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# The Transforming Archive in Literature and the Arts : A Study of Caryl Phillips, David Dabydeen, Fred D'Aguiar, Lubaina Himid and Marlene Nourbese Philip

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# THÈSE

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Présentée par **Maroua MANNAI**

The Transforming Archive in Literature and the Arts:  
A Study of Caryl Phillips, David Dabydeen, Fred D'Aguiar,  
Lubaina Himid and Marlene NourbeSe Philip

Soutenue le 9 octobre 2023 devant le jury composé de

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## Introduction

While walking through the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool, England, I was inspired by a modern sculpture entitled ‘*Timalle*’, created by the French sculptor François Piquet, who has resided, and practiced his art, in Guadeloupe since 2000. His sculpture “Timalle” was presented at the exhibition “Ink and Blood: Stories of Abolition” in dialogue with the series “Reparations” and with a preparation series entitled *Mounpapyé* (Paper People). “*Timalle*” also displays the filmed process of a white man transforming “*Timal*”, a term in creole (*petit mâle*) meaning “little male” into “*Timalle*” which means suitcase (*petite malle*). In Guadeloupe and Martinique, the term *Timal* is also affiliated with ‘brother’. This piece of art, which Piquet adds, connects the past and the present with the traumatic history of the Caribbean, features a draft reparation form and presents “A re-enactment, through sculpture and performance, of the enslavement process”.<sup>1</sup>

In an interview about his artwork, Piquet shared that “*Timalle* is a sculpture made of scrunched reparation forms evoking a skinned human body, that I bonded and shackled with old rum barrel hoops”<sup>2</sup>, to emphasize his aim to engage slavery in the act of repair rather than to make reparations: “It is a question of carrying out repairs, that is to say, restoring or putting back in function broken or deficient objects, concepts, representations, relations or simple residues”. By studying the slave past and addressing the morality of memory and repair, Piquet enters the debate with the symbolic power of his art. Art, according to Piquet, “is engaged in a process of repairing our world, the reparation, tinkering with the incurable” and “the iron rods [he] used to relive the slavery process are historical materials”. In his work, the artist interrogates the respective colonial and postcolonial histories and identities of metropolitan France and Guadeloupe.

I will start with this sculpture as I believe it serves as a concrete analogy to reflect upon the question of the archive and bring the past into the present through this complex approach of incorporating disciplines and ideologies. This artistic exhibition stimulates our thinking about our perception of the archive in relation to our present. The perspective that I try to explore on the question of the archive tends to destabilize traditional interpretations of the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/stories/francois-piquet-talks-about-timalle>

<sup>2</sup> François Piquet talks about *Timalle* in an interview with Sarah Webster (2017). The brief interview is available on the Liverpool Museum official website, <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/stories/francois-piquet-talks-about-timalle>.

archive as static and demonstrate its process of transformation both as a source and resource when put at the heart of literary and artistic creation.

In the attention given to narrative form and stylistic structures of these writers' texts and artist's artworks, my research seeks to study how they have tried to re-write and re-shape the written and visual archival records implemented in their works. I seek to frame this new discourse as an effort to depict the lives, histories, and memories of the Atlantic slave trade. In other words, the central purpose of this text is to demonstrate how writers and artists transcribe and transform the legal, textual, and artistic archive into fiction, poetry, and art. The emphasis is put on the materiality of the archive and its metamorphosing process into digital forms. The basis of revisiting the past will raise questions of what might be gained from revisiting this in the twenty-first century and how the archive can impact our reading of the present and influence our shaping of the future?

My focus on literature and visual art stems from a personal choice to regenerate the research I began during my master degree. My specific concern in my research has shifted to creating a dialogical project that involves different disciplines and genres. I seek to construct a new approach in the subject of the archival process. This research, "The Transforming Archive in Literature and the Arts: A Study of Caryl Phillips, Fred D'Aguiar, David Dabydeen, Lubaina Himid, and Marlene NourbeSe Philip", reflects an interdisciplinary investigation to discuss the evolving process of the archive. My study provides further impetus on the Atlantic slave trade and the memory of slavery, and brings together literary texts and visual artworks. To achieve this, I focus on literary, poetic, and artistic works while paying particular attention to their potential to demonstrate the complexity and multiplicity of the archive.

This return to the archive links texts and artistic creations to ethical and political issues implying a conversation between the past and present. I try to show that insufficient importance has been given to thinking about the transformative power of the archive in contemporary texts and visual arts. Despite the study's intricacy, I suggest focusing on a few literary and artistic works, mostly by Black writers and artists of Caribbean and African descent, to illustrate this innovative approach to the archive. The poetics and ethics of revisiting the archive probe us to reflect on the ongoing struggles that Black people experience not only in Britain but also globally, today.



There is a wide range of spelling the term ‘archive’: ‘archive’, ‘Archive’, ‘the archive’, ‘archives’ and ‘the archives’. However, ‘archives’ is one of those words that can be written either in a singular or plural form, although more frequently seen in the latter. In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, an “archive” /a:kaiv/, in its singular structure, alludes to the place where historical documents or records are kept. On the other hand, it can take a plural structure as “archives” that surprisingly does not refer just to its plural form but to the practice of archiving: in the *OED*, “archives” implies “to place or store in an archive; in computing, to transfer to a store containing infrequently used files.”<sup>3</sup> In the context of this study, I dedicate my interest to interrogate the singular form of the archive, in an effort to show its plural breadths. In other words, analyzing how the archival process can bring us to “archives” where more than one source is stored and reused within the same ‘reservoir’. To confront the “Archive” with a capital “A”, Ann Laura Stoler reappropriates such spelling to be “figurative” and “lead[ing] elsewhere”. She adds: “it may represent neither a material site nor a set of documents. Rather, it may serve as a strong metaphor for any corpus of selective forgettings and collections—and as importantly, for the seductions and longings that such quests, accumulations, and passions for the primary, originary and untouched entail”<sup>4</sup> (Stoler 87). This singular form, I suggest, evokes a constancy that advocates immobility; a preconception that this research aims to deconstruct. The archive, nonetheless, can be grasped as open to complexity and plurality. This analysis seeks to justify an archival process of transformation and explain in greater depth my consideration of tracing and tracking. I consider these archival methods as ways in which Black writers and artists of Caribbean and African descent have built up new archival discourses challenging our understanding about history, slavery, language, and art.

Prior to further introducing this line of research and its different areas of interests, I would like to first question key concepts relating to this study, such as: what is the Caribbean? What do we mean by Caribbean literature and Caribbean culture? Antonio Benitez-Rojo meaningfully considers these questions in *The Repeating Island; The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective (Post-Contemporary Interventions)* (1997), in which he argues that defining concepts such as “Caribbean culture” and “Caribbean literature” is challenging as it is impossible “to delineate the exact borders of the Caribbean across time” (Benitez-Rojo 43). Often identified by critics of Caribbean literature, Caribbean culture comes from the diasporic

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=archives+>.

<sup>4</sup> Ann Stoler. “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance: On the Content in the Form”. *Refiguring the Archive*, 2002, p. 87.

tradition of forced migration generated by the slave trade. Further featured by critics as a fluid and impure<sup>5</sup> movement, the concept encompasses physical geography and socioeconomic, linguistic, ethnologic, historical, and thematic criteria. Anglophone Caribbean writing has developed as a network exploring slavery, history, identity, memory, roots and routes, and trauma. Further consideration will be given to these key questions in Chapter One.

Although most of these writings and artists under this study share an interest in the concern of representing and refiguring history, their approaches to the legacy of slavery vary immensely. Contemporary writers and artists still rely on archival documents, slave narratives, journals, logbooks, legal cases, and paintings to produce their fictional and artistic artworks. By revisiting archival documents and texts, contemporary Caribbean literature and visual arts restore the history of slavery and transform it into a dynamic discourse that addresses current Black struggle. Such particular engagement reveals distinctive aesthetic elements through techniques of juxtaposition, collage and montage that are central to an understanding of the impact, potential and limitations of archival materials in contemporary literary and artistic practices. This marks an “archival turn” in the words of Ann Laura Stoler. In this respect, in her study *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (2009), Stoler further clarifies how this shift from reflecting on the archive as source to archive as subject gains its contemporary currency from a range of different analytic shifts, practical concerns, and political projects. Stoler insights come to term with Jean Fisher’s reflections on the archive underlined in his article “Diaspora, Trauma and the Poetics of Remembrance” (2008), that the archive is “open to the abuse of institutional concealment, disavowal or willful amnesia, to a blurring of the boundaries between historiography and mythography and hence a potential ideological weapon by which the place of power obliterates the experience of the marginal”<sup>6</sup> (Fisher 204).

Michel Foucault’s *Archeology of Knowledge*<sup>7</sup> (1969) critiques the assumption of the archive as an institution and material site of storing documents and objects. Foucault offers a new reading of the archive as “the law of what can be said” and “the system of its enunciability” or a “system that establishes statements as events and things” (Foucault 145-

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<sup>5</sup> The idea of fluidity and impurity has been used by Bénédicte Ledent to refer to Caryl Phillips’s experience as defined by his cosmopolitan experience taking into account his mixed ancestry: African, European, Indian and Jews as well, Bénédicte Ledent, *Caryl Phillips*, Manchester University Press, 2002, p.7.

<sup>6</sup> Jean Fisher, “Diaspora, Trauma and the Poetics of Remembrance”, *Exile, Diasporas and Strangers*. Edited by Kobena Mercer, 2008, p. 204.

<sup>7</sup> Michel Foucault. *L’archéologie du Savoir*. Translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith. Pantheon Books, 1969.

146). In other words, the archive is “that system of statements” that shapes the specific regularities of what can and cannot be said.

The French Philosopher Jacques Derrida’s prominent study “Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression” (1995) examines the term by inscribing it with knowledge, memory, and power. According to Derrida, the archive is not just a material place where knowledge is stored, but it evokes a general feature of our mental lives that he defines as “archive fever”. Derrida relies on psychoanalytic studies, namely Sigmund Freud’s to demonstrate how psychoanalysis is in fact an archival practice as much as an archeological excavation of repressed memories of trauma. Derrida and Foucault are not the only ones who have resorted to archive science in post-modern times. Many other academics have written about the institution of the archive in relation to the study of slavery, citing for instance; Andrew Apter and Luren Derby’s *Activating the Past: History and Memory in the Black Atlantic World* (2010), Marcus Wood’s *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America 1780-1865* (2000), Francis X Blouin and William G. Rosenberg’s *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory: Essays from the Sawyer Seminar* (2005) and “History and Memory: The Problem of the Archive” (2004), Judith Misrahi-Barak’s *Entre Atlantique et océan Indien* (2021), Brian Connolly and Marisa Fuentes’s “From Archives of Slavery to Liberated Futures?” (2016), Stephanie E. Smallwood’s “The Politics of the Archive and History’s Accountability to the Enslaved” (2016), Stephen Best’s “Neither Lost nor Found: Slavery and the Visual Archive.” (2011), to mention but a few.

The study of slavery and the archive have been profoundly influenced by a genealogy of scholarship that has theorized the question and indeed the problem of the archive. In his 1997 study *Stirring the pot of Haitian History*, the Haitian American academic and anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot, complicates Haitian history by demonstrating how historical problems continue to insinuate themselves into the contemporary moment. In this respect, Trouillot’s recent study, *Silencing the Past* (1995) investigates how history writing is connected to power and how archives can distort what we know about history. By challenging scholars to reflect upon the archival absences and elisions in particular the voices of oppressed peoples, Trouillot underscores the sense of disfiguration towards the knowledge of the past.

In “Rethinking the Archive of Enslavement” (2015), Simon Gikandi defines the archive of the Atlantic as a “crypt” as well as a space of “pure negativity” (Gikandi 86). Gikandi

further allows him to reflect on the archive as written by slave masters and as a “will to power” as well as “a form of violent control” (Gikandi 92). Other scholars on the archive can be brought into this discourse to better understand the main question of this research. Saidiya Hartman, for example, explains how the relationship to the historical archive on slavery seems dubious. In her study, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (2007), she attempts to depict the afterlife of slavery. Similarly, in her essay entitled “Venus in Two Acts” (2008), Hartman has written about the silenced voices of enslaved Africans which are left unrecoverable in the archive and stresses how contemporary writers should write and “imagine a free state, not as the time before captivity or slavery, but rather as the anticipated future of this writing” (Hartman 4). While Hartman fills the gaps of silence left in the archive, Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Jane Taylor and Michele Pickover’s *Refiguring the Archives* (2002) expound the degree to which thinking about the archive not only engenders new realities and new possibilities but also unfolds the ways in which the archive constructs and erases the past.

Furthermore, the complexity of the concepts of ‘archives’, ‘records’, and ‘power’ are well explored in Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook’s article “Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory” (2002). This study serves to demonstrate how archives function as institutions and the manner in which records in the form of documents are commonly understood by academics and the general public. I aim to critique the assumed passive role of archival resources by demonstrating how they are exploited for various historical and cultural purposes. This study thereby interrogates the position of historians from the mid-nineteenth century, in a pursued scientific history, have insisted on reading the archive as a neutral “repository of facts” (Schwartz and Cook 1). The archive is established by the powerful to protect or enhance their political positions in society. Through archives, the past is controlled and ‘readjusted’. Additionally, Schwartz and Cook illustrate how historical records often impose an order of transactions, events, people, and societies within a legal, symbolic, structural, and operational power of controlled communication. Their original individual design and format; their subject, nominal, or functional indexing classification methodologies; their organization, participation, and place within larger information systems; their use to enhance powerful organizations and individuals in their operational activities and subsequent legal recourse; the use (or non-use, as in oral testimony) of particular recording media; the technical sophistication (and expense) and the concomitant specialized, often elite training (from ancient scribes and medieval monks to modern audio-visual and computer-

based media specialists) required for their production and maintenance: all of these methods and other factors—actual and symbolic—assume that some can afford to create and maintain records, and some cannot; that certain voices will be heard loudly and some not at all; that certain views and ideas about society will in turn “be privileged and others marginalized” (Schwartz and Cook 14).

Schwartz and Cook explain the link between memory and archive as follows:

memory like history, is rooted in archives. Without archives, memory falters, knowledge of accomplishments fades, pride in a shared past dissipates. Archives counter these losses. Archives contain the evidence of what went before. Archives validate our experiences, our perceptions, our narratives, our stories. Archives are our memories. Yet what goes on in the archives remains remarkably unknown. Users of archives (historians and others) and shapers of archives (records creators, records managers, and archivists) add layers of meaning, layers which become naturalized, internalized, and unquestioned. (Schwartz and Cook 18)

In the same vein, Thomas Richards, in *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (1993), discusses the archive as “a utopian space of comprehensive knowledge...not a building, nor even a collection of texts, but the collectively imagined junction of all that was known or knowable,” and seeks to demonstrate how “the imperial archive was a fantasy of knowledge collected and united in the service of state and Empire” (Richards 4). In line with the question of control and power, in the “History of the Archives: The State of the Discipline” (2015), Elizabeth Yale argues how rulers accumulate power through their control over resources and invented the archive as a mechanism to consolidate and reinforce that power. She further defends that “no archive is innocent” (Yale 323), so long as stakeholders decide who maintains the power to determine what is kept and what is preserved. Against the assumption of innocence, we can reconsider the archival process as an experience that constantly transforms and alters history. In his study *The Writing of History* (1988), Michel De Certeau elucidates that writing history starts from this process of transformation: “the transformation of archivistic activity is the point of departure and the condition of a new history” (De Certeau 75).

Further insight can be gained from a study of past theoretical approaches to the archive. This research takes this initiative by assessing new literary and artistic interpretations in which the archive is rewritten, remembered and recreated in contemporary Caribbean literature and modern arts. I approach this through close analyzes of fictional, poetic, and artistic works. The goal of this project is to demonstrate the transformative process of the

archive by introducing alternative textual and visual forms rather than to replicate previous understandings of the archive. My concern thereby lies in a line of questioning that reconsiders how writers have responded to the written and visual archives. I argue that the archive can be accurate and offer new alternatives to engaging with their present implications within understandings of Black identity, Black artists' positions and Black innovation within fiction and art. My interdisciplinary and cross-cultural approach has been guided by postcolonial literary theories as well as heritage studies to further reflect upon the power of the archive as an institution. I do so in an attempt to uncover understandings of history and the past. Significant to this approach is the interdisciplinary interrogation of colonial texts and diaries written by whites and Blacks. This approach interrogates to what extent literary and artistic reproductions are aligned with or challenged within existing social, cultural, philosophical and aesthetic norms especially when dealing with Black identity.

As regards the term 'Black', the intention to spell "Black" with a capital "B" continues to be a source of debate especially in the wake of injustice and murders against Black people today. Such an evolution came at the height of Black Lives Matter, a political and social movement that seeks to uncover violence, racism, discrimination, and racial injustice experienced by Black people. This movement emerged in 2013 out of the Black community's fury upon the murder of 12-year-old Trayvon Martin in Florida by a white assailant. White supremacy continues to thrive at the expense of the Black community who continues to fight for their liberation and justice. This anti-racist movement is explicitly dedicated to underscore the struggles against racist police's violence and brutality in the United States, as well as in Britain. It is noteworthy that 'Black' and 'Blackness' reflect a political dimension due to the ongoing injustice and erasure towards Blacks; their rights, stories, culture, identity status (as in the case of the Windrush generation). When considering the writers and artists under investigation, who are Blacks with African and Caribbean ancestry, the term seems crucial in the context of this study. The concept of 'blackness' and its meaning and impact on theories of race and racism becomes a core for many studies. On the other hand, drawing on such engagement this study seeks to bring into the ongoing studies on Blacks, I deliberately decided to capitalize the term Black as opposed to the term 'white' that I believe should be written in lowercase letters as a response to racial refiguration that Black still endure worldwide from the racial domination and violence acted by the police institution.

In this study, contemporary writers and artists foreground such injustice inscribed in the past and seek to put emphasis on the necessity to remember. Slavery cannot be left in the

past, as the current position of Blacks continues to be shaped by the atrocity of this memory and channeling these memories of sufferings into a more engaged and resistant perspective to be the main concern of contemporary writers and artists. One can argue that their use of archive in their fictions, poetry, and arts reveals their individual and political visions of the Black history and expresses an angle of perception of the Black writer and artist that is at once unique and universal. The question of the way these contemporary artists and writers respond to history through different literary genres such as fiction and poetry, and visual arts is one of the first to address. Given the nature of the archive as a source and as a literary and artistic process, this study is structured to offer a dialogue between distinctive disciplines made in this regard and makes explicit the involvement of the archive into different arts which shaped our understating of the term.

I wish then to build on this study to include the consideration of the archive to advocate its position as a dynamic trope and concept that Caribbean writers revisit to trace their memories and reconstruct their identities through developing and creating their own discourse, and therefore archives. In this respect, an insightful study conducted by Wendy W. Walters, *Archives of the Black Atlantic: Reading Between Literature and History* (2013) reads Black historical novels and poetry in an interdisciplinary context, to examine the multiple archives that have produced our historical consciousness. Walters' study utilizes an interdisciplinary approach between the archive and literature, analyzing in depth literary and artistic works in relation to the archive, which also becomes the grounds of my research.

Walters examines Black historical novels and poetry in such an interdisciplinary context to inspect the multiple archival documents that have produced our historical consciousness. By proposing a reading of the archive in relation to literature, the writer exposes the "instability of [the] archive's truth" (Walters 4) and suggests that the references to archival documents in Black historical literature introduce a new methodology for studying both the archive and literature. Revisiting the history of slavery and the slave trade through an in-depth analysis of certain writers and poets suggests that "these writers, artists, poets turn toward music and performance as a potential rejection of the western ratio that created the brutal textual archive" (Walters 9). In this respect, my thesis follows the steps of my study to focus on other art forms such as visual art. Much attention is given to the dynamics of the archive, rejecting its consideration as "a temple and a cemetery: a space where relics are stored and a tomb for the fragments of lives enshrined within", in the words of Achille Mbembe (Mbembe 19). In his article, "The Power of the Archive and Its Limits" (2002),

Achille Mbembe defends the performative status of the archive and showing creative new status as a source of creation and modernity. This study creates a dialogue between various generic discourses, writers, and artists who all share their goal of shaping a creative and performative textual and artistic “heritage”, to borrow Rodney Harrison’s term (Harrison 3).

Performing the archive allows these writers and artists to build their own identity, since the archive of slavery functions not just as a repository for records but also as a space of knowledge production that aims to define what can be known about slavery, as well as the injustice and trauma that enslaved Africans have experienced and carried across generations. In this regard, in her article “Venus in Two Acts”, Saidiya Hartman argues how “the archive of slavery rests upon a founding violence” (Hartman 6). Elizabeth Maddock Dillon and Ann Laura Stoler have also argued that “we might think of these approaches as inquiries about design that ask how the archive is constituted, the form it takes, and the questions it raises<sup>8</sup>”. These approaches engender a sense of power and hegemony intrinsic in with Black identity. The term “hegemony” alludes to supremacy and authority and in order to reverse the white hegemony engendered in history and the archive, Black artists and writers aim at constructing their own hegemony and positioning themselves in a state of power. Through their interdisciplinary rewriting of the past, they reinforce such hegemony and establish new contemporary discourses as alternatives. In line with the idea of hegemony, Terry Cook’s essay “What is Past is Prologue: A History of Archival Ideas since 1898, and the Future Paradigm Shift” (1997) suggests “the need to reconceptualize traditional archival principles from a product-focused to a process-oriented activity, to preserve in the best manner the collective memory of nations and peoples” (Cook 17). Power and control, as many scholars have pointed out, are fundamental to the etymology of the term archive.

To further interrogate the archive, my thesis considers the work of twentieth century Black British writers of Caribbean ancestry and a Black Canadian artist: writers born in the Caribbean but now living in Britain and Canada. These writers have contributed to an immense variety and vitality to contemporary literatures in English, regularly winning major international prizes, from the Nobel to the Booker. My research considers the Feminist Black British artist, Lubaina Himid, who defines herself as a painter, and is a cultural activist,

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<sup>8</sup> See Elizabeth Maddock Dillon’s article “Translation Studies and the Poetics of the Digital Archive: Early American Literature, Caribbean Assemblages, and Freedom Dreams” (2017) and Ann Laura Stoler’s study “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance”, 2002.



originally born in Africa (Zanzibar) and who lives in Britain. It is also relevant to mention that she was one of the first artists involved in the UK's Black Art movement in the 1980s. What they all share is an interest in the legacy of slavery and the reliance on historical documents to reclaim Black identity. In this research, I have narrowed the main corpus down to novels, installation art and modern multimedia representations of the archive. The selection was made on the basis of their reliance on eighteenth-century historical documents and visual arts, but also the selected works correspond to a contemporary fictional and visual interest in the legacy of slavery and colonial archive. It seems relevant to mention how the political positioning of these writers as activists have influenced their works and interpretations.

Each of the selected writers and visual artists is involved in the legacy of slavery. Nevertheless, I suggest that their interest with history has evolved to deal with racism, and existing Black issues. My research in postcolonial studies seeks to foreground the articulation of literary form with social and political change, with a particular emphasis on questions of identity, modernity, justice, ethics, historical violence, and continuing forms of inequality. Some of the writers under study have clearly exposed their interests behind writing back to slavery. For example, in an article entitled "Necessary Journeys" (2006), Caryl Phillips has pointed out that the British society of the 1980s in which he lived offered Black people a limited range of stereotypes. He decided not to play to these expectations (Phillips 4-6). Similarly, in an interview with Rajiv Mohabir, Dabydeen clarifies his own vision as follows:

Trying to give voice to the silenced is to provoke literary creativity. Violence and horrible injustices are breeding grounds for poets and novelists, generating excitement and fertility, sad to say, but such is the imagination and its need for manure. It's hard to write about nice things, it takes a special talent to be scented on the page. (Dabydeen 3)

When I asked Dabydeen about his perception of his own writing, he admitted that he sees himself as a "heteroclit", which means irregular, especially when Black people write themselves out of slavery. In this research, I will focus on Caryl Phillips, Fred D'Aguiar, David Dabydeen, Lubaina Himid's and M. NourbeSe's literary and artistic works. Despite their concern with slavery, each writer addresses the topic of slavery differently and transforms generational trauma into a constructive and provocative discourse of literature and art. Challenging the practices and assumptions of cultural studies, these writers also urge us to question the efficiency and accuracy of legal discourses. Through the variety of the literary texts and artistic artworks chosen, this research seeks to investigate how the archive can no longer remain a static concept, but is rather a dynamic source of performance and creation. In

an effort to further clarify, I will provide a brief overview of my corpus before offering a structural analysis of each chapter.

Caryl Phillips was born on St Kitts in 1958, brought to Britain when he was only four months old, and raised in Leeds. The Caribbean-born writer engages with history to a greater extent than the other selected writers, and a close reading of his work reveals an intertextual reliance on other sources. His prevailing interest lies in exploring those voices absent from received historical accounts of slavery, such as of a slave, or a plantation owner's daughter. It is known that most of his interests evolve around themes of "origins, belonging and exclusion", as noted by a reviewer of his 2015 novel *The Lost Child*,<sup>9</sup> Gerard Woodward, who considers his writing a mirror to his restless life as Maya Jaggi reports<sup>10</sup>. Bénédicte Ledent argues his primary focus lies on "individual lives rather than systems of thought", which breaks down barriers of race and gender. Bénédicte Ledent's prominent study *Caryl Phillips* (2002) further examines Phillips's novels, *The Atlantic Sound*, *The European Tribe*, *Lost Child*, *The Final Passage*, *Higher Ground*, *The Nature of Blood*, *Where There is Darkness*, *Cambridge* and *Crossing the River*. Phillips was influenced by literary figures like Toni Morrison and Richard Wright who shaped his writing and "made him discover the black writer's imaginative territory that was kept away from him during his teenage years" (Ledent 5).

I mainly focus on his two novels *Crossing the River* (1993) and *Cambridge* (1991). *Cambridge* is narrated by Emily Cartwright, an Englishwoman who travelled to a West Indian estate to visit her father's sugar plantation in the West Indies and David Henderson, known as Cambridge. The novel reflects two contrasting visions of two worlds, "connected by the insult of Slavery" as the author himself states in his introduction. The vision of the slave master is provided by Emily in her journals and the transatlantic voyages of Cambridge come/is related from the perspective of a captured slave enduring unimaginable suffering. In her study *Caryl Phillips, David Dabydeen and Fred D'Aguiar: Representations of Slavery* (2011), Abigail Ward examines Phillips's heavy reliance on other sources in writing his slave narrative fiction. Phillips acknowledges his use of the archive, yet stresses the inadequacy of relying upon a single source or standard account to narrate the past of slavery. He explains that it is "only in comparing accounts and constructing a contrapuntal montage from these documents

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<sup>9</sup> Gerard Woodward, "The Lost Child by Caryl Phillips, book review: Wuthering Heights relived in post-war Britain, *The Independent*, 26 March 2015.

<sup>10</sup> Maya Jaggi. "Caryl Phillips: The Guardian Profile". *The Guardian*, 3 November 2009.

that the complexities and contradictions in representing slavery are exposed” (Ward 28). However, Ward suggests that Phillips visibly tries to “counteract the reliance on archival documents to represent the past of slavery, and wish to embrace rather than elide conflicting interpretations and unassimilable memories” (Ward 34). The use of collage, as a narrative technique, allows for these texts to function somehow as fiction and as historical accounts. The consequential metanarratives invite an exploration of the possibilities, conditions and limits of literature in accounting for human experiences in the past.

The second novel under scrutiny, *Crossing the River* (1993), includes four distinct parts, with a framing epilogue and prologue set in a trans-historical mode. Letters and diary entries within the sections are often non-chronological and incomplete, and each story tells a tale of broken familial bonds. Slavery, Phillips seems to suggest, is a “fractured and un-totalisable past” (Ward 48). Despite fragmentation, *Crossing the River* retraces the unexpected connections between people, centuries, countries and histories made possible because of the transatlantic slave trade. It may be a novel about slavery and its continuing legacies, but it is not simply an accusatory novel. Instead of a literature of recrimination and retribution, Phillips’s novel envisages a dialogue between Black and white, an acknowledgment and understanding of the past of slavery which rejects a rhetoric of blame. As he clearly stated in the Epilogue, Phillips dedicates his novel to “those who crossed the river”, acknowledging not only Blacks but also whites who journeyed across the Atlantic. Phillips’s novels are built around historical and literary archives, to re-write and echo other archival narratives.

Unlike Caryl Phillips, David Dabydeen presents a move away from the historical archive in responding to the past of slavery. In her study, *Caryl Phillips, David Dabydeen and Fred D’Aguiar: Representations of Slavery* (2011), Abigail Lara Ward describes such practice as a “deliberate vandalisation of, and irreverence towards received history” (Ward 11), thereby making his approach seem more deliberately provocative in terms of addressing slavery. The British-Guyanese writer is deliberately concerned with the ethics of representing slavery and trying to further explore his “ancestors’ stories and heritage” as he shared during an interview I conducted with him on January 2019 in Kingston, England. Dabydeen’s preoccupation with history and the writing of histories articulate both sides of the story, notably writing about the eighteenth century and shifting towards the twenty-first century. His works reveal his anxieties about audience and readers for his texts, drawing comparisons between the eighteenth-century slave narrator’s reliance on the abolition market and twentieth-century readers’ desire to devour books on slavery. The emphasis will be typically

in *A Harlot's Progress* and *Turner* as juxtaposed against the original sources he has relied on. To illustrate, the painting “Slavers Throwing overboard the Dead and Dying—Typhoon coming on (1840)”<sup>11</sup> by Joseph Mallord William Turner served as inspiration for his poem *Turner* (1995). Likewise, his novel *A Harlot's Progress* (1999), is based on a painting by William Hogarth (1732), that consisted of six plates and depicted the life of a prostitute. Dabydeen's narrative allows for fictitious interpretations of history that this research will try to further examine in terms of its dynamic literary techniques. Dabydeen's novel, as told by Mungo, an African captured into slavery, begins thirty years after the publication of Hogarth's painting. It seems pertinent to include also that Dabydeen has mentioned that he was inspired by a movie about race “Life is Beautiful” to write his novel<sup>12</sup>.

Fred D'Aguiar, a British-Guyanese poet and writer, who was born in Britain but grew up in Guyana, evokes the memorialization of slavery through his novel *Feeding the Ghosts* (1997) in which he revisits the slave ship *Zong* murder in 1781 and creatively narrates the events aboard the slave ship *Zong*. By analyzing Caryl Phillips, David Dabydeen and Fred D'Aguiar's narratives, I focus on their narrative techniques and the way they have recycled the sources used to rewrite the history of transatlantic slavery. This study also considers the literary works of Marlene NourbeSe Philip and Lubaina Himid which engage with history and its legacy; they touch upon the power and ability of the law to create, destroy, and exclude the erasure of violence and the continuity of sound (particularly ‘the sound of the drowned’). Philip is a Black Canadian poet, writer, and lawyer originating from Trinidad who is known for her commitment to social justice and her experimentations with literary structure. Although her writing displays an in-depth understanding of the canon, her social analysis and critique is evident in her work and how it challenges traditional approaches. This is embodied in her poem *Zong!* (2008) in which she explores the power of poetry to challenge the archive and deconstruct the hegemony of legal discourse.

As a British-Tanzanian visual artist, Lubaina Himid responds to the legacy of slavery by showing the multiplicity of the experience of transatlantic slavery. Himid has been highly engaged with the past through her contemporary art that unfolds a new and unconventional vision of history and the slave trade in the present. In her article “Lubaina Himid: Naming the Un-Named” (2017), Ella Mills argues that Himid's artworks aim to “fill in the gaps that

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<sup>11</sup> <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/31102/slave-ship-slavers-throwing-overboard-the-dead-and-dying-t>.

<sup>12</sup> During an interview I conducted in England with Dabydeen he mentioned that *A Harlot's Progress* was also an inspiration from a movie about race that we can distinguish here.

history leaves behind” through a modern representation of lost histories and what was previously silenced (Mills 34). Significantly, Himid’s art reinserts Black narratives into the forefront of cultural practice and conversation. Her assemblage of different materials and crafts reminds us of Caryl Phillips and Fred D’Aguiar’s reliance on the canon of slave narratives. *Le Rodeur* (2016), Lubaina Himid’s series of paintings, is based upon a symbol of the entire Atlantic slave trade through which she creatively refigures the *Zong* massacre. The artist seems “to convey the ghost of it all, the shudder in the room” (Mills 34). In addition, Himid’s *Revenge*, exhibited at the Rochdale Art Gallery in 1992, displays installations and texts that represent the slave trade and its legacies. The exhibition’s title as explained by Himid seems a reference to Black people’s survival despite the variations of slavery, imperialism, oppression and a racist art establishment.

In *Memorial to Zong* (1991), Himid demonstrates that “the crucial white/black dichotomy in the Middle Passage”, borrowing Alan Rice’s words, is highlighted by the *Zong* incident’s denial of the importance of Black lives. In his study *Creating Memorials Building Identities: The Politics of Memory in the Black Atlantic* (2010), Alan Rice incarnates Himid’s work as “a symbol of the dispersal of African lives in this incident and numerous other, and [as] commemorating the throwaway people of the Middle Passage” (Rice 44). Lubaina Himid aims to establish a sense of place historically, culturally, and psychologically to explain the “sense in which [she] use[s] sculptural language to make and explore boundaries in a contemporary context. The sculpture could be described as having a direct parallel with the diverse ways in which human behavior communicates, or remains alienated” (Himid 23). In this respect, in his article, “Viewing Inside the Invisible: African Atlantic Art in the 1990s” (2013), Alan Rice holds Lubaina Himid’s art as one that “disrupts linear chronologies and explores extended cartographies to fully express African Atlantic diasporan realities in the wake of the transatlantic slave trade” (Rice 16). The African Diasporan writers and artists under scrutiny break with lingering linear progressive narratives of the past to come along with a new vision of the archive, establishing an arena for dialogue in which to question certain aspects of history, truth, memory and identity. I will closely study the original sources juxtaposed with the literary texts highlighting how the archive as a concept is open to new fictional and artistic reproductions to interact with the present and call for a better future where silenced invisible voices can be alive. I would like to draw the reader’s attention that my analysis strictly covers the works of the selected corpus due to the complexity of this research to be extended to other works dealing with the issue at question.

Reflecting upon the authority of the archive and its power to command and order, much attention should be paid to the literary and artistic reproductions of the archive's ability to speak about those who were silenced in "the invisible" past. In "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression" (1995), Jacques Derrida defines the archive "as a word, as a place, and as a space where power emerges" (Derrida 9). Derrida puts the emphasis on the duality of the meaning of the word archive: in terms of temporality, it is a place of "commencement" and in terms of spatiality, it is the place "where men and gods command" or the "place from which order is given" (Derrida 9).

Many of my questions stem from the complexities and dynamics of the archive in terms of source incorporated in literary and artistic works. These questions carry out considerations of our own interactions with the archive, history, the past, memory, as well as of the literary and artistic involvement of historical and non-historical sources in contemporary writings. What is the archive? Could we consider the fictional and artistic creations developed by these writers as a new heritage? Can we take for granted all the archival documents used as authentic given the fact that some of the sources used lack authentic dates and references? To what extent can one rely on these sources to understand the legacy of slavery? How do these texts rewrite, revisit and challenge history through a retrospective gaze towards the horrific past?

To answer these questions, this thesis will be divided into five chapters. My chapters will, to varying extents, reflect the dynamic process of returning to the archive suggesting how this fictional and artistic return offers a new sense of Black identity. My interest lies in studying the ways each of these writer and artist have reworked these historical documents and paintings to address political questions and reconstruct the Black identity. Most often they aim at historicizing the diasporic experience. I propose to study a few examples in which I will compare, and analyze the differences and contributions added to the original sources from the perspective of diasporic writers and African artists. These works change our reflections on the archive through textual and visual transformations to shape Black identity and cultural memory. The chapters interrogate the ways in which the archive of the transatlantic slavery continues to haunt contemporary fiction and visual arts.

By relying on multiple theoretical studies on the archive, Chapter One, "Theoretical Framework of the Archive in Contemporary Caribbean Literature" reflects on the archive as a concept bringing into fore critical, philosophical, and literary studies. This theoretical

revisiting inspects its complexity, providing an overall background of the term in connection with key concepts such as slavery, politics, history, memory, the past, truth and authenticity. Chapter One is divided into two parts: the chapter starts with the ways the archive has been defined, examined, critiqued, and reinvented by writers and artists from the early twentieth century to the present. It then provides a background of the archive's relationship with disciplines like philosophy, memory, literature and art. Certain key concepts will be defined to appropriately engage with the theoretical frameworks core to this study. I then make reference to some key concepts, namely those of "the past", "the archive", "the Atlantic slavery", investigating the practice and context of these terms. This combination presents a necessary focus for the study of the archive prior to analyzing the literary and artistic reproductions. I begin my analysis by setting the stage for a dialogue juxtaposing the above terms with previous studies of the archive by philosophers and scholars. The main goal of this chapter is to show the ways the archival return and contemporary modern literary and artistic creations work mutually creating an effective dialogue.

These controversial reflections evolving around the archive continue to frame our understanding of the concept. Nevertheless, the debate in which various scholars and philosophers have been involved seems to associate the archive with the past, history and memory. These terms might appear self-evident on the surface, yet previous historical and cultural studies have recognized the complexity of these terms when associated with the archive. Memory, History, and the Past provide an interesting focus area in terms of the archive studies which seems necessary to be further analyzed. The different sections in Chapter One build upon the archive and the form, the archive and truth, the archive and history, and the archive and visual art. It further demonstrates the evolution of the archive as an area of academic interest, and in particular the way in which the archive has developed in response to various critiques in literature and visual art. I rely on postcolonial cultural studies and heritage studies as theoretical frameworks. This chapter serves as a methodological space paving the way to the case studies that the following chapters will further illustrate. It looks at the archive and poetics, i.e., the difference between an archival document and a literary text and the textual criteria that should be considered to compare both sources, then moves to analyze the archive and the literary text or artistic works. On the whole, this chapter aims to simultaneously reexamine definitions of the Caribbean and to introduce some of the key terms and studies revolving around the archive.

Chapter Two, “Reading the Archive: Delving into a Slave Past through Fictional Narratives in Caryl Phillips’s *Cambridge* (1991) and *Crossing the River* (1993) shifts emphasis from the theoretical framework to focus on the fictional text and its reliance on historical narratives. It suggests a comparison between the primary sources used and the literary texts written by Caryl Phillips. This chapter revisits the various primary sources that Phillips has relied on in his narrative process, specifically slave narratives, autobiographies, journals, diaries and testimonies. In this respect, Phillips exposes the inadequacy of relying upon one source, or standard account to narrate the past. According to him, it is only through comparing accounts and constructing a contrapuntal ‘montage’ from these documents that the complexities and contradictions to represent slavery are exposed. Phillips finds himself in a constant dialogue with the past in such a way that he always needs to incorporate what “has been said” to his own text. His revisiting of the archival document might be understood in itself as a response to the voice of the past, notably a classical traditional repetition totally different from that of Fred D’Aguiar, David Dabydeen and M. NourbeSe Philip. The chapter concludes with the findings of this comparison: two texts seem to be apparently identical but are implicitly different. My attempt is therefore to state the textual differences in terms of discourse, language, words, form, and narratology. Such a comparison serves us to reflect upon the status of the literary text. Can we consider Phillips’s novels as new hybrid discourses? Did Phillips reconstruct a new archive or mainly reproduce identical literary texts relying on Black and white sources?

Chapter Three, “The Ekphrastic Response: David Dabydeen and Fred D’Aguiar Write the Visual Archive”, underlines the ekphrastic approach of the archive as treated and transformed by these Black British writers. The way they have responded to the archive could be perceived as provocative, political, and creative. This chapter is divided into three main parts: the first part, “David Dabydeen responds to the Art of William Hogarth”, offers a reading of David Dabydeen’s fiction *A Harlot’s Progress*, a work that is inspired by William Hogarth’s *A Harlot’s Progress* (1732), a series of six paintings. The second part will cover “Re-writing Back the Past: Buried in the Visual Archive and Reincarnated in the Fictional Account: David Dabydeen’s *Turner* (1995) and Fred D’Aguiar’s *Feeding the Ghosts* (1997)”, which is a response to Joseph Mallord William Turner’s painting *The Slave Ship*, originally entitled “Slavers Throwing overboard the Dead and Dying” (1840). In this chapter, highlighting this visible reliance to eighteenth century visual arts, both Dabydeen and D’Aguiar’s fictional and poetic texts give voices to the “invisible” Black figures, invisible in



eighteenth century visual art, and turns the work of art into imaginary stories narrated by “visible” Black figures.

In this chapter, I give special attention to efforts in re-writing/re-righting back the Slave past through Dabydeen’s *Turner* as compared to JMW Turner’s 1840 painting *The Slave Ship (Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying, Typhoon Coming On)*. Likewise, the imaginative return to the past is embodied in the child’s voice in Dabydeen’s *Turner* that transforms history into a redemptive newness, and the hybrid intertwining discourse in Fred D’Aguiar’s *Feeding the Ghosts*. As previously indicated, the chapters are framed in such a way as to create a dialogue between each other, but at the same time to interrogate these writers’ techniques to reincarnate the archive, yet in a provocative way.

Chapter Four, “Haunting the Archive: Somewhere in Between Text and Art in M. NourbeSe Philip’s *Zong!* and Lubaina Himid’s Artworks”, exhibits and performs the creative engagement with the archive. As a fragmented text, Philip disrupts the canonical discourse in her use of language as a tool to deconstruct an archival account and embrace alternative textual and visual forms. Complex and fragmented as it is, *Zong!* is a challenging poem to be grasped let alone analyzed. The chief concern in this chapter is to demonstrate how it fits with the visual, structural, and textual reinvention of the legal discourse.

The Canadian writer of Caribbean descent explicitly advocates how her poem must tell the “untold stories” that should be told in history, in particular focusing on the deficiencies of the legal discourse and documents as part of the archive. In the same vein, this chapter seeks also to concentrate on the visual aspect of slavery in visual art through Lubaina Himid’s installation *Revenge* (1992) and *Memorial to Zong* in which she transforms historical mourning into artistic revenge. By drawing on Hogarth’s critique of eighteenth century society in *Marriage A-la-Mode* (1743-45), Lubaina Himid’s installation *A Fashionable Marriage* is a critique of British society, including the art world of the 1980s featuring Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1979 to 1990, and Ronald Reagan, American politician who served as the 40th president of the United States.

I seek to demonstrate how the archive continues to be mined by contemporary artists in an effort to render what is “invisible” visible. I consider this process as a constant transformation and subversion of a previous order. Art is therefore not only an archival record, but also a new archive that contemporary artists like Lubaina Himid seek to create

between then and now, foregrounding a display of the past to ‘remember’ and raising the awareness about the atrocities of history in such a performative approach.

In this regard, in his study *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance, Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (2005), Ian Baucom points out that “the massacre on the slave ship *Zong* and its representations are central not only to the political and cultural archives of the Black Atlantic, but also to the history of modern capital, ethics, and time consciousness” (Baucom 34). Contesting the conception that the legal documents twisted in the *Zong* case are the only available testimonies of the lives of the enslaved Africans thrown overboard, NourbeSe Philip’s *Zong!* (2008) interrogates the legal document of the *Zong* case and dismantles the archive.

By reconfiguring the role of gaps and silences, Philip engages with history rather than merely representing it, thus urging for a more radically unsettling language to inhabit modernity and challenge the legal discourse in history. In a similar vein, she claims the necessity to “bear witness to the resurfacing of the drowned and the oppressed and transformed the desiccated, legal report into a cacophony of voices-wails, cries, moans, and shouts that had earlier been banned from the text” (Philip 203).

I follow in this trail by revisiting *Zong!* (2008), and demonstrate how Philip destabilizes the conventional archive and accordingly interrogates its premises in the poem itself. I notice how this unexpectedly appropriates poetry to become an epistemological tool. As a consequence, such a radical engagement with theory requires us to move towards a different understanding of and a new approach to the reliance on the archive, inviting a profound deconstruction and rearticulation of its very language. She considers the archive “incomplete discourse” since “the half-tellings, and un-tellings force her to enter the zone of contamination to complete it” (Philip 199). Likewise, Lubaina Himid’s modern art echoes a criticism of political and historical powers from an approach of a feminist Black British artist. She highlights the Black position in art and the way the archive can be re-contextualized to fit with contemporary issues of Black identity creating a dialogue between then and now.

Chapter Five, “The Performative Archive: A shift from the Material to the Digital” considers the performative process of the archive in literature, art, and multimedia. It leads to the central argument of this research which lies in this performing and transforming archival process. The idea of the archive as a static repository of history is challenged through

processes of digitizing and performing the archive. Contemporary archives can take many different forms, providing opportunities for creativity in literature, theatre, poetry and art, in both material and digital media. This chapter is composed of three main parts; the first part, entitled “Archive as theatre”, incorporates two sections: “Staging the Archive: Performing the Trail of the *Zong* in Fred D’Aguiar’s *Feeding the Ghosts*”, is a study of theatrical elements and techniques. In the second section, “The Archive and Emotion”, I examine the interconnection between the archive, emotion, language, and the contemporary reader as an active audience. This perspective enables us to put emphasis on interconnections between the archive, fiction and imagination. To put it differently, the fictional discourse is set in a theatrical setting, which has a unique emotional effect on the mind and consciousness of the reader. This emotional engagement with history further raises awareness of historical injustice.

This chapter’s second part, “The Body as Archive”, examines the ways in which the body can represent and perform the archive. More than the incorporation of the archive, what interests me here is the process of performing through the body or collective bodies. The first section in this part, “Materializing the Spirits of the Bodies of the Dead through NourbeSe Philip’s *Zong!* Durational readings”, focuses on the transforming process of the archive and how the Black female body can be figuratively seen as a creative entity where the past, present and future intersect. Additionally, the concepts of performance and performing, materializing, and materiality are given considerable attention in the exploration of this dynamic process evolved around the archive. This section aims to foreground the contemporary artistic version of *Zong!* to highlight the Black experience and to make space for women, so as to shed light on hidden histories. I consider the complementary dancing performances of Philip, and how they produce evocative body movements that encourage and unsettling interconnection between the physical and the spiritual. The *Zong!* poem, has a ‘performing aspect’, as previously illustrated in Chapter Four, and prompts us to consider how the archive can be powerfully transformed. In the same way that the body of the dead spiritually interacts with the living body, a spiritual connection is made to its ancestors across time and space. The body is intimately connected to water and the sea which is the focal point of the following section.

In the second section, “Materiality of the Sea/Water”, I examine the sea as a setting of performance which allows for the forgotten archive to become a living one, allowing the self to be freed from traumatic historical experiences and to open to the many possibilities of

reconciling with one another. As a result, the sea becomes both a refuge and a heritage to ensure an amount of control over amnesia. In terms of Black identity, Philip's choice to perform in the ocean can be perceived as a dual form of 'belonging' to her African roots and 'be-longing' to reveal the hidden atrocity of the past. The importance of the sea, as a place, in the process of remembering has been highlighted through Philip's performances.

The third section of this chapter, titled "Sound as Archive", examines yet another creative use of the archive. It is divided into two sections: "Joscelyn Gardner's *Omi Eborá*" (Yoruba for "spirits of the waters"), a multimedia installation that Gardner describes on her official website in the following terms: "submerged syllables and words float up from beneath the ocean's surface while hearing haunting voices, moaning, groaning, gasping, and whispering" (2014). *Omi Eborá* engages with M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!* (2008), and offers a digital version of this poetic text, originally derived from the legal archive. The second section of this chapter, "Black Voices in Lubaina Himid's *Naming the Money*", further demonstrates Himid's innovative and modern use of audio effects to identify all of her wooden figures and provide them with a space to tell their own stories. Himid tries to bring the wooden Black characters and the archive's static form to life with her voice by concentrating on the sound and as such providing a creative and challenging vision of the African heritage.

Each of these chapters raises certain questions about the archive and new forms of interpretation in both literature and art. The fluidity of chapters introduced above also echoes the fluidity of the process of archiving. Studying this dynamic process generates a dialogue between literary and artistic works as a creative response to the past. This thesis offers an analysis of archival use in fiction, and a consideration of what fictional and artistic engagement with the archive means in its double function of 'meditating' and 'mediating' between the past and the present. By situating my analysis of key texts alongside debates in postcolonial theory, anthropology and history, I advocate a multi-disciplinary approach to Caribbean literature that re-positions fiction as site of analysis. In doing, my thesis contributes to build on a wider breadth of research material within cultural studies and demonstrate how the archive is actually a dynamic institution. I hope to show how the archive functions as a driving force for each text's storyline. Despite the cross-medium literary and artistic case studies considered in this project, I represent the past as tightly knit in the present and to reveal this dynamic within contemporary creative practices. I argue that the best way to carry out this reconsideration is to create a dialogue, bringing together the archive, theory, literature

and art across disciplines and institutions. Assuming the ethical responsibility of listening to the silences of the past, contemporary writers and visual artists of Caribbean and African descent continue to engage with the past to reinterpret history and help construct a better future.

My dissertation does not break with previous thinking on the archive, nor does it aim to replicate what other scholars have already shared on the subject. It contributes to existing field of research on the archive by demonstrating progressively the dynamic metamorphosis of the archival process itself, from the past to the present. Taking into account these reflections and readings of original materials and of updated versions of the past, this study argues that the archive is a source and resource for Black heritage that deserves more attention. Precisely, how we engage with the archive immediately shapes our present.

## Chapter One

# A Theoretical Framework of the Archive in Contemporary Caribbean Literature and African Art

The purpose of this chapter, as indicated by its title, is to examine the theoretical framework of the “archive”. Conceptualized in the shape of a preamble, this chapter underlines the different conceptions and dimensions that previous studies have covered when dealing with the question at hand. The chapter does not aim to deconstruct previous studies or definitions, but it attempts to show how the concept of the archive itself can stimulate our thinking when related to ideas of the past, of memory, of visual art and of the transatlantic slave trade. Given the abundant offering of previous analysis of the archive, this chapter remains selective of sources that serve each chapter’s concerns. It is thereby an additional contribution to an already existing dialogue, as I propose more insights and knowledge that I believe to be useful in framing our understanding of the term itself.

The provocative approach that writers and artists of archival studies tend to take, demonstrates how the archive must be grasped as both complex and interdisciplinary. This innate complexity determines the impossibility of restricting studies of the “archive” to traditional frameworks. It seems worth noting that this study does not fully break from what has been said before on the matter of the archive. It maintains continuity with previous research in archival studies, and investigates this fluid process, which continues to be in flux. This chapter explores the question of literature and art and the way in which each discipline can reveal more of the archive. In so doing, the study honors the process of reviving archival documents so as to be creatively re-written, re-constructed, re-imagined and re-purposed.

This first chapter is divided into two sections: “Mining the Past” and “Caribbean Literature and the Atlantic Slave Trade” aims to introduce some of the ways in which the archive has been defined, examined, critiqued and reinvented by writers and artists from the early twentieth century to the present. I then historically situate the archive within disciplines

of philosophy, memory studies, literature and visual art. Certain key terms such as the “past”, the “archive”, and the “Transatlantic slave-trade” will be further investigated as interconnected with studies in Caribbean literature and visual art. This analysis operates as a preamble prior to analyzing the literary and artistic works under study. I will first set the stage for a discussion involving the aforementioned terms and criticism of scholars who have previously dealt with the archive. When addressing the Transatlantic slave trade, my initial focus will be reviewing literary and artistic creations. A dialogue is effectively created by this revival of archived contemporary modern literary and artistic reproduction as I stress the way these artistic creations have contributed to the making and representation of the archive itself.

## 1.1 Mining the Past

### 1.1.1 Reflections Around the Archive

The “archive” as a reference to institutions and records has controversially been seen by academics and other users as a passive resource to be exploited for various historical and cultural purposes. One of the defining features of the modern era has been the increasing importance attributed to the archive as the means by which historical knowledge and forms of remembrance are accumulated, stored, and recovered. Theoretically, the term archive will be examined progressively in relation to existing philosophical and theoretical studies. To begin, I suggest revisiting the philosophical and historical reflections that evolved around the archive. The archival debate was influenced by French Philosophers and historians such as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Paul Ricoeur among other philosophers and social scientists. They initiated broadly interdisciplinary conversations about the politics and hegemony of the archive in the production of historical knowledge. In his article “Archives, Documents, Traces” (1978), Paul Ricoeur defines the archive through its connection to “traces” and “eye witnessing testimony”, archives are constituted as gathered-together documents which are conserved thereafter. Nonetheless, these preserved documents are not free from erasure or destruction. Ricoeur refers to *Encyclopedia Britannica*’s assumption that conservation makes archives an “authorized deposit” (Ricoeur 67). Accordingly, this process of preserving is best explained in relation to notions of trace, testimony, that is as

documentary instruments in his insightful work *History, Memory, Forgetting* (2004). Paul Ricoeur defines “archive” as follows:

The moment of the entry into writing of the historiographical operation. Testimony is by origin oral. It is listened to, heard. The archive is written. It is read, consulted. In archives, the professional historian is a reader. Before the consulted or constituted archive, there is the archiving of things. This brings about a break in a continuous trajectory. Testimony, we have said, gives a narrative follow-up to declarative memory. Yet narrative can be detached from its narrator, as literary criticism informed by structuralism likes to emphasize. But this does not mean that the phenomenologist is left behind. Between the saying and the said of any utterance, a subtle gap opens that allows what is stated, the saying of what is said, to pursue what we can strictly speaking call a literary career. The employment of a told story, moreover, reinforces the semantic autonomy of a text, whose composition in the form of a work gives it the visibility of something written. (Ricoeur 166)<sup>13</sup>

It seems worth noting how the moment of writing crystallizes what before would have been primarily a “told story” and “oral history” into a kind of witness testimony. Ricoeur’s reflection on testimony raises the additional question, which is to what extent the “new documented story” remains faithful to the original story. In other words, the emphasis was put on the new reproduced institutional record or what Ricoeur calls above “the archiving of things”. Considering this process of historical transmission, Michel Foucault’s *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1979), extends the inquiry further to questioning memory. He argues that the transference of documents to historical storage favors a specific continuity of memory and disfavors revisionist historical documentation.

The term “archive” has also been approached from a psychoanalytic dimension. In his late work, “Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression”, Jacques Derrida develops his 1994 lecture to propose a psychoanalytic reading of the concept of the “archive”. The work was

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<sup>13</sup> Le moment de l'archive, c'est le moment de l'entrée en écriture de l'opération historiographique. Le témoignage est originellement oral; il est écouté, entendu. L'archive est écrite; elle est lue, consultée. Aux archives, l'historien de métier est un lecteur. Avant l'archive consultée, constituée, il y a la mise en archive-. Or celle-ci fait rupture sur un trajet de continuité. Le témoignage, a-t-on dit, donne une suite narrative à la mémoire déclarative. Or il appartient au récit de pouvoir être détaché de son narrateur, comme insiste à l'envi une critique littéraire frottée de structuralisme. Mais le phénoménologue n'est pas en reste : entre le dire et le dit de toute énonciation, un subtil écart se creuse qui permet à l'énoncé, au dit des choses dites, de poursuivre une carrière qu'on peut dire au sens strict littéraire. La mise en intrigue d'une histoire racontée vient en outre renforcer l'autonomie sémantique d'un texte à laquelle la composition en forme d'œuvre donne la visibilité de la chose écrite. (Michel Foucault, *La Mémoire, L'histoire, L'oubli*. Translated by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, 2004, p. 209.



first published in French in 1995, “Mal d’archive: une impression Freudienne”, and questions the archive in multiple ways: “as a word, as a place, and as a space where power emerges” (Derrida 9). Taking this approach, Derrida explains the duality rooted in the meaning of the term archive, emphasizing its temporality and spatiality as a place of “commencement” and as the place “where men and gods command” or the “place from which order is given” (Derrida 9). This fusion of topology and power, Derrida calls “archontic power” (in a signifying pun on the double meaning of the Greek word *arkhē*, which names at once “the commencement” and “the commandment” (Derrida 9), or origin and authority. In other words, this system of dominance functions in many ways. He remarkably demonstrates how the State can determine what is “archivable,” and what is deemed inefficient, or simply discarded. Derrida traces the development and establishment of state power that finds its authority in the archive and the knowledge that the archive functions to favor the state. The French philosopher explicitly confirms this:

there is no political power without control of the archive, if not memory. Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation. (Derrida 11)

Given the archive as a form of power, Derrida criticizes its assumed authority as authentic historical documents reflecting the truth and rejecting further criticism and interpretation. This interconnection embedded in the archive and power is best explored in Achille Mbembe’s “The Power of the Archive and Its Limits” (2002) in which he examines how the archive is primarily “the product of a judgment, the result of the exercise of a specific supremacy and authority, which involves placing certain documents in an archive at the same time as others are discarded” (Mbembe 20). As a historian and political theorist, Achille connects the archive to notions of authority and state control that he emphasizes as political power. The archive functions always “outside its own materiality, in the story that it makes possible” (Mbembe 21). If its function is to provide evidence yet all data cannot be integrated into it, then there is an inevitable limit to the variety of narratives it can allow. The trace of life will rather be a “debris” in the words of Mbembe (21), a fragment defined by loss as much as by survival. A form of violence will be indissociable from the archive; the violence of the process of selection and exclusion, comparable in many ways to repression in both social and psychoanalytical terms; the violence of death, which constitutes the archive as a testimony from the past; the entropic menace of time, threatening to disperse or destroy the archival *corpus*; and finally, a desire to destroy the archive, which might stem from a political will to

cover one's traces. Like the end of apartheid in South Africa, or, according to Derrida, the willed aggression of the Freudian death drive, whose special refinement is that it endeavors to erase the very traces of its acts of erasure; "the death drive is above all *anarchivic*, one could say, or *archiviolithic*. It will always have been archive — destroying, by silent vocation" (Derrida 10).

Furthermore, the complexity of the archive evolves around other key concepts as the past which is also reappraised, reinterpreted, and rewritten. In light of Derrida's insights, the archive becomes the space from which the past commences, despite the past contained in the archive as incomplete, the archive can only hold certain traces of certain aspects of the past. Derrida's reflection on the archive helps to illustrate the concept of the archive as an 'incomplete' institution that allows contemporary writers and artists to 'complete' the past by creating a new discourse. The archive, according to Derrida, does not stand to be simply a material place where knowledge is stored, but it is rather a general feature of our mental lives. This aspect can also be examined through the work of Sigmund Freud. All human beings suffer from "mal d'archive", from "archive fever" or an archive sickness, which is the compulsion towards archiving. Derrida uses the psychoanalytic topography of consciousness and the unconscious in order to demonstrate his argument that even psychoanalysis is an archival practice as much as an archaeological excavation of repressed memory. He sees the unconscious as an archive that is established by the "archive drive".

It is illuminating to situate Derrida's considerations of archive drive and archive fever as reproductions of real and material archives. It reintroduces the role of archival science in a post-modern world in the debate around the archive and challenges archivists everywhere to rethink their discipline and practice. In his study "Archival Science and Postmodernism: new formulations for old concepts" (2001), Terry Cook suggests connections between the nature of postmodernism and archival science outlining two broad moves in archival thinking that support a paradigm shift. Terry Cook formulates this archival science as: "A profession rooted in nineteenth century positivism, let alone in earlier diplomatic, may now be adhering to concepts, and thus resulting strategies and methodologies, that are no longer operational in a postmodern and computerized world" (Cook 3). Cook states above that this paradigm shift steps away from viewing archival records as static physical objects or passive products of human or administrative procedures. His statement implies such records now as having radical consequences for the human self-image of archivists. They are no longer the passive protectors of an inherited legacy. They are now perceived, as Cook argues, "active agents

who shape cultural and social memory” (Cook 4). Although archivists may have restrained the archive as a neutral, even objective accumulation of information, they have now become cultural analysts, viewing the archive not just as a storage of information but as a source of knowledge and power essential for social and personal identity. Drawing on such insights, this study aims at demonstrating the different reproductions created out of such transmission from historical records, legal cases, journals, paintings to new fictional and artistic discourses. This process of transmission also echoes an ongoing linear movement of production from the past to the present.

In this conceptualisation, the process of archiving shapes the event as much as it records it. Derrida explains how the technical structure of the archiving also determines the structure of the archivable content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future. According to Derrida, the archiving “produces as much as it records the event” (Derrida 17). In response to Derrida and Ricoeur’s discussion of the archive, Michel Foucault’s *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1979) broadens traditional conceptions of what constitutes an archive by revealing how the archive operates through various public discourses. This approach continues to influence contemporary critical discourse. Foucault defines the archive in its first instance as a discursive regulatory tool that delineates what can and cannot be contained within its boundaries. In his definition, Foucault identifies the importance of every archive’s internal order and outlines how a particular rationale of classification and arrangement regardless of the difference in every case still governs it:

The archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass, nor are they inscribed in an unbroken linearity, nor do they disappear at the mercy of chance external accidents; but they are grouped together in distinct figures, composed together in accordance with multiple relation, maintained or blurred in accordance with multiple regulations. (Foucault 129)<sup>14</sup>

The archive is not what despite its immediate escape, safeguards the event of the statement, and preserves for future memories, its status as an escape; it is that which, at the very root of the statement-event, and in that which embodies it, defines at the outset *the system of enunciability*... it is that

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<sup>14</sup> “L’archive, c’est aussi qui fait que toutes ces choses dites ne s’amuse pas indéfiniment dans une multitude amorphe, ne s’inscrivent pas non plus dans une linéarité sans rupture, et ne disparaissent pas au seul hasard d’accidents externes; mais qu’elles se groupent en figures distinctes, se composent les unes avec les autres selon des rapports multiples, se maintiennent où s’estompent selon des régularités spécifiques”. *Ibid.*, p.170.

which defines the mode of occurrence of the statement-thing, it is *the system of its functioning*. (Foucault 129)<sup>15</sup>

Michel Foucault's approach of the archive and power is explicitly exposed in his reflection on the archive that does not simply represent an institution, nor a physical material place where papers and records are stored as in libraries and museums, but rather "the law of what can be said"<sup>16</sup> (Foucault 145). Therefore, the archive evokes a set of discursive rules and provides a system that ensures that things said become composed together in accordance with multiple relations and additionally regulated. In the statements above, Foucault underscores how the archive reveals the rules of a practice that enable statements to both survive and to undergo a system of transformation. Given Foucault's definition and insights on the archive, this present study fits perfectly with this process of transformation since the texts and artworks under investigation meet this paradigm of alteration not only in the form but also in the content. Similarly, this transformative potential inscribed within the archive itself assists in the vindication of its power. Yet, this current discourse seems to be suggestive of a shift that emphasizes process instead of product, function instead of structure, and archiving instead of archives.

As our theoretical framework of the archive unfolds, more recent studies are developed to think of it from other scopes that meet with its constant evolution and new practices. Ann Laura Stoler explains in her article "Colonial archives and the arts of governance" (2002), that within the making of cultural theory,

[T]he archive has a capital 'A' is figurative and leads elsewhere. It may represent neither a material site nor a set of documents. Rather, it may serve as a strong metaphor for any corpus of selective forgetting and collections and, as importantly, for "the seductions and longings that such quests for, and accumulations of, the primary, originary, and untouched entail. (Stoler 94)

Stoler's position depicts the archive as a tool of remembrance for the neglected forgotten documents that may be and intentionally left untold to save the position of the legacy of white people and urge us to forget traumatic memory that Black people had experienced during

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<sup>15</sup> "L'archive, ce n'est pas ce qui sauvegarde, malgré sa fuite immédiate, l'événement de l'énoncé et conserve, pour les mémoires futures, son état civil d'évadé; c'est ce qui, à la racine même de l'énoncé-événement, et dans le corps où il se donne, définit d'entrée de jeu le système de son énonçabilité". Michel, Foucault, *L'archéologie du Savoir*, Gallimard, 1969, p.170.

<sup>16</sup> "L'archive, c'est d'abord la loi de ce qui peut être dit". *Ibid.*, p.170.

slavery. This idea echoes what James Lowry calls the “displaced archives”<sup>17</sup> which is a term he used to designate “any records that have been removed from the context of their creation and where the ownership of the records is disrupted” (Lowry 2). Lowry suggests a theory for displaced archives that would be critical in its aim to explain injustices in cases of archival displacement, posit practical goals for their resolution, and provide a set of norms for achieving those aims. This theory, Lowry claims, affects a larger human imaginary and possibilities of radical empathy (Lowry 198).

Projecting a new configuration of the archive and power, the term “displaced archives” brings to mind “The Windrush scandal”, that I believe might be relevant in terms of our discussion on the archive and the political power engendered by the current state politics. This scandal appears to be an illustration of the impact of government policy on the people affected by new legislative laws. The “Windrush” generation refers to West Indian immigrants who came to the United Kingdom between 1948 and 1973. The term also refers to the ship MV Empire Windrush, which docked in Tilbury on 22 June 1948, bringing workers from Jamaica, Trinidad, and Tobago, Barbados, among other islands, to help mitigate a post-war UK labor shortage. Despite living and working in the United Kingdom for decades, many people of Caribbean descent who came on a British passport, were told they were residing in the UK illegally due to a lack of ‘official paperwork’. Under the 1971 Immigration Act, all Commonwealth citizens already living in Britain were given indefinite leave to remain. However, the home office ‘did not keep a record’ of those granted leave to remain or issue any paperwork confirming it, meaning it is difficult for the individuals to now prove they are in the United Kingdom legally.

In line with the archival debate this chapter seeks to explore in terms of the interconnection of the archive and power, I intentionally highlighted the words ‘official paperwork’, ‘did not keep a record’ due to their relevance to the archive process. To rephrase the question, how can political interests ‘erase’ and ‘remove’ official documents provided by it to later decide to retrieve or perhaps alter it? Again, this dichotomy entails to what extent records and documents may affect one’s identity, life, and future. In Wendy Williams’s independent review *Windrush Lessons Learned*, published on March 2020, she further explains the key lessons behind the Windrush scandal, particularly from 2008 to March 2018. Williams has accessed the stories of injustice experienced by immigrants, ‘legally identified

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<sup>17</sup> James Lowry. *Displaced Archives*, Routledge, 2017.

as British citizens', who abruptly lost their jobs and lives due to legal policies made regarding their documents and records which are 'erased' by the British system. In terms of this study, this Windrush scandal seems of great relevance since it underscores political power of the British government to implement harsh regulations on Blacks and appalling treatment to the "Windrush-era citizens"<sup>18</sup>, who came to build the country after the Second World War.

In the context of the Windrush generation's debate, Charlotte Taylor examines in her article "Representing the Windrush generation: metaphor in discourses then and now" (2018), how the British government has repeatedly positioned them as: "'good' migrants and placed them in binary opposition with 'undesirable' migrants, whom they cite as 'the intended target of their policy' (Taylor 7). Likewise, using historical parliamentary debates and national media, Taylor compares this contemporary rhetoric with Windrush representations in the 1940s and 1950s and contemporary representation of those the government constructs as unwanted migrants. Taylor also states that there is very little continuity in how the Windrush migrants were discussed at the time of their arrival and in the current period. Instead, there is a much greater proximity between the past representations of the Windrush migrants and the current representations of "undesirable" migrants.

Likewise, Amelia Gentleman's article "Perspectives on the Windrush generation scandal: an account by Amelia Gentleman" (2018), reveals different immigrants' cases who lost their jobs and rights to stay in the country because of missing records about their status as legal residents in England. Gentleman depicts the ignorance and careless home office reaction over such scandal claiming they were unaware of certain cases. As stated earlier, following the outcomes of this scandal, one can think of the extent to which political power can shape one's identity and deconstruct it at the same time. Because of the lack of records, the British state has taken severe humiliating procedures to force the Caribbean citizens to leave the country and impacted their faith towards the state as Gentleman has reported what Trevor Johnson, impacted by the system, has mentioned: "I loved living here, but I have lost faith in this country" (Gentleman 3).

This idea of hegemony and the archive is best illustrated by Jean Fisher's reflections on this field that he further underlines in his article "Diaspora, Trauma and the Poetics of Remembrance" (2008), stating how the archive is,

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<sup>18</sup> Wendy Williams has included an apology statement by Home Secretary Amber Rudd published in the Guardian newspaper on 16 April 2018, of which the title is "Amber Rudd "Sorry" for appalling treatment of Windrush-era citizens, p. 23.

open to the abuse of institutional concealment, disavowal or willful amnesia, to a blurring of the boundaries between historiography and mythography and hence a potential ideological weapon by which the place of power obliterates the experience of the marginal". (Fisher 204)

The power emanates in this act of "suppression" and abuse may also lead to the idea of a selective recording process, in which the state decides what is important to be kept and what should be destroyed. In the same vein, in her study "Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance: On the Content in the Form" (2002), Ann Laura Stoler, a historian and anthropologist, indicates how in the context of the colonial archives such "codes of concealment were the fetishized features of the state itself" (Stoler 98). In other words, the state reproduces classified and selected records to be revealed to the public knowledge meanwhile destroying all secrets and confidential documents that could harm the state's power. Seeking with this notion of fabrication of representations of historical reality.<sup>19</sup> In the same vein, in her article "The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives" (1985), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak exposes the inconsistencies of British records and empirical language. She refers to examples of letters in which certain passages including subalterns in military training, who were supposed to serve with regular troops in native governments, were omitted and altered by other texts. These omissions, according to Spivak, prove how the empirical project imposes legal sentences in the case of disapprobation. Importantly, this notion of omission and selection can lead us to reflect upon the "materiality" of the archive, that Lowry associates with the displaced archives and further raise the following questions:

What value does the data have, and what value the records? When what constitutes the original is unclear, does, or could, or should that change the perception of the adequacy of copies in settling disputes? ...Could new thinking about materiality and affect in archives reinforce the symbolic power of the originals, as artefacts of unique and significant value? (Lowry 9)

This process of the archive resonates with key terms as "selective" and "forgetting", most radically demonstrated by the destruction of records in the case of the Windrush generation, all to which revisit questions of 'power', 'the government' and 'commandment' but also remarkably the process of "anachronism". The way we read archival records and documents written in the past does not imply the same perspective and value in the present. As defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term "anachronism" indicates "something placed in the

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<sup>19</sup> This phrase derives from Gayatri Chakravorty concern in her essay "The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives", which was taken by closed critics as "historical realism", p. 271.

wrong period in history or something that belongs to the past rather than the present”<sup>20</sup>. I employ the term here to demonstrate how the practice of reading and implementing these archival documents in a contemporary literature raises the question of this “archival return”: why do contemporary writers re-visit and use these documents today? Are there any political motivations behind this practice?

The dynamics of the “Western archive”, understood as the discursive operations and politics that regulate and dominate hegemonic discourse are rooted in the formation of actual physical archives which consequently follow ordering and re-structuring mechanisms that condition their interpretation, access and circulation. In their study, “The Making of Memory: The Politics of Archives, Libraries and Museums in the Construction of National Consciousness” (1998), Richard Harvey Brown and Beth Davis-Brown define a national archive as “the storing and ordering place of the collective memory of that nation or people” (Brown and Davis-Brown 3). This assumption further interrogates the ideological and political dimensions of archival processes. Building on the principal of selective knowledge and state power, Thomas Richard discusses in *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (1993), how the archive paradoxically operates as a “Utopian” space of comprehensive knowledge not a building, nor even a collection of texts, but the collectively imagined junction of all that was known or knowable and seeks to demonstrate how the imperial archive was a fantasy of knowledge collected and united in the service of state and empire” (Schwartz and Cook 4).

In this debate around the framework of the archive, it is important to add how the term has been described differently as Marlene Manoff’s essay “Theories of the Archives from Across the Disciplines” (2004) has revealed. Manoff offers an exploration and overview of the archival discourse through exploring the ambiguity and complexity of the archive. When investigating these questions, she has mentioned the different connotations given to the archive as a “postcolonial archive”<sup>21</sup>, “the popular archive”<sup>22</sup>, and “the liberal archive”<sup>23</sup> among others. This study suggests yet another definition or depiction of the archive as “the

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<sup>20</sup> The term “anachronism” refers to “something that is placed, for example in a book or play, in the wrong period of history; the fact of placing something in the wrong period of history. In this context, I use the term metaphorically to speak about the way we read the colonial archive in today’s era and context. <https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=anachronism>.

<sup>21</sup> “Postcolonial archive” discussed in Sandhya Shetty and Elizabeth Jane Bellamy, “Postcolonialism’s Archive Fever,” *Diacritics* 30. 1, 2000, p. 25–48.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Lynch, “Archives in Formation: Privileged Spaces, Popular Archives and Paper Trails,” *History of the Human Sciences*, 12. 2, 1999, 65–87.

<sup>23</sup> Patrick Joyce, “The Politics of the Liberal Archive,” *History of the Human Sciences* 12. 2, 1999, 35–49.



transforming archive”. In terms of archival study, the section does not aim to cover all theories and discussions around the archive, rather focus on key elements that will be further emphasized through analyzing the fictional and artistic works. Equally important, the chapter seeks to cover other areas as the intersections of memory, history, and the past in the spirit of archival change. While these terms may initially appear to be synonymous, previous historical and cultural debates have demonstrated their true nuance when referring to the archive. In the next section of this preliminary chapter, I aim to highlight the way in which the archive not only challenges our knowledge about history and the past but also articulates with memory.

### 1.1.2 The Archival Return: History/Memory/The Past

This section introduces the major theorists who provide the theoretical groundwork for understanding the different contemporary reproductions of the past and memory inscribed in the corpus. Most of the writers and artists I analyze evolve around memory and historical injustices that took place in the past. The idea of the archive as something which enables us to transition from memory to history has been well studied in Pierre Nora’s *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de mémoire* (1989), in which he asserts that histories are the discursive representations of what historians believe to be objective, whereas memory represents actual subjectivism. Considering this, should we consider fiction to be a form of historical reparation against all sorts of memory loss and erosion? The following lines of Pierre Nora’s reflection on memory and history further encapsulate the significance of bringing it up here:

Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer (Nora 9).

Nora believes that memory is a phenomenon that is always present, a link that connects us to the eternal present; history is how the past is shown. To put it differently, memory flourishes in the substantial, in spaces, motions, pictures, and articles, while history ties itself stringently to worldly coherencies, movements, and relations between things: history, on the other hand, can only conceive the relative, whereas memory is absolute. Similarly significant, in the same study, Nora argues that modern memory is, most importantly, authentic since it depends

completely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, and the perceivability of the image. What started as writing closes as high fidelity and copying.

The less memory is experienced from within, Nora argues, the more it exists just through its “exterior scaffolding and outward signs-hence the obsession with the archive that marks our age, attempting at once the complete conservation of the present as well as the total preservation of the past” (Nora 13). Accordingly, Black British writers and artists in this study often share a concern of remembering the silent past and bringing out the uncovered traces of slavery in their works. Nora’s reflections on memory can, furthermore, furnish us with a critical framework that makes it possible to study the way these writers and artists continue to commemorate the past in the present with a futuristic perspective. Even if certain memory were erased and disappeared, Nora claims there is a constant necessity to collect the remains, testimonies, documents and visible signs of what has been as if these up-and-coming memories are to be called upon as testimony in some tribunal of history:

The sacred is invested in the trace that is at the same time its negation. It becomes impossible to predict what should be remembered-hence the disinclination to destroy anything that leads to the corresponding reinforcement of all the institutions of memory. A strange role reversal has occurred between the professional, once reproached for an obsession with conservation, and the amateur producer of archives. Today, private enterprise and public administration keep everything, while professional archivists have learned that the essence of their trade is the art of controlled destruction (Nora 14).

The past can always be resuscitated by an effort of remembering; indeed, the present itself becomes a sort of recycled, updated past, realized through such welding and anchoring. This reminds us of David Dabydeen’s *A Harlot’s Progress* (1999), a novel that relies on William Hogarth’s paintings in which the British-Guyanese writer opens history to fictional interpretations raising concerns that are mostly related to the Black image between then and now, past and present. Concerning the Black identity, Dabydeen’s study *Hogarth’s Blacks: Images of Blacks in Eighteenth Century English Art* (1985) shows how Hogarth’s artistic vision reflects:

a society scarred by commercialism, the money that replaces human relationships. The upper classes, exposing their seedy sexual vices and inadequacies, their central fraudulence, and their brutal economic abuse of common people. (Dabydeen 11)

This textual and visual refiguration of the past resonates with what Pierre Nora refers to as “the mechanism of memory”. Precisely, the connection to the past is formed by a subtle game between its intractability and disappearance. This presents the question of representation—in the original sense of the word—that differs from an old idea of bringing the past back to life. According to Nora, the possibility of revival or ‘resurrection’ necessitates a “hierarchy of memory, ordering the perspective of the past beneath the gaze of a static present” (Nora 16).

Representing the past through the archive proceeds by strategic highlighting, selecting samples, and multiplying examples and this study attempts to interrogate how can these writers and artists manage to fill the fragments and gaps already represented in the past. Their treatment and dependence on archival materials seems different from one writer to another, which additionally asks to what extent the contemporary writers discussed in this text depend upon the existent sources. The demanded reliance on the original sources provokes insecurities of “authenticity” and “coherence” as these sources insist on histories and documentations disproportionately represented by white masters.

The correlation between memory and history is heavily influenced by the archive, in particular aspects of “truth” and “knowledge” when mining the past records and reinscribing them into fictional and artistic reproductions. In this matter of “authenticity” in the archival records, Carolyn Steedman’s *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (2002) contradicts the archive to be a source of truth, as known, and points out that the archive embodies stories that historians deploy to construct meaning out of the dust of people’s lives. Steedman makes it clear that it is impossible to study the archive by referring to Derrida discussing Freud since she believes “the archive is not very much like human memory, and is not at all like the unconscious mind” (Steedman 68). Rather, Steedman argues the archive is,

made from selected and consciously chosen documentation from the past and also from the mad fragmentations that no one intended to preserve and that just ended up there [...] *And nothing happens to this stuff, in the archive.* It is indexed, and catalogued, and some of it is not indexed and catalogued, and some of it is lost. But as stuff, it just sits there until it is read, and used, and narrativised. In the Archive, you cannot be shocked at its exclusions, its emptiness, at what is not catalogued ... Its condition of being deflects outrage: in its quiet folders and bundles is the neatest demonstration of how state power has operated, through ledgers and lists and indictments, and through what is missing from them. (Steedman 68)

Steedman’s above statement indicates how an archive is grasped as a place of longing and appropriation. It is not only a process of putting things together in lists and indices but also a

place where a social order may be reimagined, she examines this possibility when she writes: “the recurrence of a name in a register, through a scrap of paper, or some other little piece of flotsam” (Steedman 76). The archive becomes, in the words of Steedman, a concrete space where those involved with historical disciplines engage material objects. As stated in her statement above, there is a necessity for the archive to be “used” and “narrativized” to become more engaging and to fill these “quiet folders” so as to reassert its power. In line with this idea of ‘reusing’ the archive, this thesis aims to show that the archive is a dynamic modern space where writers, poets, and artists frequently engage in conversation with memory, objects, paintings, and stories to remember the past differently and to challenge our knowledge of it. Certainly, the allure behind such a concern on the archive stems as well is this contact with objects that have survived to bear witness to the nature of the past. Lubaina Himid’s art works is a great illustration to reflect on this immersion of the artist’s interests with resurfaced materials and objects to rebuild archival material. Himid’s artistic approaches will be analyzed in-depth in Chapters Four and Five.

Advocating that the process of creating an archive is not a random, neutral documentation but rather an intentional selection of documents and records, Steedman urges to be less concerned with history as “stuff” (Steedman 68). Conversely, she argues “we must put to one side the content of any particular piece of historical writing, and the historical information it imparts and think of the archive as a process, as ideation, imagining, and remembering” (Steedman 68). In line with this fusion between the past and the present, Steedman describes such practice as “a striking reversal of the general impulse of modernity, to turn space into place, and to find a home in the world by literature and other means” (Steedman 78). The archive then becomes, as a result of the cultural activity of history, a site of potential for memory’s prospective space. Drawing on Steedman insights and reflections on the archive as a process, the thesis interrogates the techniques and devices deployed to narrate, imagine, and visualize the records and texts from the past. The purpose lies also in this notion of challenging the accuracy of historical document at times, as in the case of Philip’s *Zong!*. Previously invoked in the introduction, the legal archival discourse of the *Zong* murder has been deconstructed by the new textual and visual discourses the poem has exposed in a combined version, where the archive still visualized only in the words, suggesting a subversive vision of history. This new vision responds to the historical silence and injustice of its initial representation. Chapter Four is thereby devoted to reexamining Philip’s new deconstructive approach explicitly through language, form, and structure.

Furthermore, the recent scholarly focus on the archive continues to engage with recovering silenced memory, for instance, in *Refiguring the Archive* (2002), Carolyn Hamilton examines the different types of archives that can unearth histories previously silenced by Apartheid in South Africa. Seeking to clarify our understating on the archival discourse, Steedman shifts the focus to the reproduction of knowledge and in particular how knowledge of the past has been produced and the way records are altered over time. She considers that the immediate accessibility of documents and oral records can be found in alternatives in literature, landscapes, dance, and others. Steedman thereby assumes possibilities of omission, and seeks to recover knowledge about the past. Hamilton's invitation for alternatives resonates with the focus of this text also seeks alternatives in fictional texts and artistic creations. Considering these alternatives as ways to rewrite the past, in his study *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language* (1983), Dominick LaCapra argues how reading the archive, that he refers to as "the documentary" can be explored by reading "alternative possibilities." LaCapra further claims that these possibilities "arise in texts especially at their most intense moments of inner difference and self-contestation-moments that engage the reader in self-questioning that has a bearing on the present and future" (LaCapra 18).

My thesis considers how writers and artists often reproduce history without direct reference to the archive; rather discover records and documents that allow for a 'different' and 'innovative' version of the past. The possibility of difference is approached by LaCapra as "an ongoing process" that "may take at least small difference onto pure oppositions" (LaCapra 18). Such a constant production of rewriting reveals, according to LaCapra, "how the past is not simply a finished story to be narrated but a process" (LaCapra 18). It may be argued here that the fictional and artistic reproductions of the archive under my study maintain the ongoing process of narrating the past.

The idea of 'Mining' the trauma inscribed in the legacies of slavery constitutes a challenge to various fields of contemporary research and practice. For instance, the transatlantic slave trade may belong to the past to the extent that people directly and personally victimized are no longer living as contemporary witnesses. Despite this, collective memory is remains vivid and informs present discourses on racism, colonialism, restitution, and globalization. This idea of persistently remembering the past brings back what Friedrich Nietzsche calls "historical consciousness". In his essay "On the Use and Abuse of History for Life" (1874), Nietzsche suggests a new dimension to our current concern on the archive and

the past. We are associated with and asserted by the past toward which we continually wind up answering, not exclusively to *what* has been, yet to *who* has been. Frederick Nietzsche describes this act of returning to the past as a “historical life” that he further explained below:

We will call these the historical people. The glance into the past pushes them into the future, fires their spirit to take up life for a longer time yet, kindles the hope that justice may still come and that happiness may sit behind the mountain towards which they are walking. These historical people believe that the meaning of existence will come increasingly to light in the course of its process. Therefore, they look backwards only to understand the present by considering previous process and to learn to desire the future more keenly. In spite of all their history, they do not understand at all how unhistorically they think and act and also how their concern with history stands, not in service to pure knowledge, but to living. (Nietzsche 5-6)

Nietzsche’s past is presented as essential to the construction of a future, for looking back suggests a multiplicity and uniqueness of every historical event that illuminates a larger pattern. This pattern can be subverted through creative representations and engagements with history so as to go beyond it, towards the future. The possibility of a self is here tied to the continued preservation of artifacts and a *domicile* that together constitute the spirit of collective belonging to this particular place. Nietzsche depicts the crucial return to the past in the metaphor of a peaceful tree that strives to acknowledge its roots as part of its existence:

The sense of well-being of a tree for its roots, the happiness to know oneself in a manner not entirely arbitrary and accidental, but as someone who has grown out of a past, as an heir, flower, fruit, and thus to have one’s existence excused, indeed justified, this is what people nowadays lovingly describe as the real historical sense (Nietzsche 11).

Here, Nietzsche examines the past as a way to read how history is both activated and reappropriated in the present to construct a future. My chosen title for this section ‘Mining’ conveys the process of digging into history to extract memory and experiences to be reconstituted in the future. To this end, amnesia of ‘what happened’ is quite essential for a creative future vision, which is one of the main interests of the writers and artists central to my study.

In contrast to Nietzsche’s impulse of going back to the past, recent studies of the archive have proposed a framework of a dialogue. Ann Laura Stoler’s essay “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance: On the Content in the Form” (2002), considers the idea that the colonial order of things is seen through its archival productions. She further

emphasizes the politics of knowledge within archival genres, cultures of documentations, fictions of access, and archival conventions. In her study stated earlier *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Sense* (2010), Ann Laura Stoler, examines the colonial archive in official nineteenth and twentieth century Dutch colonial documents. She argues how archives are “sites of perturbation” and records of “uncertainty and doubt, narratives of what might have been or what might still yet be” (Stoler 6). Colonial authority underscored in these official records, Stoler declares, “does not convey any sense of transparency regardless of its accessibility to public” (Stoler 6).

In accordance with what has been said on memory and the past, it is fundamental to live with memory and a historical consciousness. However, historical consciousness assumes the ability to leave behind and to forget, since all acting requires forgetting. The promise of the past, as articulated by Jacques Derrida, thereby attributes the archive to the possibility of a future, that which is: “a response, of a promise, and of a responsibility for tomorrow” (Derrida 36). Pursuing the question of what is past, in a 2001 interview with Kwame Dawes, when asked about his poem *Turner*, David Dabydeen quite explicitly reveals his connection with the past: “*Turner* is a great howl of pessimism about the inability to recover anything meaningful from the past, but it’s a kind of howl that is also a release into the future” (Dawes 197). Dabydeen’s response shows the futuristic dimension of a constant remembering of the past, thus refusing all forms of forgetting. In keeping with remembering and forgetting, in his article “Forgetting to Remember, Remembering to Forget: Late Modern Heritage Practices, Sustainability and the Crisis of Accumulation of the Past” (2012), Rodney Harrison argues:

The process of forgetting is in fact integral to remembering that one properly form new memories and attach values to them without also selecting some things to forget. Remembering is an active process of cultivating and pruning, and not one of complete archiving and total recall and cause us to be unable to make confident decisions about which memories are valuable and which are not? (Harrison 580)

This very process of forgetting reveals fact as integral to recollection, which implies that one cannot properly form new memory and attach value to them without likewise selecting some traces to forget. Harrison claims that this risk is equally true of heritage, and that as a result of the increasingly broad definition of heritage in the contemporary world, we can be overwhelmed by memory, consequently rendering all heritages as ineffective as they are worthless. Harrison considers sustainability as an example of this overwhelm. Within the subject of cultural heritage, we are prompted to question the endurance of various material

heritages, the viability of the pasts within the heritages we choose to preserve. Both practice and the precision of language became consequently essential in the articulation of identity.

Harrison's claim of invisible or intangible practices of heritage embodied in language, culture, popular song, and literature, are thereby of equal significance in the understanding of collective identity. The term *heritage* is often defined differently. To illustrate, the *Oxford English Dictionary*<sup>24</sup> provides a definition of "any property, and especially land, which devolves by right of inheritance". Other appropriations derived from this term reflect variety other meanings: "something that is passed down from preceding generations; a tradition, the status acquired by a person through birth; a birthright: a heritage of affluence and social position"<sup>25</sup>. All these phrases allude to notions of tradition, inheritance, culture, existence, and transition, which meet with my study's interrogation of the politics of archive. However, as a noun, the "archive" is defined as "a historical record or document preserved. As an adjective, it means, "to place or store in an archive; in computing, to transfer to a store containing infrequently used files"<sup>26</sup>.

The semantic fields of these two words considerably overlap. Both "heritage" and "archive" interconnect in their processes of recording and creative complicity, as the archival records become heritage itself. Drawing on such definitions, it may be argued that the archival records used by the writers and artists under my study meet this definition of "heritage" with transgression, in this process of transformation as an entity, paving the way to the emergence of other alternatives. In *Troubled Legacies: Heritage/Inheritance in American Minority Literatures* (2015), Michel Feith and Claudine Raynaud illustrate a similar transmission between heritage and inheritance focusing mostly on the difference between "heritage" and "inheritance" which generates a creative process of transmission:

It is only when they are paired in creative tension [...] the process of *différence* widens the gap between the two terms. Inheritance for our purposes will shift towards the passive voice: it will be the shaping determination of transmission and things transmitted; whereas heritage will rather represent the traditions claimed and transformed by the subject or community into materials for their self-definition. Together they represent what is passed down, willy-nilly, from the past, which rarely amounts to the whole of the past. (Feith and Raynaud 2)

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=HERITAGE>.

<sup>25</sup> To better illustrate the term, I have also used other appropriate definitions found in other sources: <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/heritage>.

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.oed.com/search/advanced/Entries?q=archive&sortOption=Frequency>.



The question of interconnecting heritage and inheritance to foreground a shifting transmission process can be aligned with the purpose of this research in terms of thinking of the archival process as a ‘source’ and ‘resource’. Nonetheless, as regards the concept of “heritage”, Harrison categorizes the term heritage into two shades: “the physical heritage” and “the practices of heritage”. My research concerns the latter, for its correlation with language, art, music, community commemorations and preservation of memory. Additionally, another aspect of these practices of heritage is how we preserve things that Harrison sets in the following lines:

The choices we make about what to conserve from the past and what to discard: which memories to keep, and which to forget; which memorials to maintain, and which to allow to be demolished; which buildings to save, and which ones to allow to bit build over. (Harrison 9)

Moving forward with this question, heritage can be articulated as “cultural heritage” (those things manufactured by humans), and “natural heritage”, (those which have not been manufactured by humans) (Harrison 11). Drawing on Harrison’s theory, inheriting the past brings to mind legacies of slavery, which are burdened by a combination of individual and collective trauma in line with what Harrison refers to as an active interrelationship between people, places, and things. Following these insights, my research emphasizes the archive’s dialogical aspect by examining how the various artistic and textual works interact with one another. To offer a new discourse, I would like to follow in Harrison’s footsteps and stress the archive’s creative and transformative reproduction. Harrison’s *Understanding the Politics of Heritage* (2010) demonstrates how the present is shaped by the past and focuses on heritage as a governing instrument:

which explores how “government have used documentary heritage, drawing on case studies of the use of national archives as an arm of government, with particular emphasis on the UK and the Republic of Ireland, and the use of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by the government of South Africa. The aim of the examples is to offer a critical view of the stated purposes and functioning of the institutions that guard documentary heritage on behalf of governments. They show that governments’ use of heritage can be controversial, contradictory and inconsistent, and that governments may regard the destruction or neglect of the materials of the past as advantageous. (Harrison 3)

What if, given the unpredictability of the archive and its tendency of re-traumatizing its readers, engaging with it threatens the continuity of remembered identities rather than helping? What if identity can only be reconstituted from imposed amnesia, from selective

remembering, and consequently misremembering of experience? The possibility of narrating History is thereby at stake. In *The Writing of History (L'écriture de l'histoire)* (1975), Michel De Certeau combines standards from the disciplines of religion, history, and psychoanalysis to redefine historiography and rethink the categories of history. According to De Certeau, the past is not unchangeable rather always transforming, thus traces of the past cannot be ignored.

The staging of the past through historiography, De Certeau argues, can be compared with the work of a museum guide. On the one hand, the guide organizes the paintings on the wall; he/she relates a story about them, following a set route that connects all of the pictures. On the other hand, the guide cannot speak definitively. Just as unique particulars arise in historiographic texts, the museum guide must also refer to what he/she cannot fully describe in words: the picture itself. The museum guide and the pictures are thereby dependent on each other: the picture maintains meaning through the story that the museum guide tells of it, while the museum guide cannot tell the story of the picture without its visibility. The museum guide, like the historian, must show so as to tell.

Taken together, the concept of the archive offers a fusion with the past and with history that highlight an ongoing process of a 'repurposed' archive to serve present issues of Black identity. To rephrase, the novels and artworks under study can be understood as platforms to revive the textual and visual archive that which accentuate the dynamics behind such archival processes. In the following section, I will examine central concerns relating to archiving so as to clarify their historical context. Reconsidering categories such as "Caribbean literature", "the Atlantic slave trade", and "visual arts" can aid in a broader perception of the politics of archival return. I specifically consider the reconfiguration of history in contemporary literature and visual art among Black British writers and artists.

## 1.2 Caribbean Literature and The Transatlantic Slave Trade

If poetry is an attempt to reunite what was splintered, the study of literatures is a second effort, a meta-attempt, to assemble, discover, or confront the creations produced in the most disparate and dispersed places and moments: the one and the many. (Bonfiglio 150)

Defining concepts such as “Caribbean culture” and “Caribbean literature” seems challenging, as it is impossible to delineate the precise boundaries of the Caribbean. Such a task would consider physical geography, socioeconomic, linguistic, ethnological, historical, and thematic data. Borrowing from the Caribbean writer Edward Kamau Brathwaite, Caribbean literature can be defined as literary works of the Caribbean area written in Spanish, French, or English. The literature of the Caribbean has no indigenous tradition. Rather the tradition began in the 1920s when a distinctive literary form became widely accepted and practiced. Visible in Anglophone writing from the area, Caribbean literature has evolved as a network of themes such as slavery, history, identity, memory, roots, and trauma. While representing history preoccupies many written works, the general approach to confronting slavery varies immensely. In this section, I make room for British Black writers and artists under this study to further define their Black identities and Caribbean roots.

In *A Reader’s Guide to West Indian and Black British Literature* (1988), David Dabydeen and Nana Wilson-Tagoe, define Black British literature as “created and published in Britain, largely for a British audience, by Black writers born in Britain or who have spent a major portion of their lives in Britain” (Dabydeen and Wilson-Tagoe 10). In his essay “On Not Being Milton: Nigger Talk in England (1990), published in *Crisis and Creativity in the New Literatures in English* (1990), the Black British writer David Dabydeen shares his insights and individual experience as a Black writer:

I cannot... feel or write poetry like a white man, much less serve him... I feel that I am different, not wholly, but sufficient for me to want to contemplate that which is other in me, which owes its life to particular rituals of ancestry. (Dabydeen 67)

In the “Preface” to *Slave Song* I state that the creole language is angry, crude, energetic [...] I speak too of the brokenness of the language which reflects the brokenness and suffering of its original users. Its potential as a naturally tragic language is there in its brokenness and rawness which is like the rawness of a wound. If one has learnt and used Queen’s English for some years, the return to creole is painful, almost nauseous, for the language is uncomfortably raw (Dabydeen 61).

In writing *Slave Song* I had no Caribbean literary models to imitate, since I knew none. Apart from childhood in Guyana I was brought up in England and no Caribbean literature was taught in schools. So, I was wholly ignorant of the creole poetry of Edward Brathwaite or Claude McKay, the latter influenced by the balladry of Burns. What in fact triggered off *Slave Song* were the years spent as an undergraduate at Cambridge reading English Literature. (Dabydeen 62)

Dabydeen's language makes direct reference to the suffering of its users as if he speaks about himself and his own experience within a white community. The mixture of identities, most visible in the poem *Turner*, preoccupies Dabydeen's work. As far as *The Slave Song* is concerned, Dabydeen explains in his preface that he tried to voice the brokenness of language which "reflects the brokenness and suffering of its original users", and its potential of English as a naturally tragic language. He further adds, "there in its brokenness and rawness which is like the rawness of a wound" (Dabydeen 62). In line with Dabydeen's body of work, Caribbean literature is re-characterized by its questions of hybridity, complexity, and crossing.

Describing Dabydeen's poetry, in "Between Creole and Cambridge English: The Poetry of David Dabydeen" (1988), Benita Parry remarks:

Dabydeen's is a radical political poetry; nourished by images of the enslaved past endured by generations of the downtrodden, its atavism is not a retrograde worship of the ancestors but a rewriting of the west's master narrative that addresses the post-colonial condition. He writes not only as a Guyanese within a Caribbean tradition, but as a British Black who has known the "winter of England's scorn and whose poetry defies the racist fear that "they will besmirch the White Page with their words. (Parry 13)

The apparent linguistic tension between each language reveals Dabydeen's intention to differentiate his poetry from himself, offering a mixture of both languages in his work. Inspired by his contemporaries such as Caryl Phillips and Fred D'Aguiar, Dabydeen continues to deal with issues of slavery, historical trauma, and the past. His effort to resist British culture, in "An interview with David Dabydeen on Literature and Politics" (2016), conducted by Ruzbeh Babae, is a reaction to traditional representations of enslaved Africans:

Guyanese history, in relation to contact with Europe, is stark: the decimation of indigenous people, the enslavement of Africans, the system of Indian indentureship. It is stark in terms of the immensity of suffering, and the sheer injustices of colonial rule. Yet, we became acquainted with Samuel Johnson's *DICTIONARY* and the magical properties of the English language; with the lyricism and storytelling of the Bible, of Shakespeare, of Victorian poetry. These new texts supplemented the ones we brought from Africa and India (the *KORAN*, the *RAMAYANA*). Ancient and living Carib, Arawak and other Amerindian stories fertilised the situation. We rewrote and reimagined our inheritance, hence Walcott, Naipaul, Jean Rhys, Pauline Melville, Grace Nichols, John Agard, and a host of others. I write about the injustice (historical, but also self-inflicted in our postcolonial condition) but more about the urge to creativity and expression that emerged from being on the margins; the fierce resolve to

become educated, literate, creative, venturing beyond boundaries<sup>27</sup>.  
(Dabydeen 75)

David Dabydeen's own writings offer new representations, that allow for his own "pluralistic identity" to function like an echo of the plurality of a Caribbean life. His writing, fueled with his own African, and Indian linguistic heritage, uses creole with Standard English in an effort to reveal the nuances of Black identities within a diaspora. Chapter Three will seek to reveal the arch of his writing from questions of slavery to criticism of eighteenth century art.

The Caribbean has also impacted the reception of Caryl Phillips's works. Born in the Caribbean Island of St. Kitts and raised in Leeds, moving with his parents at a very young age, Phillips often refers to matters of belonging. In *Colour Me English* (2011), Phillips expresses his emotional attachment to both places underlining the significance of moving and crossing in the making of his identity. It is mostly known that the history of Caribbean immigrants, known by slavery, the Middle Passage, and the African diaspora, carries a heritage of forced displacement. In his essay entitled "Necessary Journeys", published in his nonfiction work stated above, Phillips further explains his position of belonging:

My continued sense of alienation in a British context is hardly original. The roots are racially charged, but others have felt similarly excluded on grounds of class, gender or religion. [...] Some people have little choice but to live in this state of high anxiety. Some others make plans to leave. I have chosen to create for myself an imaginary "home" to live alongside the one that I am incapable of fully trusting. My precious, imaginary, Atlantic world. (Phillips 308)

Phillips's decision to accept his new home reminds us of Paul Gilroy's "double consciousness", initially inspired by W.E.B. Du Bois, which depicts the split subjectivity and race consciousness that Du Bois perceives as inherent to the experience of being an African American, a consciousness of existing at the same time inside and outside the prevailing culture. This "double consciousness", Gilroy explores in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993), emerges as one of the defining characteristics of Black History of the Trans-Atlantic. Gilroy's concept emphasizes mutability, in which fragmentation, adaptation, and synchronicity all play a role within cultures that offer a variety of difference. Both Phillips and Dabydeen embrace this notion of plurality, inscribed in their origins which leads to the construction of their "multiple identities", borrowing the words of Stuart Hall. As

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<sup>27</sup> <https://journals.aiac.org.au/index.php/IJCLTS/article/view/2598/2231>.

regards this multiplicity, in his essay “Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities”, Hall states:

The politics of living identity through difference. It is the politics of recognizing that all of us are composed of multiple social identities, not of one. That we are all complexly constructed through different categories, of different antagonisms, and these may have the effect of locating us socially in multiple positions of marginality and subordination, but which do not yet operate on us in exactly the same way. It is also to recognize that any counter-politics of the local which attempts to organize people through their diversity of identifications has to be a struggle which is conducted positionally. (Hall 57)

The inscribed hegemony of Caribbean life has encouraged writers to enhance their own voices and construct their own discourses. Caribbean literature thereby seeks to embrace difference and to celebrate creativity and innovation. Obviously, a sense of attachment to African and Caribbean roots is often reflected when dealing with Caribbean writers as NourbeSe Philip clarifies in the layout of her poems and fragmented form of her text. In her essay “Notanda”, located at the end of her poem *Zong!*, Philip quotes Thomas More’s definition about the poet who is “a detective and the detective a poet”, she adds, “and that’s what I feel like—a detective sifting the evidence, trying to remove the veil hiding the facts” (Philip 196). Philip’s striving to deconstruct, reformulate, and recreate a new text might be perceived as a way of preserving her Caribbean roots.

Philip’s new arrangement of language fits with the Caribbean which is ‘collectively’ written, and produced by a multilingual network of writers. In his study “Reinterpreting the Caribbean” (2001), Norman Girvan clarifies how definitions of the Caribbean might be based on language, identity, geography, history and culture, geopolitics, geoeconomics, or organization (Girvan 6). Girvan also adds how the Caribbean has been and is being continuously redefined and reinterpreted in response to external influences and to internal currents. The Caribbean is not only “multilingual, it has also become transnational” (Lindahl and Girvan 4).

It is equally important to note that other terms arise from the Caribbean such as “cultural identity”. There is a new race-centered discourse, perhaps most evident in the work of contemporary writers in the diaspora who seek to rethink the role of race and the politics of identity. Consequently, there is a widespread concern for the place of Black Caribbean writers outside of their homelands as is the case of the writers in my research. Stuart Hall raises the question of “cultural identity” which seems challenging. In his article “Negotiating Caribbean

Identities” (2001), Stuart Hall claims that this problematic request stems from different reasons. The search for identity involves a search for origins which is impossible since the indigenous no longer exist due to the European encounter. This question of identity thereby becomes a question of representations.

In the wake of this debate, Hall states “questions of identity are always the questions about the invention, not only the discovery, of tradition. They almost involve the silencing of something to allow something else to speak” (Hall 26). And therefore, silencing as well as remembering does not limit perception towards the future. Narrative accounts produce knowledge; it is always about narrative; the stories told of cultures are told to understand identity and origin. These representations can be seen in the use of a creole language through which Caribbean writers reconstruct their traditions and form their own text to subvert linguistic hegemonies and canonical modes. They return to the past seeking identity reconstruction and remembering. The slave ship *Zong* makes its appearance as one of the events rooted in the past that still haunts the present through its different reconfigurations and representations in fiction and art.

### 1.2.1 Remembering the Slave Ship *Zong*

In the context of refiguring slavery, William Turner’s painting *Slave Ship “Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying, Typhoon Coming On”* (1840), in which a leg with shackles stands in for the sinking human cargo, Fred D’Aguiar’s novel *Feeding the Ghosts* (1997), Ian Baucom’s *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (2005), Marvin Bartley’s *Tragedies of Zong Series* (2012), Christina Sharpe’s *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (2016) among others have traced the *Zong* murder in different representations in genre and media, as the legal proceedings become novelized prose, then scholarly analysis, then poetry, then the sounds in Gardner’s contemporary art installation. As some continuities persist, I will provide a brief overview of the slave ship *Zong* murder since most of the works under scrutiny refigure the murder bringing nuanced perspectives. This brief section tends to cover the historical background of the *Zong* murder through establishing a connection with theoretical framework on slavery.

In his provocative study *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (2005), Ian Baucom revisits the primary resources associated with the

case of the *Zong* describing the case and the scene of drowning and terror as “a sort of haunting spirits in a broad array of literary, sociological, historical, and philosophical texts” (Baucom 31). Baucom further portrays the *Zong* as a “massacre and the set of legal decisions made upon; both an act of atrocity and the value form on which that atrocity made its claims and which, rather the act itself, was truly on trial” (Baucom 134). In the context of my study, the *Zong* trial will be analyzed through the ‘imaginary’ scene Fred D’Aguiar has created in his novel to further underscore and criticize the extent to which literature can depict historical event. D’Aguiar transforms the legal scene into a provocative *mise en scene* where all historical figures involved in the massacre act to perform history in literature.

On 29 November 1781, the master of the merchant vessel *Zong* made the decision to jettison a portion of his cargo into the Caribbean. The *Zong* was a slave ship and the jettisoned cargo comprised 132 living men, women, and children, yet despite their deaths, and the two court hearings of 1783, no criminal prosecution would ever result from the *Zong* incident. For precisely this reason, the events of November 1781 came to play an important part in the rise of the anti-slavery movement in Britain, and it is for this reason, too, that scholars and artists of many kinds have continued to engage in a dialogue with the *Zong*. Further consideration will be given to the wider impact of the *Zong* incident upon eighteenth-century maritime law regarding the shipping of ‘human cargos’.

It is important to emphasize here that the 1780s and 1790s were significant decades for the British slave trade, marking a watershed in the fortunes of a business that had flourished without any form of regulation for more than 200 years. In the 1780s, this situation began to change. Parliament undertook lengthy inquiries into the workings of the slave trade, whilst the courts were simultaneously wrestling with issues surrounding the insurance of ‘human cargoes’ at sea. It was against this backdrop that, in 1788, parliament first enacted legislation to regulate British slave shipping. In her study “The *Zong* in the Context of the Eighteenth-Century Slave Trade”, Jane Webster argues that:

The *Zong* incident directly informed this legislative process, not simply by publicizing the barbarities of the Middle Passage, but because the court hearings of 1783 had helped to expose the inadequacies and uncertainties of existing legislation governing captive Africans in transit upon the seas”.  
(Webster 285)

The legal inadequacies in the case of the *Zong* murder are further visualized in most of the works at study. For instance, Luke Collingwood, the captain of the *Zong* ship passed away



seven days after the *Zong* arrived in Jamaica and did not appear in court in 1783. Paradoxically as it may seem, D'Aguiar's novel *Feeding the Ghosts* refigures Collingwood in to be part of this court and offers a stage where he could narrate again what happened onboard the ship. However, Collingwood's fictional version does not seem to be neutral especially provided from the writer's perspective on such historical murder that can only be conveyed through irony and criticism.

Webster's study above has stated that the only thing that can be said with certainty is that having sighted Jamaica, Collingwood sailed away from it, setting in motion events that resulted in the deaths of 132 African captives. Although most British slave ship masters were required by their venture owners to keep daily logs, only a relatively small number of examples have existed to the present day.<sup>28</sup> It is nevertheless surprising that the logbook of the *Zong* had disappeared within just two years of sailing. It was supposedly never traced, the Gregson syndicate claiming first that the logbook had been left with their agent in Jamaica, and later that it had remained in Collingwood's hands and was lost when he died. In this matter of logbook, Baucom also refers how "the logbook of the *Zong* does not survive" (Baucom 11). To provide an overview of the content of logbooks, Baucom includes another example of the log of the *Ranger*, that he describes as: "a long and a repetitive list, one whose reiterative predictability both requests the eye not so much to read as to skim and one whose flattened pathos solicits the reader's indulgence for horror banalized, horror catalogued" (Baucom 11). In accordance with this logbook, in *Crossing the River*, Caryl Phillips incorporates another version of a logbook that mirrors the original with slight amendments that will be further analyzed in the next chapter.

The *Zong* was first brought to the awareness of the larger British public through the newspaper reports that the ship's owners were suing the underwriters for the insurance value of the 132 murdered Africans. In her study *In the Wake on Blackness and Being* (2016), Christina Sharpe has raised several questions behind the reasons of this murder that the following lines further illustrate:

The deposed crew recounted that it was the lack of water and the insurance claim that motivated that throwing overboard. They recognized that insurance monies would not be paid if those enslaved people died *a natural death*. What would constitute a natural death here? How could

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<sup>28</sup> For example, surviving manuscript logs at the National Maritime Museum include those of John Newton for the voyages of the *African* and *Duke of Argyle*, 1750–54 (NMM MS/LOG/M46), and Samuel Gamble's log of the voyage of the *Sandown*, 1793–1794 (NMM MS/LOG/M21).

their deaths be natural? How can the legally dead be declared murdered? But in his testimony in court, the chief mate revealed that the crew on board the *Zong* never encountered a shortage in water, that is, at no point did they resort to water rationing. (Sharpe 35)

As stated in her study, the murder was revealed thanks to the antislavery activist Granville Sharp and the formerly enslaved activists Olaudah Equiano and Ottobah Cugoana. The events on board the *Zong* would be committed to historical memory first as the insurance claim in the case of *Gregson v. Gilbert* and only later as the murders of 132 Africans are not recognized by the court to be murders: “It has been decided, whether wisely or unwisely is not now the question, that a portion of our fellow creatures may become the subject of property. This, therefore, was the throwing overboard of goods, and of part to save the residue” (Sharpe 35). This traumatic event encapsulates the modern engagement with the archive in literary texts and visual art. Slave narratives, testimonies, legal cases, journals, and the Trans-Atlantic Slavery archive—all of which were used in the writings of these contemporary authors—will be considered. The significant complicity between literature and the archive reminds us of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak insights on this matter. In her essay, “The Rani of Simur: An essay in Reading the Archives” (1985), Spivak assumes that “Literature and the archives seem complicit that they are both a crosshatching of condensations, a traffic in telescoped symbols that can only easily be read each other’s repetition-with-a-displacement” (Spivak 250).

The notion of complicity established in the moment of interaction between literary texts and past records should be taken with an explicit displacement. In other words, Spivak argues that for a better reconsideration of the knowledge resonated in these records and produced a displacement version should be taken place. Literature, Spivak adds, “cannot easily flourish in the fracture or discontinuity which is covered by an alien legal system masquerading as law” (Spivak 250). This argument insinuates how the knowledge and truth produced by the archive cannot be an authentic source due to the internal and external control and laws that certain state institutions impose. Drawing on Spivak’s insights, by establishing a comparison between these archival records and the literary modern texts, I intend to accomplish more than just recounting and revisiting these texts as part of the archive. More precisely, my study attempts to examine these authors’ contributions to revisiting history and keeping those archives vivid in the present by juxtaposing these archival texts with contemporary literary texts.

Additionally, I further investigate how these writers tried to cover the submerged truth and these legal discrepancies constructing instead a new “episteme”.<sup>29</sup>

Can these new narratives be classified as “counter history” and “counter archive”? For instance, in her essay “The Archive and Affective Memory in M. NourbeSe Philip’s *Zong!*”, (2013), Jenny Sharpe claims that “silences in official archives are not only holes to be filled with missing pieces of a counter-history but also spaces of an affective relationship with the past” (Sharpe 470). Reflecting on the silence inscribed in history, in his essay stated earlier, “The Power of the Archive and its Limits”, Achille Mbembe takes a different approach to the issue of this silence, describing the archive as “a temple and a cemetery: a strict space where relics are put away and a burial place for the sections of lives cherished inside” (Mbembe 19). He explains that the monumental structure of the archive and the tangible materiality of the preserved records are what give the archive its status and power. Although “not all documents are destined to be archives”, the collection in one place of those deemed worthy of preservation gives an illusion of coherence where only “fragments of lives and pieces of time” exist (Mbembe 20).

Although most of the writers’ and artists’ main focus has been to cover the past and the silenced truth in the archival discourse, their literary and artistic productions open up ways that enable readers to think about their current positions today. It is important to remember that the majority of them left their ancestral homes and continue to write about slavery from abroad. Examining their singular approaches and positions is of central interest to my study. They may be requiring a radical change by giving an alternative approach and conveying a critical rewriting of the past in the present. It is essential to keep in mind that most of these textual and visual reconfigurations of slavery pay tribute to the lives and deaths of millions of Africans who were enslaved during the transatlantic slave trade. This act of remembering might serve as resilience and a form of resistance against the harmful legacies of transatlantic slavery and enslavement, such as racism, discrimination, and ongoing inequalities, injustices, and exploitation. Visual Art engages with the question of the archive and treats this silence in a compelling, modern way that should be deeply examined in our study. The following

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<sup>29</sup> The word has been used by Saidiya Hartman in her essay “Venus in Two Acts”, in which she examines the ubiquitous presence of Venus in the archive of Atlantic slavery and wrestles with the impossibility of discovering anything about her that hasn’t already been stated. Venus makes plain the convergence of terror and pleasure in the libidinal economy of slavery and, as well, the intimacy of history with the scandal and excess of literature. In writing at the limit of the unspeakable and the unknown. Her essay uncovers the violence of the archive and attempts to redress it by describing as fully as possible the conditions that determine the appearance of Venus and that dictate her silence. 2008, p.1-14.

section shows how to use art to visualize the archive; a section that serves as an introduction to additional examination that following chapters will cover in detail.

Commemorating the past and the legacy of slavery has been the focus of many Caribbean writers who are mostly concerned with “returning to the past” to keep the memory of slavery alive and resist the amnesia of history. Now this practice of remembering emerges not only through literature, but also art and theatre. When asked about this return to the past in the present, David Dabydeen replied “I think it is a kind of excavation of the self, the layers of the self have been buried in forgetfulness, which is why I like the “Truth” painting, because it’s the Black figure who is submerged in the sea, head first, not feet first” (Dawes 197). For a considerable time, the history of slavery has attracted wide interest in various scientific disciplines, including at an international level. In *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (1983), Paul E. Lovejoy defines slavery as follows:

Slavery was one form of exploitation. Its special characteristics included the idea that slaves were property; that they were outsiders who were alien by origin or who had been denied their heritage through judicial or other sanctions; that coercion could be used at will; that their labor power was at the complete disposal of a master; that they did not have the right to their own sexuality and, by extension, to their own reproductive capacities; and that the slave status was inherited unless provision was made to ameliorate that status. (Lovejoy 1)

In the context of the transatlantic slave trade, enslaved Africans were considered as chattel, which meant that they could be purchased and sold. They belonged to their masters who had total power over them. Religious institutions, kinship units, and other groups did not protect enslaved Africans as legal persons. Because enslaved Africans were treated as commodities. Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993), locates the genesis of the Black Atlantic in the rites of the Middle Passage, the journey from Africa to the New World, as a kind of origin myth for later chosen tales of ocean crossings by Wright, Du Bois, Douglass, and others who make a modern journey from the Americas to Europe. Yet, there is something oddly dissembling about those sites of what Gilroy calls “contamination”.

## 1.2.2 Visualizing the Archive in Art

One of the defining characteristics of the modern era has been the increasing significance given to the archive as the means by which historical knowledge and forms of remembrance are accumulated, stored and recovered. Created as much by state organizations and institutions as by individuals and groups, the archive, as distinct from a collection or library, constitutes a repository or ordered system of documents and records, both verbal and visual, that is the foundation from which history is written. This volume provides a contextual introduction to the ways in which concepts of the archive have been defined, examined, contested and reinvented by artists and cultural observers from the early twentieth century to the present. For it is in the spheres of art and culture that some of the most searching questions have been asked concerning what constitutes an archive and what authority it holds in relation to its subject. (Merewether 10)

Artists have gradually expanded the boundaries of art over the past few decades by engaging with an increasingly pluralistic history. The collective space of art today transcends the artist's individual space. Art becomes an instrument of engagement, representation, and refiguration of certain themes ranging from the everyday to the uncanny, the psychoanalytical to the political.

In his study "The Archive: Documents of Contemporary Art" (2006), Charles Merewether, provides a series of commentaries by artists and art historians on uses of the archive from the post-1945 period to the present. Through a study of Aby Warburg's Mnemosyne Atlas and Gerhard Richter's album-work Atlas (ongoing since 1962), Benjamin Buchloh addresses the role of photography which can be seen as being archival in both "enacting and destroying mnemonic experience". Between these two poles he finds a historical shift away from the optimism for modern technologies of reproduction in providing what he characterizes as a "collective social memory" during the inter-war period to the post-war recognition that this, in fact, caused the destruction of mnemonic experience and historical thought altogether. The term "mnemonic" as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* refers to a "pattern of letters, ideas, or associations which assists in remembering."<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, these works are 'mnemonic' to the degree that they assist the reader and the viewer to remember the past and embrace these memories. In addressing more broadly the concept of a "memory crisis", Buchloh advances the idea that mnemonic desire may in fact be activated especially in those moments of extreme distress in which the traditional material bonds among subjects, between subjects and objects, and between objects and their representation appear to be on the verge of displacement if not extinction.

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<sup>30</sup> <https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=mnemonic>.

In “The Archival Impulse” (2004), Hal Foster looks at the contemporary phenomenon of artists — as archivists, some of whom, in distinction from the subjects analyzed by Buchloch, have moved away from a melancholic understanding of culture that views history largely in terms of the legacies of traumatic events. Foster argues that the work of contemporary artists such as Tacita Dean, Sam Durant and Thomas Hirschhorn assumes “anomic fragmentation as a condition not only to represent but to work through, and proposes new orders of the affective association, however partial or provisional” (Merewether 13). For such artists intervention in the archive is what Merewether defines as “gesture of alternative knowledge or counter-memory which can harbor the possibility of an unexpected utopian dimension” (Merewether 14).

The question of what visual art remembers and forgets, and for whom and for what purpose is worth exploring. In light of this, we might consider the strategies employed by artists and curators to transgress the perceived ‘power’ of the archive and establish new representations—personal, collective, or individual—as a new technology of memory. As well as posing ethical questions, it can also express sadness, and what we reject. As Merewether states “the counter-monument or counter-archive is, rather, a form of recollection of that which has been silenced and buried” (Merewether 16). This approach towards the archive is also investigated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, notably in her article stated above “The Rani of Simur: An essay in Reading the Archives” (1985), where she returns to the archive to discover how the idea of India itself has been created, as a proper name and as fiction that inscribes its colonial history, reminding us of how the conception of the other is defined within the logic of the same. Moreover, she proposes that in so far as the archive has been designated by “hegemonic nineteenth-century European historiography” as a “repository of facts”, those facts need to be read (Spivak 248).

Reading archives not only makes it possible to write histories in new ways, but they also convey the sense of the absurd, the futile, or the impossible that ultimately haunts the archive’s logic. In terms of art and the archive, this thesis demonstrates a novel perspective and comprehension that meets with the current contexts. The visual arts encompass a wide range of techniques, materials, and media. The areas most associated with the visual arts incorporate drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, and photography. Contrary to the idea of individual artists, art is a field and space of collective recollections, building a bridge between then and now, the self and the other, and challenging certain perceptions. The knowledge is not only conveyed through fiction, narratives, and writing, but also through

visual arts that serve to “fill the gaps” and uncover “the silenced truth” about the past. How can we perceive the past through art? How beneficial is it to engage with the archive in order to gain a deeper understanding of particular untold memories? How does the visual artist help build awareness of history and help people feel connected to the past? How does art safeguard the past and create a new archive? The final chapter of this thesis addresses many of these issues, but I believe it would be best to begin by providing a general overview of the relationship between art and the archive in order to better understand how visual art interacts with the archive.

Representing the past in the visual arts incorporates deciphering and sharing memory. The artist fosters a process of selecting, analyzing, interpreting, developing, and creating certain techniques of representation. These presentations, shown in museums, impart meaning and a record of social and political encounters. It seems interesting to mention that museums may use archival practices to expose and help in the process of remembering historical models that are embedded in the past.

Pursuing this interest in preserving history and visualizing the past, “Black models: from Géricault to Matisse”<sup>31</sup>(2019), an exhibition organized by *Musée d’Orsay* and *Musée de l’Orangerie* in Paris (2019), can be conceived as a “multi-disciplinary approach that combines the history of art and the history of ideas. To put it differently, it explored aesthetic, political, social, and racial issues as well as the imagery revealed by the portrayal of Black figures in visual arts, from the abolition of slavery in France (1794) to the modern day”.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, the exhibition focused specifically on three key periods, intended to provide a long-term perspective: the era of abolition (1794-1848), the new painting era up to Matisse’s discovery of the Harlem Renaissance, and the early twentieth century avant-garde movement and the successive generations of post-war and contemporary artists.

The exhibition re-centered models as a subject by making a dialogue between the model who poses and the artist who paints, sculpts, engraves, or photographs him/her. It also looked at how Nadar and Carjat’s photographs, as well as major works by Théodore Géricault, Charles Cordier, Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux, Edouard Manet, Paul Cézanne, and Henri Matisse, changed how Black figures were depicted. *Black Models: From Gericault to Matisse*

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<sup>31</sup> The exhibition’s title in French is “Le modèle noir de Géricault à Matisse”, displayed from 26 March till 21 July 2019.

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/events/exhibitions/in-the-museums/exhibitions-in-the-musee-dorsay/article/le-modele-noir-47692.html?cHash=f010ade30d>.

(Le modèle noir de Géricault à Matisse) is not the only and first testimony about art's engagement in terms of Black identity. At the same time, Lubaina Himid installed her exhibition *Naming the Money* in Contemporary Art Gallery in Bordeaux where I had the opportunity interview her. By owning her political position regarding black representation in England between the past and the present, the work of artist Lubaina Himid offers new narratives hidden in fragmented historical traces. It is possible to think of art and artistic works as a "lieu de mémoire", in which history is revisited, reimagined, represented, and refigured through art, sculpture, exhibitions, and museums. The artist's work articulates the relationship between separate time periods and the way we build our relationship with time. Museums can be likewise perceived as "lieu de mémoire", since Orsay attracts the modern audience through the visual representation of Blacks and suggest its viewer to reflect upon certain representations embedded in history, which might be perceived differently today. In line with the idea of creating a dialogue between history and other mediums, in his book *Creating Memorials Building Identities: The Politics of Memory in the Black Atlantic* (2010), Alan Rice asserts that:

Dialogising history with other forms, such as biography, folklore, memorials and artistic representation, helps to fill that contested and empirically dry history with the memories and experiences it needs in order to reflect a more accurate and human face: to 'find an anchor for memory'. (Rice 13)

The idea of "dialogising" might be connected with what Ernst van Alphen has coined "the emergence of an archival impulse"<sup>33</sup> in modern and contemporary art, which can be understood as a revitalization of re-representing slavery (Alphen 32). The archive is thoroughly fed by contemporary artists to make the "invisible" visible and meaningful. In doing so, art functions as an archival space and setting through which contemporary artists like Lubaina Himid, Stephen White and Co, and Roshini Kempadoo among others use to help create a dialogue between then and now, in doing so opening the space for interpreting the past and engaging in the present. Recognizing this duality, of remembering and engaging within and through the archive demonstrates the fundamental transformation of the archive and its performative dynamic status powerfully presented through the digital art Media. This dynamic status will be best explored and elaborated in the final chapter of this thesis.

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<sup>33</sup> Alphen Van Ernest, *Staging the Archive: Art and Photography in the Age of New Media*, 2014.



The emergence of the archival return is embodied in different forms and sites, among these sites of memory, I stated museums and slavery exhibitions, that sometimes as Marcus Wood argues in *Slavery, Empathy and Pornography* (2003), “amplify, rather than confirm, the gaps between our present and complacency in viewing the past and the forgotten channels” (Wood 298). Slavery in this context raises a number of questions and concerns, such the importance of investing in museums on slavery in England and other countries that participated in the slave trade. The history of the slave trade was first discussed as part of the city’s maritime history at the Merseyside Maritime Museum, which opened in 1980, shortly before a transatlantic slavery gallery was created in 1994 to better explore Liverpool’s historic role in the slave trade.

Today, museums as institutions have evolved into extremely innovative tools for depicting not only the past but also the present by providing access even underwater.<sup>34</sup> In line with an artistic project held on slavery, Jason De Caires has created an installation composed of statues. At first glance, it portrays a group of men and women standing in a large circle and holding hands as they look out along the ocean floor. These figures, delineated by Aaron Witcher in his review titled “Ecologies of the Sacred: A Review of Valérie Loichot’s Water Graves” (2021), manifest as:

bear bright red pink, and violet protrusions of coral, undulating gossamers of seaweed. And the occasional sea star. The texture and topography of these statues’ skin-their pores, wrinkles, and scars-provide the ideal environment for aquatic life to take root and repopulate this portion of ocean floor...offers another, more haunting kind of repopulation, this time by the specters of the Triangular Trade: The innumerable captives thrown overboard after dying in transit during the Atlantic crossing and condemned to perish, away from ancestral lands and families that could offer funerary rites or remembrance. (Witcher 34)

The underwater use of these statues echoes this archival return as a work of art that reflects the archive’s contemporary dynamic status as a creative institution and space where traces of the past are creatively merged. Artists not only pay tribute to the enslaved Africans who were transported on ships, but also engage the past in the present by intervening artists to share oral testimonies. Art becomes a highly collective practice and therefore touches not only a few but many. Museums represent storehouses where objects, images, and sculptures are collected

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<sup>34</sup> The Underwater Museum in Marseille is a museum with enormous sculptures installed at a depth of 5 meters (16 feet) so that the public can visit and experience commentaries on the past below the surface of the sea.

from the past and still stored and maintained. For instance, the Slavery Museum in Liverpool still among others, foregrounds a display of the past to “remember” and raise the awareness about the atrocities of history in such a performative approach.

In line with the study of the archive and the objects archived in museums, Ernst Van Alphen’s *Staging the Archive: Art and Photography in the Age of New Media* (2014), demonstrates how artists question not only what the archive is and what it can be, but also what materials, images, or ideas can be archived. These archival artists and works of art are examined in depth by Ernst van Alphen, who places them in their social, political, and aesthetic contexts. He shows how contemporary and modern artists have used and contested the idea of the archive to establish new relationships to history, information, and data by looking at the works of Christian Boltanski, Annette Messager, Fiona Tan, and Sophie Calle, among others. In the following lines, Ernst van Alphen speaks further about the artistic archiving:

Artistic archiving is often a violation of the idea of the archive as transition of private to public and as intersection of the general and the singular. Artists usually collect and archive the trivial, that is, objects that are not acknowledged by the public or the culture at large as important, or valuable in whatever respect. In other words, the trivial is not considered as archivable. Artists collect objects that are usually overlooked: not worth keeping in storage, collecting or archiving. As soon as artists begin to collect the overlooked, however, its status changes. The individual changes through its adoption and absorption into the collective. (Alphen 87)

In the passage above, the artistic archiving process starts from collecting traces and objects from the archive, which later demonstrates its transformative potential. In other words, the artist’s engagement and contribution helps to transform what was identified as “trivial” and “unarchivable” objects to other reproductions. Just as the individual experience becomes collective, it ceases to be autonomous and rather includes the other. It may be possible to say here that art becomes a medium of giving justice to the past and a testimony of what has been left silenced or lost. In line with the idea of testimony, in his study, *Memory, History, and Forgetting* (2004), Paul Ricoeur states how “it is justice that turns memory into a project, and it is this same project of justice that gives the form of the future and the imperative to the duty of memory” (Ricoeur 88). Art then functions as a “testimony”, which Paul Ricoeur in a different context defines as follows:

Testimony takes us with one bound to the formal conditions of the “things of the past” (praeterita), the conditions of possibility of the actual process

of the historiographical operation. With testimony opens an epistemological process that departs from declared memory, passes through the archive and documents, and finds its fulfillment in documentary proof<sup>35</sup>. (Ricoeur 161)

Most often, the term testimony is associated with connotations as proof, evidence, of formal written or spoken statements, and testimony. All these interpretations evolve around the process of witnessing something that has already happened. Here, testimony stems from the archive and its documents. In line with the idea of witnessing and art, Martina Kopf argues in her study, “Trauma, Narrative and the Art of Witnessing” (2009) that art becomes “a form of empathic witnessing” (Kopf 47). In other words, these artists do not only depict scenes of past history, but create “afterimages” of slavery by dealing with visual materials. This trail of after-images of slavery is offered on to artists as a genealogy of pictures, which have been distorted, stereotyped and fragmented, but still suggesting traces of historical experiences. Kopf also argues that most artists, who work on issues of slavery today “do not invent new images, but repeat and transform, reframe and translate old ones into the contemporary” (Kopf 64). Through the visual and digital representation of the past in the contemporary era, the re-figuring of the past, the re-narrativization, and the making of the invisible visible are represented not only in literary texts but also in art. Contemporary writers and artists have demonstrated the possibility of creation through “the imaginative” past and “artistic representation” out of the past itself, deconstructing Friedrich Nietzsche’s concept of a danger inherent in a culture too obsessed with memorizing the past and therefore unable to generate creative work and action in the present.

It is likewise important to acknowledge the undeniably creative and empowering role of the digital today giving access to history made available to the individual in accessing global archives of past histories and in responding to cultural narratives. These shifts demonstrate the role those visual arts and the media play in the process of viewing in the creation of intercultural subjectivities. They have also resulted in turning-away from history as a singular discourse rather towards the smaller narratives and individual voices that constitute memory and history today.

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<sup>35</sup> The quotation was taken from the translated version *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2004) by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (2004). In the original French text : *Mémoire, Histoire, Oubli*, Paul Ricoeur states « Le témoignage nous conduit d'un bond des conditions formelles au contenu des choses du passé (praeterita), des conditions de possibilité au procès effectif de l'opération historiographique. Avec le témoignage s'ouvre un procès épistémologique qui part de la mémoire déclarée, passe par l'archive et les documents, et s'achève sur la preuve documentaire » p. 201.

As we consider the practice of using the archive, we must also consider the archive itself. One example can be found in the artworks of Lubaina Himid, which investigate the possibilities of what art is and what it can do. Himid's work also problematizes the principles of which the archive is organized. Most of the time, these works of art are archival principles—breaking performances. In other words, these visual performances are built from archival materials and consisted of archival interrogation or construction. Nevertheless, this use of the archive for artworks does not imply an uncritical exploitation of the archive as an artistic tool. On the contrary, Himid's artworks interrogate the principles, claims, promises, and effects of the archive by representing it against the grain. Such practice might lead to the creation of a new archival structure that gives rise to “its own interpretative categories”, in the words of Ernst Van Alphen, in order to establish an archaeological relationship with history, evidence, information, and data.

Lubaina Himid has used this authority to interpret the archive offering a bridge of interaction, calling on the past to be spoken, by inviting the nation to recall and recollect the past and establish an engaging dialogue. During an interview that I conducted with her in 2019 in CAPA (Musée d'art Contemporain) in 2019, Himid states that:

I am interested in having conversations with Black audiences, how do we see ourselves, what do we look like in the museum, how is our story being told, when we go can we see our families, can we see our sisters. So that's my primary thinking, of course an extension of that is the art, especially in 1980. Rather than think about how to react to whiteness, I am trying to take the conversations about the everyday life of people in the African diaspora forward rather than respond to a white agenda. Of course, I am responding to a white agenda but not in opposition to it, I am trying to bring them into filling the gap, that's the point about this show here, it is not oppositional, we are telling each other our stories, you can listen to those stories, but in the listening to them we all then have to take actions, because we all took part in the first place, but now we are calling the agenda, we are telling our stories, so the museum has to re-look at their archives, their holdings, the histories they are telling and help in the filling of those gaps, but it is not an opposition, it has to be a dialogue, and it is slow and organic, but opposition produces a short term aim, and then you are two steps forward and 8 steps backward. And I need for us to be steadily moving forward, so it is a dialogue<sup>36</sup>. (Himid 2019)

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<sup>36</sup> Lubaina Himid, Interview by Maroua Mannai, *CAPC Contemporary Art Museum of Bordeaux*, 31 October, 2019.

Himid's creation of a dialogue between the archive and the audience echoes the connection of the archive to modern art. Following Himid's perception, I argue that the archive can be modernised when it shifts from one discourse to another as the following chapters will further demonstrate. It is open to digital presentations by implementing different techniques and materials. Joscelyn Gardner's *Omi Eboras* installation (Yoruba for "spirits of the waters") (2017), which is inspired by NourbeSe Philip *Zong!* might be an appropriate illustration of the archive's potential as a digitised interdisciplinary discourse. In this multimedia installation *Omi Eboras* (Yoruba for "spirits of the waters"). While the poet employs words from the murder trial of Gregson v. Gilbert, Gardner takes the poet's words off the page and puts them, literally, in water. As a representation of the agony that the enslaved Africans had endured, the audience hears sounds of moans and whispers.

Since art, according to Jill Bennett, is able "to exploit forms of embodied perception to promote forms of critical inquiry" through its affective capacities, it seems noteworthy to say that visual art echoes a reaction and a response to traumatic experiences and silenced past to insightful critical investigations. This conjunction of effect and critical awareness may be understood to constitute the basis of empathy grounded not in affinity (feeling for another insofar as we can imagine being that other) but on feeling for another that entails an encounter with something irreducible and different, often inaccessible (Bennett 347). Lubaina Himid's work demonstrates explicitly that she acknowledges the existence and significance of white archives in this process of identity construction:

Hogarth has done Black people and Britain a great favor, in that even though almost every image he presents of the Black figure is derogatory and disgusting in many ways, he did us a favor of giving us evidence of our belonging in Britain for many hundreds of years. So, in those discussions where the right wing will talk about our present in those countries as something that happened from the 1960's. This accidental inclusion, his obsessions of degrading everybody, and the French, showed that we were contributing all along, we were over here. Therefore, the British must have been over there and pictorial evidence, plus of course it is very clever works and very vicious. Everybody is under his scrutiny. It allows me to do the same thing, while referring to somebody who is quite essentially British. So, I was able to inhabit the British art history by using that work.<sup>37</sup>(Himid 2019)

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<sup>37</sup> During the installation of *Naming the Money* in CPCA Bordeaux (2019), I conducted an interview with the artist to discuss further her engagement with Black history in her art.

Himid considers the archive as a useful site for thinking through the importance of it today for the purpose of representing and framing Black identities. Lubaina Himid's art creates a dialogue between the past and the present as she shows the necessity of maintaining the links between the past and the present. Rather than being a source of revenge, she states that her art seeks to create a debate inside and outside of the archival return. Through this process, a new "creative and performative" representation is made possible by intentionally engaging the past as a strategy rather than a mistake or a shame. As a consequence of this, art demonstrates its ability to depict the possibility of establishing a new Black identity that not only alludes to previous conceptions and figurations of Blacks but also to a new discourse for the future.

The artworks corresponding to this research into a colonial visual archive material provide a differently configured sense of the past from mainstream representations and are inextricably linked to questions of both individual and collective memory. The underlined works embody the process of "creating a new archive" and create a dialogue between the text and the image, the story and the voice, the body and the memory. The archive's dynamic process is demonstrated by staging it within art. Although the archive is needed as a home for contemporary artists, Marcus Wood, conversely, highlights the challenges of addressing the past of slavery visually, rather focusing on a range of materials and genres from four sites: the Middle Passage, slave escape, imagery from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and the torture of enslaved Africans. Wood clarifies this approach in the following passage:

Slavery caused a mass of suffering which the victims might never understand themselves let alone be able to, or wish to, communicate. The attempts of Western painters, sculptors, engravers, and lithographers to provide European culture with a record of slave experience is consequently a history fraught with irony, paradox, voyeurism and erasure. The testimony produced by the slaves themselves, which is frequently projected through white creative and economic filters, is equally complicated in its relation to whatever we understand as historical truth. (Wood 8)

Taking into account that whites have narrated many historical events, Wood examines the authenticity of how history is represented in art. Marcus Wood discusses the enslaved African experience through a close examination of the visual, focusing on the images associated with slavery in popular culture and opening up a discussion to counteract an academic tradition in which "the imagery of slavery has not been taken as seriously as it should have been" (Wood 6). The experiences of millions of people who were subjected to slavery, Wood claims, cannot be documented; it is unrecoverable as a set of relics. There can be "no archeology of

the memory of slavery that corresponds to an emotional identification with a lost reality” (Wood 7). As a result, this traumatic experience cannot be depicted in art. Although representation can never adequately capture the lived traumas of oppressive systems, Woods concludes that “Art can make the blind see” by inviting a deeper exploration of J.M.W. Turner’s “Slavers throwing overboard the Dead and Dying-Typhon coming on” (1840), in which trauma of the murder is portrayed.

Himid sheds light on her determination to inspire audiences to action and engagement with history. To this end, she makes it clear in her following statement: “I’m making work that you are supposed to do something with, or that you are supposed to interact with and then do something about it”<sup>38</sup>. In explaining her fundamental formal and thematic concerns to Alan Rice, Himid avows that:

I was trying to find a way to talk of a thing that is not there, sort of inside the invisible”. I am interested in the politics of representation, how when something is there you can talk about it, write about it, paint about it, but when something isn’t there what can you say, how can you make something of it, how can it not have been in vain, if you like. (Rice 2003)

Given that the majority of the writers and artists that I discuss grew up in England, this section emphasizes how visual art can alter how we perceive the traumatic past and how memory can be transformed into an artistic representation that addresses contemporary issues regarding Black identity in England. These interdependencies are prevalent in the context of slavery, for artwork of Lubaina Himid, among others, has the potential to alter our perceptions of both visual art and the slave trade. In this context, Marcus wood’s *Blind Memory: Visual Representation of Slavery in England and America 1780-1865*, raises the question if there is a possibility to create an art of slavery. He stresses the idea that art can rethink history and transform the trauma and horror inscribed within. He further points out that there “in every story there is a silence, some sight concealed, some word unspoken till we have spoken the unspoken we have not come to the heart of the story (Wood 305).

We are thereby prompted to ask multiple questions by the works under study: how well do fictional works depict histories in which there is no evidence—no linearity, continuity of meaning, or monumental history—but rather a discontinuity characterized by obliteration,

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<sup>38</sup>See Alan Rice, “Commemorating abolition: interview with Lubaina Himid”,2003, available at [http://lubainahimid.info/yahoo\\_site\\_admin/assets/docs/B\\_Commemorating\\_abolition.6271157.doc](http://lubainahimid.info/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/B_Commemorating_abolition.6271157.doc).

erasure, and memory loss? Who constructs the archives? The legal and juridical function of the archive as a collection of evidence-based traces of events refers to those with power. Can we challenge the solidity of the fictional genre's representational form? Once collected, is there an alternate approach to take when studying Caribbean works?

Assuming an inherent fluidity of the archive is to question the values it promotes, how it is used, and to hold its contents as unstable entities that are open to interpretation. The questions raised herein stem from the terminology and theoretical approaches examined in this chapter. What is the real nature of the archive, its status, and to whom does it belong? When dealing with slavery in the literary texts under scrutiny, shall we take for granted the narrative texts and records narrated by whites to address Black identities and the slave trade legacies?

The theoretical framework presented in this chapter can collectively reconsider the archive and what it denotes as essentially performative. Proceeding chapters will consider the role of slavery as tightly knit in the work of Black British artists. The best way to carry out this revision of history is in my view, to recollect artistic contributions from a diverse network of disciplines. This interdisciplinary study can enable a reconsideration of the ethics and aesthetics of the archival process.

In the following chapter "Reading the Archive: Delving into a Slave Past through Fictional Narratives in Caryl Phillips's *Cambridge* (1991) and *Crossing the River* (1993)", I will analyze Caryl Phillips's novels in comparison with the original sources they reference. In his novels, Caryl Phillips clearly reveals a desire to counteract the reliance on archival documents to represent the past of slavery. By making this comparison, I hope to consider the various literary techniques used by Phillips such as montage, collage and pastiche, as a kind of 'recycling' of historical records.



## Chapter Two

### Reading the Archive: Delving into a Slave Past through Fictional Narratives in Caryl Phillips's *Cambridge* (1991) and *Crossing the River* (1993)

The Archive is not potentially made up of everything, as in human memory; and it is not the fathomless and timeless place in which nothing goes away that is the unconscious. The archive is made from selected and consciously chosen documentation from the past and also from the mad fragments that no one intended to preserve and just ended up there<sup>39</sup>. (Steedman 56)

Carolyn Steedman claims that the archive is “composed of selected documents from the past that no one intended to preserve” and coexists within forms of fiction that revisit official documents. These neglected historical documents attracted certain contemporary writers to re-appropriate and inscribe them into their works of fiction. This can be said of the work of Caryl Phillips, the central writer of this chapter, who takes on the seemingly easy task to use techniques, devices, and alterations that Phillips previously provided the reader. Among these techniques are collage, juxtaposition, intertextuality, and montage that altogether serve to offer a new more innovative albeit recycled archive. This approach subverts a critical overview of Phillips’ excessive reliance on these records. Rather the archives in the twenty first century fiction invite Black British writers of Caribbean ancestry to rewrite histories of slavery and thereby demonstrate the limits of archival legitimacy. Such limitations of the archive are provoked by the innovations in form, authenticity, context, intentions and contemporary anachronisms of each writer. The writer’s “necessity” to rely on archival resources—notably stories, diaries, journals, letters, and statistics—challenges the bigger picture of how transatlantic slavery is represented. According to each artist undertaken in this chapter, this representation cannot be re-narrated through a single source.

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<sup>39</sup> Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*, Rutgers University Press, 2011.

This chapter examines Caryl Phillips's literary texts, *Crossing the River* (1993) and *Cambridge* (1991) juxtaposed with the archival sources employed. I argue that this literary return offers new creative insight on slave narratives as sources of innovation for literary writers, and that such innovation may lead to a "new archive". Phillips's fictional texts allow readers to enter into multiple archives via one single narrative. Phillip's fiction builds an imaginative bridge between the past and the present. Through this the narrative discourse breathes life into old archival materials, creating a new fictional archive. As contemporary writers try to fill the gaps in these archival materials, they revive history's silenced voices.

Contemporary writers, like Caryl Phillips, are impelled to question the authenticity of the archival materials and their value in relation to enslaved Africans and the slave trade in the eighteenth century due to the absence of the submerged voices in archival records. These archival silences lead to an ultimate silence and sometimes "modified"<sup>40</sup> voice—those of the enslaved narrating their journeys or white slave masters recording their slave trade voyages. The fictional text intervenes to make the marginalized voices of enslaved people heard by the reader. Traditionally, the archival document's adequacy and authority is rarely questioned. Taking this acceptance into consideration, this chapter focuses on the textual structure of archival documents as sources of new fictional reproductions. This interdisciplinary approach underlines the way the fictional text "fills the gaps" and approaches this 'archival silence'. The concept of "archival silence" is further developed by Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Silencing the Past: Power and Production of History* (1995), who argues that "any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences, the result of a unique process, and the operation required to deconstruct these silences will vary accordingly" (Trouillot 26).

In the pursuit of these insights on archival silence, the fictional text challenges this silence to unveil the political interests that may have influenced the original archive, raising a certain awareness around who is silenced. As regards this silence, Trouillot identifies four crucial points at which silences enter the historical production process: "the moment of fact creation (the making of sources); the moment of fact assembly (the making of archives); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of narratives); and the moment of introspective significance (the making of history in the final instance" (Trouillot 27). In line with silence, Trouillot refers to all the facts any historical narratives processed as "documents and

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<sup>40</sup> In his study *Re-Membering the Black Atlantic: On the Poetics and Politics of Literary Memory*, Lars Eckstein refers to the question of authenticity in terms of classical slave narratives since some of them were reprinted and edited by white producers, p. 53.

monuments which are neither neutral nor natural” (Trouillot 48). As such, the archive, which is believed to be that source of authority and authenticity over the past becomes, however, “troubling,” borrowing Abigail Ward terms. In this respect, in his article “History and Memory: The Problem of the Archive” (2004), Francis X. Blouin, Jr. argues how in the context of historical understanding the archive becomes more problematic in its capacity to inform inquiries and authentic discourse” (Blouin Jr. 297). The challenges lie when the records are copied in the contemporary context to uncover the legacy of slavery. The question of using the archive in fiction requires attention and further analysis in this study precisely because of “this troubling” nature.

Caryl Phillips’s novels rely on written sources—notably slave narratives—as a way of giving his fictional voices room to trace the remains of the past. Phillips often combines historical sources with fictional narratives to write his novels. To illustrate, the Black British writer ‘borrows’ elements from slave journals, narratives and testimonies, and fuses them with imagination in order to produce a literary work that challenges preconceptions about written archives and their authority.

Caryl Phillips’s narratives undertake a mapping of the historical, cultural and psychological elements that have shaped Caribbean identity. Through this he performs a narrative examination of the history of slavery, the Middle Passage, colonialism, and the Black diaspora in Europe and America. They give access to the past through the slave narratives. In this chapter, I would like to draw attention to how fiction and the archive can work together to relate history to novels that engage with history in different ways. Additionally, this chapter seeks to identify the specific archives embedded in the literary text, with the aim to show how literature can immediately serve as a “historical archive”<sup>41</sup>. In his article, “Literature as Historical Archive” (2004), Allan H. Pasco ponders whether literature can serve as a historical archive considering literature as a cultural repository. He indicates likewise that historical sources must be interpreted and, then, fitted into some sort of “an appropriate overview or narrative”, since documents are often missing and in disorder (Pasco 376). For that purpose, these official documents require a close reading to uncover the atrocity of the past confronted with contemporary discourse.

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<sup>41</sup> Allan H. Pasco. “Literature as Historical Archive”. *New Literary History*, Critical Inquiries, Explorations, and Explanations. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004. p.373.

The questions of whether we can rely extensively on neo-slave narratives, deemed as archives, are multiple and manifold. Phillips's intention to make his work a means to discover history has been harshly criticized by Marcus Wood, who argues that Caryl Phillips fails to rewrite the authentic journal and renovate it into "a new thing" since his "pastiche reduce [s] the complexities and complications of the original" (Wood 59). Wood claims that Phillips's text "damage[s] Newton's original" through the slight changes of dates, numbers, names" (Wood 62). Additionally, he points out that Phillips seems to be "a diasporic variant of the post-colonial bricoleur". Upon perceiving these similarities, I chose to focus on the identification of the archive in Phillips's fictional texts by examining both sources and seeking to determine the place of slave narratives in Caryl Phillips's writing.

Caryl Phillips's multi-voiced texts revolves around slavery and its dynamic voices; this chapter builds on and extends the previous research on the polyphonic nature of Phillips's texts that some critics have discussed, such as Bénédicte Ledent's, in her essay "Slavery Revisited through Vocal Kaleidoscopes: Polyphony in Novels by Fred d'Aguiar and Caryl Phillips" (2005). Ledent argues that Caryl Phillips and Fred D'Aguiar's use polyphony to produce alternative historical narratives that are in turn lyrical and epic. In the wake of this multiplicity of voices, Caryl Phillips uses a variety of genres, which underline the dynamic nature of the archive; it can be re-used, revisited and re-mixed in contemporary fiction. His novels, regarded as purely fictional, often bear traces of non-fictional texts. For example, in his novel *Dancing in the Dark* (2005), Phillips includes archival materials as song lyrics and newspaper reports, in *Higher Ground* (1989) and *The Nature of Blood* (1997), he also alludes to Anne Frank's diary and adapts excerpts from Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative* of Olaudah Equiano throughout *A Distant Shore* (2003). In this regard, Lars Eckstein suggests in his study, *Remembering the Black Atlantic on the Poetics and Politics of Literary Memory* (2006), that Phillips makes an elaborate use of polyphony in his novel *Cambridge*. He notices how the speech of the white English narrator, Emily, "dialogically confronts, on equal terms, the ideologies of the older texts it writes back to" (Eckstein 82) and her narrative is, moreover, "juxtaposed dialogically" with that of the slave Cambridge" (Eckstein 85). This idea is also approached by Bénédicte Ledent, who argues in her essay "Remembering Slavery: History as Roots in the Fiction of Caryl Phillips and Fred D'Aguiar" (1997) that Caryl Phillips creates "narrative viewpoints which complete and contradict each other in a crisscrossing dialogue" (Ledent 277). Ledent sheds light on the dialogical voices and sources in Phillips's texts which interact with one another to produce meaning(s). By doing so, the

writer brings fictional text into dialogue with the archive that serves in the making of his new discourse.

In response to the same concern, in her study, *Caryl Phillips, David Dabydeen and Fred D'Aguiar: Representations of Slavery* (2011), Abigail Ward explores a range of novels, poetry and non-fictional works to look over their creative responses to the slave history. The focus of her study is on British literary representations of slavery with certain engagements with the ethics of exploring slavery, the memory and trauma of this past. Ward's study inspects the ways in which the literary explorations of slavery in Caryl Phillips, Fred D'Aguiar and David Dabydeen may shed light on current issues in Britain today, or what might be thought of as the continuing legacies of the UK's largely forgotten slave past.

As a response to such criticism, Phillips justifies his extensive use of historical documents in the inadequacy of relying upon one source or standard account to narrate the legacy of slavery. In his novels, Caryl Phillips visibly challenges archival documents as the sole authority over the past of slavery, and wishes to embrace rather than "elide conflicting interpretations and unassimilable memories" (Ward 34). Collage allows these texts to function as slave narrative fiction or as metanarratives exploring the possibilities, conditions, and limits of literature in accounting for past human experience. These similarities jointly inform how Phillips rewrites the archive to offer other interpretations and reflections on historiography and slavery. I argue that Phillips's texts clearly generate multiple voices from the past, yet, a close analysis evokes not only a sense of complexity but also creativity. To put it differently, the writer's attempts at giving his own version of history creates a balance resulting from the juxtaposition of competing versions of the past in the contemporary discourse. The fact that part of *Crossing the River* and *Cambridge* are written based on autobiographical texts should also be given some attention. Phillips relies on the conviction that history cannot be directly represented. This is justified through his often fragmented, non-linear narratives and stories within his texts. Regardless of the harsh criticism Phillips has confronted, upon reading his texts one can notice how he brings to the fore the fictional power of revisiting and rewriting several texts without losing sight of his main concern of addressing slavery.

The chapter breaks into three sections: "Revisiting Slave Narratives", "Reviving the Archive: Identifying the Archive in Literary Texts", and "The Literary Text as a New Archive: Transatlantic Slavery and Literature". For the sake of methodological accuracy, I

begin this chapter with a brief overview of slave narratives and neo-slave narratives, referring to their structures, intentions, contexts, and forms. I recall the characteristics of the genre generated from known autobiographies from the eighteenth century to help us explore their literary archival record. The examination of eighteenth-century slave narratives is particularly relevant in the context of this chapter since contemporary Black writers like Caryl Phillips, David Dabydeen, and Fred D'Aguiar, take part in this textual tradition. My overview will be further illustrated with an analysis of a few excerpts taken from each novel under scrutiny vs the archival sources employed to identify their differences and similarities. Finally, I will explore the interconnection between the archive, memory and Black identity in Caryl Phillips's fictional text, which resides in the faithful and imaginative imitation and recreation of historical voices to remember. His most radical experiment in this method is embedded in *Cambridge* in which he creates a dialogue between two distinct juxtaposed voices, Black and white voices. The literary process of identifying the archive in a fictional text can lead us to narrow a critical reflection on the author's intentions behind this practice and reflect further on the novel as a new commemorative fictional discourse that helps us to remember and recover from an imposed amnesia.

## 2.1 Revisiting Slave Narratives

### 2.1.1 Defining Slave Narratives: An Overview

The examination of eighteenth-century slave narratives is of particular relevance to this chapter as contemporary Black writers like Caryl Phillips, David Dabydeen, and Fred D'Aguiar write back to the textual tradition of the period. The following titles, among others, have long attracted a special readership in Western culture and represent some of the sources 'recycled' by the writers under study: Frederick Douglas's *Life and Times of Frederick Douglas written by Himself. His early Life as a Slave, His Escape from Bondage, and His Complete History to the Present Time* (1845), Mary Prince's *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave. Related to Herself* (1831), Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by Himself* (1789), William Hayden's *Narrative of William Hayden, Containing a Faithful Account of His Travels for a Number of Years, Whilst a Slave, in the South. Written by Himself* (1846) to state but a few. These listed texts might seem familiar to the modern reader as influential traditions in African American literature and yet have been written in the form of autobiographical narratives.

They were written in the eighteenth century and published in English by enslaved Africans or former enslaved Africans. Most of these narratives share a recording of the severe conditions of their bondage, their stories, their tales and their lives during the journey of slavery. I believe a general overview of these texts would be helpful in the process of understanding Caryl Phillips' unique style, further analyzed in the second part of this chapter. This overview does not presume to include all the slave narratives though, but rather serves as a framework to understand the nature of the texts used by the authors under scrutiny. The structure, intention, and form of these narratives, which were the primary source of the 1990s slave narratives and framed the Caribbean neo-slave narratives studied in this dissertation, will be the focus. In terms of slave narratives, writers under study use double archives; the slave narratives produced during eighteenth century and neo-slave narratives of 1960s.

In order to focus more on the way Black British writers have revisited and rewritten to slave narratives, it seems important to provide an overview of the genre along with its specificity in form and content. The original slave narratives were deemed to range between 1760 and 1865. In his study *The Classic Slave Narratives* (2002), Henry Louis Gates, Jr has mentioned how almost half of the African American literary tradition was created when its authors and their Black readers were either enslaved Africans or former ones (Gates 3). This literary genre emerged during the rise of the transatlantic abolitionist movement of the late eighteenth century. As testimonies to the brutality of life under slavery, they were considered as political documents against white masters. Historiography of this period experienced an intellectual shift in its understandings of how slavery was experienced in American history. Lynn Orilla Scott's article, "Autobiography: Slave Narratives" (2017), defines slave narratives as "autobiographical accounts of the physical and spiritual journey from slavery to freedom" that scholars recovered, republished, and analyzed. The form and content of slave narratives evolved over the course of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. The narrator's journey of the trials of slavery to freedom is figured in conjunction with reflections on the westernization of Christianity. Most early Black autobiographical accounts were dictated to a white amanuensis or editor who selected and arranged the former enslaved African's oral report, "improved" the style and wording, and provided an interpretive context in the preface and in the choice of metaphors that gave shape and meaning to the former enslaved African's story. In his book *Blind Memory* (2000), Marcus Wood states, "slave narratives are notoriously difficult to locate in terms of form, and in terms of "truth" of their content" (Wood 139). Similar to Wood's work, Ashraf Rushdy approaches slave narratives as

complex objects circulating in many intersecting exchanges and listens carefully for the whistling and humming around him. Rushdy places the form in dialogue with the politics of Black Power, arguing that the novels “organized the production and reception of the intellectual and rhetorical strategies of the Black Power movement” (Rushdy 43).

Rushdy further develops this in his claim that these novels insist on a kind of intersubjectivity that questions the cultural politics of literary individualism and of received and often (mis)appropriated histories of race and slavery at different points in the second half of the twenties. Rushdy continually demonstrates that this form “whistles and hums” with history (Rushdy 5). As slave narratives were written by the enslaved or formerly enslaved Africans, they offer unique perspectives on the politics of slavery. The relationship of enslaved or formerly enslaved to the sites of slavery—the nodes of the Atlantic system—differ in significant ways from those of free people. This emerges most clearly when we read slave narratives as travel narratives.

The possibility that some of these narratives were edited by white people raises the ‘authenticity’ issue that has been brought up by some critics. William L. Andrews points out that in many early African American autobiographies, it is often “impossible to separate the voice of the black autobiography subject from that of the white writer recording and interpreting the story” (Andrews 7). A number of antebellum narratives went through multiple editions and sold tens of thousands of copies, far exceeding sales of contemporary works by Herman Melville, Henry David Thoreau, or Nathaniel Hawthorne. Among the bestselling were *A Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of Moses Roper from American Slavery* (1837); *Narrative of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave Written by Himself* (1845); Solomon Northrup’s *Twelve Years a Slave* (1853); and Josiah Henson’s second autobiography, *Truth Stranger than Fiction: Father Henson’s Story of His Own Life* (1858). These slave narratives have created a genre of literature that at once testified against their masters and bore witness to the urge of every enslaved African to be free and literate.

Drawing from techniques used in popular historical novels, the slave narratives are episodic in structure, melodramatic in tone and didactic in their appeal to commonly held moral values. Slave narrators appealed to the religious and secular values of their white audiences, arguing that slavery dehumanized the masters as well as degraded the enslaved. Autobiographies written by newly freed Blacks after the Civil War clearly borrowed



conventions from antebellum narratives (those written before the American Civil War). However, these autobiographies had distinct goals and focuses.

### 2.1.2 Form and Content

Slave narratives have been featured by their particular similarities in terms of their form and content. As Gates explained, slave narratives “came to resemble each other, both in their content and in their formal shape” (Gates 2). In this process of imitation and repetition, they were considered as “communal utterance [s], collective tale [s], rather than merely individual autobiograph[ies]” (Gates 2). To illustrate, these slave narratives share simultaneously similar stories that were written on behalf of the millions of silent enslaved Africans still enslaved by white masters. In the same context, in his essay “How to Read a Slave Narrative” (2010), William L. Andrews identifies how: “all the heterogeneous, heterogeneric elements in slave narratives come to be so regular, so constant, so indispensable to finally establish a set of conventions. This series of observances become virtually *de rigueur* for slave narratives unto themselves” (Andrews 152). The conventions for slave narratives were firmly established and imagined within the same patterns and structures. For a better understanding of the latter, I quote this long passage to give a detailed structure of a slave narrative text that will be further served in our analysis of Caryl Phillips, Fred D’Aguiar and David Dabydeen’s texts:

A portrait signed by the narrator.

A page that includes the claim, “Written by himself,” as an integral part of the title

A handful of testimonials and/or one or more prefaces or introductions written either by a white abolitionist friend of the narrator or by a white amanuensis editor/author actually responsible for the text. Here, the reader is told that the narrative is a “plain unvarnished tale” and that it might have been set down from the imagination.

A poetic epigraph, by preference from William Cowper.

The actual narrative:

A first sentence beginning: “I was born,” specifying the place but not the date of birth.

A sketchy account of parentage, often involving a white father

A description of a cruel master

An account of one extraordinary strong slave

A record of the barriers raised against slave literacy and the overwhelming difficulties encountered in learning to read and write

A description of a “Christian” slaveholder and the accompanying claim that Christian slave-holders are invariably worse than those professing no religion

A description of food, clothes, the pattern of a day, a week, a year

An account of a slave auction, of families being destroyed and separated, of distraught mothers clinging to their children as they are torn from them

A description of failed attempt to escape

A description of successful attempt to escape

Taking of a new last home to accord with a new social identity as a free man

Reflections on slavery

F) An appendix or appendices composed of documentary material: bills of sale, details of purchase from slavery, newspaper items, further reflections on slavery, sermons, anti-slavery by speeches, poems, appeals to the reader for funds and moral support in the battle against slavery. (Andrews 153)

As previously mentioned, slave narratives shaped the events and stories of the enslaved lives into a similar, chronological, and well-structured pattern to meet with a new notion of ‘authenticity’. Gates explains further how the enslaved writings were often “direct extensions of their speeches, and many ex-slave narrators confessed that their printed texts were formal revisions of their spoken words or organized and promoted by anti-slavery organisations” (Gates 4). This confession, however, raised awareness of the authenticity of these narratives providing room for criticism.

### 2.1.3 The Politics of Authenticity in Slave Narratives

The term ‘authenticity’ derives from ancient Greek, *authentikos* which means original, accurate and genuine. It can be additionally associated with words like “legitimacy, credibility, reliability and truthfulness”<sup>42</sup>. The question of ‘authenticity’ of slave narratives, predominantly narrated by enslaved Africans themselves and edited and published by whites, has frequently been posed in the process of reading them, perhaps to gain a better understanding of slavery.

As a response to the claims raised on the lack of authenticity in Janet Schaw’s *Journal of a Lady of Quality: Being the Narrative of a Journey from Scotland to the West*

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<sup>42</sup> These terms were taken from the definitions provided by the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Collins Thesaurus of the English Language – Complete and Unabridged 2nd Edition. 2002 © HarperCollins Publishers 2002. <https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=authenticity+>. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english-thesaurus/authentic>.

*Indies, North Carolina and Portugal, in the years of 1774-1776*, the editor, Evangeline Walker Andrews, states:

If further proof were needed, both of the authenticity of the journal and also of the accuracy and truthfulness of the author in describing places, events, and individuals, that is supplied by the notes and appendices of this volume, in which Professor Andrews has checked up or amplified each point of personal and historical interest. Scholarly research has been applied to the work of this delightful “lady of Quality”, but she holds her ground firmly and ably, as with ease and fluency she discusses manners and customs, climate and scenery, sugar-culture and farming, friends, their houses, amusements, recreations, and sorrows and, fortunately for posterity, happenings and human beings as she saw both in the West Indies and North Carolina just before the American War for Independence. (Andrews 8)

The editor’s declaration above rejects all sorts of falsification in terms of the written version as most of the events and information have been checked and revised appropriately to avoid any misconceptions and doubts. Similarly, in her article, “Harriet Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*: The Re-Definition of the Slave Narrative Genre,” (1986), Joanne M. Braxton investigates the issue of authenticity in slave narratives using a description of Jacobs and Jacobs’s text from an anti-slavery advocate review:

we have read this book with no ordinary interest, for we are acquainted with the writer; and have heard many of the incidents from her own lips and have great confidence in her truthfulness and integrity. Her manners were marked by refinement and sensibility; and by an utter absence of pretense or affectation; and we were deeply touched by the circumstances of her early life which she then communicated and which exactly coincide with those of the volume now before us. (Braxton 383)

Braxton does not only refer to the authenticity of slave narratives but also to the universal nature of this discourse, adding how “despite its rarity, [Jacob’s text] speaks for many lives; it is in many respects a representative document” (Braxton 385). Many scholars were overwhelmed by the sheer volume and diversity of the writings called slave narratives. In his article “Black Message/White Envelope: Genre, Authenticity, and Authority in the Antebellum Slave Narrative” (1987), John Sekora indicates how eighteenth-century examples, like many other American prose works, used the word narrative prominently in their titles, often as the first substance word, the phrases “run-away slave”, “fugitive slave”, “escaped slave” were regularly added early in the nineteenth century (Sekora 467). By the early 1830s at the latest, sponsors, printers and reviewers were writing of a distinct genre” (Sekora 483). Slave-owners possessed increasingly elaborate state codes controlling the labor and physical being of enslaved Africans. To masters, the words of enslaved Africans appeared

doubly significant; on the one hand, they were intimate, personal expressions of self and world. On the other hand, they were potent, lethal things.

Slave narratives retain their integrity and are as compelling as they were before to scholars and reviewers today. In their introduction, *The Language of Slavery*, Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates asserted that “no written text is a transparent rendering of historical reality be that text composed by master or slave. The slave’s narrative has precisely the identical documentary status as does any other written account of slavery” (Davis and Gates, 1985, 3). Whereas its presuppositions tend to differ dramatically from those of texts written by non-slaves, both sorts of texts are of the same order as historical documents and literary discourses.

It is no longer possible to speak about ‘authenticity’ and the conflict of voices without engaging with the 1999 publication of evidence found by Equiano’s editor and biographer, Vincent Carretta, which suggests that Equiano may not have been born in Africa, as he claimed in his narrative, but instead in North America. Before the emergence of this data, critics were divided over how to interpret his narratives. Such a paradox in Equiano’s narratives raised questions about the degree to which slave narratives can be considered as powerful recordings of the past. In bringing this lack of accuracy and authenticity into the discourse, slave narratives are central to contemporary writing forms today, as is the continued legacy of slavery in fiction.

#### 2.1.4 Neo-Slave Narratives

Despite their close relation, it seems crucial to discern the difference between slave narratives and neo-slave narratives. Many prominent critics like Bernard W Bell, Ashraf H.A.Rushdy, Valerie Smith, and others discuss neo-slave narratives by referring to novels from the mid-sixties through today that perform conventions of the slave narrative genre originating in the late eighteenth century. Examining novels like Margaret Walker’s *Jubilee* (1966), Alex Haley’s *Roots* (1976), and Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987), among others, critics explore how contemporary writers renewed a historical form to examine the African American community.

Ashraf H. A. Rushdy's *Neo-Slave Narratives: Studies in the Social Logic of a Literary Form* (1999) revisits the term neo-slave narrative which refers to the literary genre of contemporary narratives of slavery emerging in the late 1960s and 1970s. These narratives precisely rewrite records of racialized slavery in the Atlantic World from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries. The neo-slave narratives rather refer to texts written in the mid-to late twentieth century and early twenty-first centuries. Rushdy's *Neo-slave Narratives* was composed of close readings of four neo-slave narratives: Ishmael Reed's *Flight to Canada*, Sherley Anne Williams's *Dessa Rose*, Charles Johnson's *Oxherding Tale*, and Johnson's *Middle Passage*. Frustrated by a somewhat confining term, neo-slave narratives in Rushdy's study attempts, in his words, "contemporary novels that assume the form, adopt the conventions, and take on the first-person voice of the antebellum narrative" (Rushdy 3).

In his review of Rushdy's study, Eric Gardner explains how the neo-slave narratives examined reveal an "intersubjectivity that questions the cultural politics both of literary individualism and of received and often (mis)appropriated histories of race" (Gardner 542). Rushdy argues that the aim of neo-slave narratives resonates, then, not to study the specific and singular dialogue between such texts and slave narratives as much as to mark and place this specific form in its own multifocal cultural moment. He continues to demonstrate that neo-slave narrative, as a contemporary form, is highly associated with history.

In her article, "Neo-Slave Narratives in Contemporary Black British Fiction" (2012), Sofia Munz-Valdivieso, a literary critic, provides further insights on Rushdy's definition of neo-slave narratives. She argues that these contemporary narratives are particular kinds of slavery fiction, those that recreate the first-person narrator of the original texts written (or dictated) by former enslaved Africans themselves" (Valdivieso 43). Similarly, Valdivieso refers to Bernard Bell's in *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition* (1987), where the term neo-slave narratives first originates to study the fictions about slavery that began to appear in the US in the sixties and seventies. Bernard Bell has described neo-slave narratives as "residually oral, modern narratives of escape from bondage to freedom" (Bell qtd in Valdivieso 47). We might consider the slavery novels published in Britain as playing a role in the recent re-configurations of the past taking place in the country as a more general effort from historians, artists, and other social forces to make British involvement in the slave trade and slavery relevant to "present ethnic and cultural identities" (Valdivieso 44).

This study of William L. Andrews refers to the structural features of the new genre that replicate forms of prefaces and introductions in historical slave narratives. He argues that typically, in the antebellum slave narrative “a black message inside a white envelope” (Andrews 4) is carried to the reader. Andrews claims how “prefatory matter by whites attest to the reliability and good character of the black narrator while calling attention to what the narrative would reveal about the moral abominations of slavery”. He explains how notable examples of white prefaces to black texts such as William Llyod Garrison’s in *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* and Lydia Maria Child’s in *Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl* seek to authenticate the veracity of the narratives that follow them.

Authors of African and Caribbean origins primarily refer to novels published in Britain about the legacy of slavery. Among them we can find Caryl Phillips’s *Higher Ground* (1989) and *Crossing the River* (1993), Fred D’Aguiar’s *The Longest Memory* (1994), Laura Fish’s *Strange Music* (2008). These novels are typically ‘polyphonic’, as they offer the perspectives of different characters involved in slavery, and “subvert the grand, master narrative of history... not through a reversal of the center of the margin, but by ... replacing the original exclusiveness by a new inclusive approach” (Ledent 291). The polyphony in these novels is usually achieved by shifting the focalization of the third-person narration so that the full story of each text is told through different centers of enunciation. *Crossing the River* and *Cambridge* among others explicitly revisit the original slave narratives, which is one of the concerns of part two in this chapter. To this end, neo-slave narratives take another contemporary approach to becoming “more transnational and global” (Misrahi-Barak 239).

Phillips’s narratives combine narrative patterns of the genre of slave narratives with the conventional literary forms and stylistic devices of contemporary literature. This new form connects the past to the present. To put it differently, drawing attention to slave narratives above allows us to fill in understandings of the necessity to revisit archival sources that Anna Stoler defines as “sites of the expectant and conjured—about dreams of confronting futures and forebodings of future failures” (Stoler 3). To rephrase, what was left behind was not obsolete but as Stoler argues: insists on the necessity to return to the past for a better understating of our future. Embedding a historical context into fiction not only bears witness to traumatic histories of slavery but also connects these histories to the present. The reliance on slave narratives can serve to classify Phillips’s novel as a multidisciplinary genre. This

genre generates a sense of “postcolonial healing”<sup>43</sup> (Ford 22). To frame a concrete differentiated picture of how contemporary writers are inscribed in the archives, a close analysis drawn on excerpts from these archives can be juxtaposed to fiction as necessary. The following section will demonstrate the multi-disciplinary and polyphonic *recycling* and *montage* techniques that Phillips remarkably frames to provide a modern reader with a polyphonic text that revisits the past from contemporary perspectives.

## 2.2 Reviving the Archive: Identifying the Archive in Literary Texts

Evading restrictions to one historical source, Caryl Phillips’s texts offer an amalgam of historical materials. These include texts such as *The Interesting Narratives of Olaudah Equiano*; *The Journal of a Slave Trade* (John Newton); Janet Schaw’s *Journal of a Lady of Quality*; Mrs. Carmichael’s *Domestic Manners and Social Conditions of the White, Colored, and Negro Population of the West Indies* (1833); Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* (1796); Phillis Wheatley poems; Sojourner Truth, Harriet Ann Jacobs, and Linda Brent’s accounts in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*; Mathew Lewis’s *Journal of a West India Proprietor*; *Lady Nugent’s Journal of Her Residence in Jamaica from 1801 to 1805*, Mrs. Flannigan’s *Antigua and the Antiguans* (1844); and Lowell Joseph Ragatz’s *The Fall of the Planter Class in the British Caribbean 1763-1833*, to state but a few. My analysis takes this into consideration by focusing on John Newton’s *The Journal of a Slave Trade* as the text that has the most visible traces in the section “Crossing the River”.

### 2.2.1 “Crossing the River” vs the Archives

Caryl Phillips’s novel, *Crossing the River* (1993) is often studied alongside neo-slave narratives. It is worthy to mention that recent criticism has condemned his “excessive” use of archives. Slavery is at the heart of the third section, entitled “Crossing the River,” which consists of slave trader James Hamilton’s logbook during his travel to the west coast of Africa in 1752-1753. The logbook includes two letters destined— to his wife—located in the middle of his journal. Such texts are stylistically different from the original journal. Phillips

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<sup>43</sup> In his article, “Representations of Deference and Defiance in the Novels of Caryl Phillips,” John Ford argues that the novels of Caryl Phillips challenge ideologically fixed notions of victims and victors. His work explores the uncomfortable notion of the “Uncle Tom” and representations of vulnerability in the colonizer.

intentionally acknowledges the use of John Newton's eighteenth-century *Journal of a Slave Trader 1750-1754* when crafting James Hamilton's logbook in the novel as he himself testifies in this passage: "I have employed many sources in the preparation of this novel, but would like to express my particular obligation to John Newton's eighteenth-century *Journal of a Slave Trader*, which furnished me with invaluable research material for part three" (Phillips 1993).

This explicit acknowledgement draws attention to "intertextuality" as a powerful technique to make sense of a text in Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan's words. In her study, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (1983), Rimmon-Kenan addresses the process of reading in relation to other codes. The text, then, entails a "perspective of quotations, a mirage of structures, so many fragments of something that has been *already* read, seen, done, experienced" (Rimmon-Kenan 124). The technique of involving other sources into *Crossing the River* meets with Gerard Genette's concept of 'transtextuality', or textual transcendence, which he defines as "all that sets the text in relationship, whether obvious or concealed with other texts which covers all aspects of a particular text" (Genette 83-84). To put it differently, trans-textuality is the connection built between a text and another text. In the 1960s, the term "intertextuality" was first employed by Julia Kristeva to make reference to any apparent relation between different texts. Intertextuality can be defined as a theory of the text that expands the identity of the text to include its origins and its uses to past texts. No text is autonomous rather every text maintains an inter-text within the context of current happenings and the past. Gerard Genette further expanded Kristeva's study as a relationally of texts systematically so as to demonstrate a "transtextuality" or textual transcendence.

Prior to further textual analysis, it is worth noting that Phillips's novel fits with Genette's notion of "hypertextuality". Genette defines his concept as "any relationship uniting a text B (the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary" (Genette 5). He further explains that a hypertext is any text derived from a pre-existing text either from simple transformation or indirect imitation. Therefore, the hypertext appears as a combination of repetition and alteration at the same time. In light of Genette's conception of hypertextuality, it can be appreciated that Phillips's texts reverberate with the echoes of neo-slave narratives as a kind of hypertext. I defend that this is far from the case, as this novel, much like Phillip's other writings, is made eminent through its creative approach to both structure and theme.



Since Phillips's fictional text appears to be 'a pastiche' of John Newton's, the reader might initially classify Phillips's novel as Genette's "hypotext". The intertextuality, or 'collage,' rather perfectly embodies what Lars Eckstein depicts as "the explosion of formal and temporal unity" (Eckstein 104) into, "bits and pieces of historical records are cut out of original sources and mixed as a montage into the novel to represent a bigger picture" (Eckstein 69). The term 'pastiche' is a key figure in the study of Caryl Phillips's works. The *Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines the term as "a patchwork of words, sentences or complete passages from various authors or one author"<sup>44</sup>. As per the *OED*, the term means "to copy the style; to imitate"<sup>45</sup>. In critical theory, the term has taken another connotation. To illustrate, in his study Eckstein indicates how both terms of 'pastiche' and 'montage' are fundamental techniques in the novel of *Cambridge*. He provides additional examples of the distinctions he has made between these two terms:

The novel is composed of numerous, in most cases slightly modified fragments of older texts (montage); at the same time, these fragments are supplemented and interconnected by passages which merely imitate the source-material stylistically while relying entirely on Phillip's own imagination (pastiche). (Eckstein 73)

Interestingly, the term 'pastiche' maintains an equivocal aspect. *The Cambridge Dictionary* refers to 'pastiche' as "a piece of art, music, literature, etc. that intentionally copies the style of someone else's work or is intentionally in various styles, or the practice of making art in either of these ways"<sup>46</sup>. I would like to concentrate on the following important aspects for the purpose of my analysis: "a piece of art", "intentionally copies", and "the pastiche of making art in either of these ways". Caryl Phillips has been harshly criticized for his extensive use of historical documents and montage in his texts. Still, this technique requires certain degrees of "playfulness" and "creativity" to offer thoughtful contemporary neo-slave narratives, as is the case for Caryl Phillips's *Cambridge* and *Crossing the River*. The writer does not strictly copy other texts. Rather, he 'corrects' and 'alters' the original text to make it fit within a modern English language and its perspectives of a modern reader. This argument will be further analyzed in this chapter through a few excerpts from Phillips's fictional text.

*Crossing the River* is intertwined into four fragmented narratives. The novel represents different narrators who intervene each time: a former enslaved African who has returned to Africa and exchanged letters with his former master, the captain of a slave ship, a runaway

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<sup>44</sup> "Pastiche". *The Penguin Book of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, ed. J.A. Cuddon, Penguin, 1992, p. 685.

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=pastiche>.

<sup>46</sup> "Pastiche" from the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus* © Cambridge University Press). 25 July.2022 <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/pastiche>.

*slave*<sup>47</sup> and a British woman who had an affair with a Black American during World War II. Moving from one period to another within the same fictional text, as in the case of *Crossing the River*, reminds us of what Gail Low states about the movement from *Cambridge* to *Crossing the River*. She describes this time shift as a “redemptive act: the past is seen as our partners in the future” (Low 130).

Likewise, Phillips’s extensive reliance on other sources characterizes both *Cambridge* and *The Nature of Blood*. Many critics such as Kowaleski-Wallace, Eckstein, O’Callaghan, Joanno and Lanone focus on “the creative transformation of the historical documents” into fictional artworks. However, as previously mentioned, Phillips’s texts were harshly criticized—notably by Marcus Wood—for their excessive dependence on original texts. Wood describes this reliance as a lack of creativity, especially when the text supposedly approaches slavery from a white slave trader’s perspective. In line with these critical overviews, my analysis, then, focuses on identifying the archival document in Phillips’s fictional texts. I am particularly interested in *Crossing the River* through juxtaposing Hamilton’s logbook with the slave trader’s logbook. This juxtaposition demonstrates how Phillips brings the archive into fiction and by doing so he creates another discourse surrounding cultural memory and the hidden silenced truth inscribed in the archive itself.

As previously mentioned above, Phillips relies on John Newton’s<sup>48</sup> *The Journal of a Slave Trader*, which is believed by editors to be “unique as a complete day-to-day record of the negro slave trade at the middle of the eighteenth century, from the point of view of a slave

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<sup>47</sup> There is a shift in language in terms of the word “slave”, which is transformed into “enslaved African” or “enslaved people”. However, here for the purpose of this literary analysis on the use of the archive, I need to keep the name in its original form.

<sup>48</sup>From 1750 to 1754, John Newton was Master of slave ships (a quite respectable occupation), and the journal which he then kept has ever since been locked away, unseen by any historian and only quoted briefly by one of his biographers. It is unique as a record of the slave trade. It covers three voyages from England to Africa, giving details about months of trading on the west coast, the notorious “Middle Passage” to the West Indies and the return voyages to England. It is an important addition to our information about slave trading, about the history of West Africa and, to a lesser extent, about life at sea in the mid-eighteenth century. The editors have omitted passages which are repetitive and have included a few extracts from Newton's diary and letters written from sea at the same time as the journal, so that Newton's character while he engaged in this shocking trade is revealed to an astonishing degree. Later, when Newton was a clergyman and the intimate friend of the poet Cowper, he wrote hymns which are still popular and books which were reprinted again and again all through the nineteenth century. His flair for literature adds to the fascination of the journal. On the title page of the journal, Newton wrote a Latin tag, 'It will be pleasant to remember these things hereafter, 'but in middle age he described the slave trade as 'a business at which my heart now shudders.' He became an abolitionist and was largely responsible for bringing Wilberforce into the anti-slavery campaign. With the journal before him to refresh his memory, he also wrote *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade*, a pamphlet which supplements the journal and is included as an appendix.”

ship's captain." The journal fills 336 pages of a leather-bound foolscap book. Entries were made daily over a period of four years at sea. Newton's entries ran from noon to noon. In 1750, when the journal begins, "the slave trade was not only respectable, but seemed indispensable to English Prosperity" (Martin and Spurrell 1962, Newton xi). This raises the question behind Phillips's use of the white agenda to write about the slave trade despite the fact that Newton himself clearly states in one of his diaries how he "was brought out of a way of life, disagreeable to my temper and inconvenient to his profession" (Newton xii). Burney Maritime Dictionary identifies how a journal is meant "to record what winds and currents a ship meets with so that, with the observation and the log, the ship's position could be fixed." Newton's journal covers three voyages: the first from 11<sup>th</sup> August 1750 to 17<sup>th</sup> October 1751 from Liverpool to the Windward Coast of Africa, the second from 30<sup>th</sup> June 1752 to 29<sup>th</sup> August 1753 in Antigua, and the last to Liverpool. Whereas Hamilton's journal covers the second voyage commenced in the 24<sup>th</sup> August 1752. Newton's logbook, according to the editor of Newton's journal, had to include and record all details about the weather conditions, the daily activities on board, the health of the crew and the enslaved, death rates and enslaved Africans' numbers that would later serve as an economic archive.

The original document, *The Journal of a Slave Trader (1750-1754)*, is composed of two parts. The first comprises a logbook in which Newton covers three voyages from England to Africa. This portion provides details about months of trading on the west coast, the Middle Passage to the West Indies, and the return voyages to England. It records his slave trade, the three voyages, the sickness and death rate of slaves and crew, and weather forecasts. The second part, entitled "Thoughts Upon the African Slave Trade" records Newton's feelings, personal emotions and thoughts about the slave trade. Newton's engagement into the slave trade may be understood through his own words, described in a letter to his wife written on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1753:

The three greatest blessings of which human nature is capable are undoubtedly religion, liberty, and love. In each of these how highly has God distinguished me! But here in Africa are whole nations around me, whose languages are entirely different from each other, yet I believe they all agree in this, that they have no words among them expressive of these engaging ideas... These poor creatures are not only strangers to the advantages which I enjoy, but are plunged in all the contrary evils...that are deceived and harassed by necromancing, magic, and all the train of superstitions that fear combined with ignorance, can produce in the human mind. The only liberty of which they have any notion, is an exception from being sold, and even from this very few are perfectly secure. for it often happens, that the man who sells another on board a ship, is himself bought and sold, in the

same manner, and perhaps in the same vessel, before the week is ended. (Letters to his wife, xii)

June 1756: After recording in his diary how he was obliged to leave the slave trade on account of ill health, he wrote, “thus I was brought out of a way of life, disagreeable to my temper and inconvenient to my profession (of the Christian faith).

I think I should have quitted it (the slave trade) sooner had I considered it as I now do to be unlawful and wrong. What I did I did ignorantly. (Martin and Spurrell xii)

As mentioned above, Newton’s feelings of doubts about the morality of the trade were expressed in his authentic narrative eight years later in 1764. He considered the slave trade an “unhappy and disgraceful branch of commerce” (Newton 98), and expressed explicitly in his notes the way he was “bound in conscious to take shame on himself” as his trade provoked a feeling of “fear combined with ignorance”. These feelings of remorse seem, surprisingly, ignored and nonexistent in Hamilton’s discourse.

Despite the explicit resemblance to words and form with the original document, it is important to note that Hamilton’s logbook, in contrast to Newton’s, incorporates another ‘epistolary’ when he includes one of his letters to his wife in his logbook. Hamilton’s logbook includes at the end an emotional letter written to his wife on the 25th of August without any specific year in which he expressed his feeling of grief and loss of his father’s death, dreaming of “imagined joys of his projected children” (Phillips 118). Hamilton’s letter, though, imitates the same discourse Newton has often uses in his letters to his wife in which he expresses his extreme admiration, love and idolatry to his wife. The following excerpts can best illustrate this difference:

Liverpool, October 7, 1755.

I cannot express what I felt today while I was reading your dear letter, which informs me that you hope to set out next week; but you can guess for me. Ten thousand thoughts crowded upon me at once. The remembrance of that mournful, painful week at London, when I could only behold and share, and, by sharing, increase your distress, without procuring you the least help or ease, (which I hope I shall never forget while I can remember anything), the situation in which we parted, when the Lord enabled me to hope against hope- the joy to think you now recovered from a most dangerous illness- the expectation of seeing you in a few days, and the former experience I have had, of what a happy meeting with you includes — all these different emotions of joy and sorrow, of love and gratitude, took possession of my soul at once. And so indeed? Shall I receive you soon as restored from the grave, and have all my

pleasures heightened by the contrast of my late trials? Oh, then, what shall I render to the Lord for all his goodness? Could money or friends have helped us, you would have been relieved sooner—but there was no power in heaven or earth, that could restore ease to you or peace to me—but God alone. (Newton Letters 1408)

Hunslett, May 17, 1759.

I cannot tell you how often your dear name has been in my mouth since I left you, nor how earnestly and frequently I commend you to the Lord's blessing. May He teach us to improve these short occasional separations. When I am absent from you — I most sensibly feel how dear you are to me; and what a heavy trial I would have, if God was to take you wholly from me. I ought to believe that He enable me to bear whatever he may appoint, because such is his promise; but at present it seems, that a blow so near to my heart, would be long and deeply felt in every other circumstance of life, and that I would find pleasure in nothing but in bemoaning my loss. (Newton's letters 1417)

West Africa, 25<sup>th</sup> April

My dear, I too must confess to deep feelings of revulsion, but haltered is a word altogether too fierce to describe my natural passions, for in the same manner that a continued indulgence in this trade and keen faith cannot reside in our breast, one heart can surely not contain the warring passions of both love and hatred. This being true, then my father's heart must surely have hardened on his final fateful voyage. (Phillips 119)

While Newton's letters to his wife above visibly portrays a sincere love and emotion merged with a religious discourse and prayers, Hamilton's letter does not imitate word by word the original text, but instead appears to be a mixture of Newton's words with fictional contribution. In Phillips's version, "Letters to Wife" has been omitted despite his borrowing from some of Newton's letters. Newton's letters dated from 1755-1785, notably before his departure from Liverpool, after his arrival in Antigua, and when he was at sea headed toward Liverpool. Hamilton's letters, however, were written before his departure from Liverpool.

8<sup>th</sup> January (1751): No one who has not experienced it like me, can conceive the contract between my present situation, distracted with the noise of slaves and traders, suffocated with heat, and almost chop-fallen with perpetual talking; and the sweet agreeable evenings I have passed in your company. (Newton 48)

26<sup>th</sup> April (1753): Those, myself aside, who have experienced pleasant and agreeable evenings in your company, could never imagine the contrast between such sweet times, and the present miserable situation. I am continually assaulted by the combined noises of slaves and traders; suffocated by heat; and subjected to perpetual talking, the greater part of it to no serious purpose. (Phillips 118)

Tightly bound to religion, Newton's utterances and style in his letters to his wife denote a kind of hypocrisy or contradiction, precisely, for the profession of the slave trader is associated with atrocity, violence and inhumanity. Religion and slavery meet in the same

document at an awkward intersection. The desire of including one of the letters in “Crossing the river” might be approached as an intentional desire from Phillips to reveal such hypocrisy and turmoil within the official document. In accordance with religion, another slave narrative depicted discrepancies between the master’s religious and economic discourses. In the slave narrative, *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw* (1772), Ukawsaw Gronniosaw narrates the conflict between religion and commerce, a core matter of British identity and international position in the eighteenth century.

The excerpt above reveals Hamilton’s paradoxical personality who seems to appear as a ‘sensitive’ and ‘caring husband’ but is simultaneously a rather indifferent and careless captain. This vocal duality in Hamilton’s character echoes a traumatic state of mind and a sense of contradiction. In other words, the love content of the letter included within the suffering daily life of enslaved Africans and records of death rates creates a paradoxical traumatic self. This discontinuity and rupture in Hamilton’s discourse embodies two voices; one voice obliterates the other trying to find balance through family love. By doing so, Phillips gives voice to the slave trader, which is perceived as a narrative technique of transforming the archives into what Abigail Ward coins “monuments” creating “docu/monuments” (Ward 257) and providing voices to the silenced archive. Additionally, these “monuments” are regarded as “patchwork[s] of discontinuities texts (Birat 47). Another record that Phillips used to shape William Nash's letters in his novel will be discussed in the following section.

### 2.2.2 Williams Nash’s Letters vs John McDonogh’s Letters<sup>49</sup>

It is relevant in the context of my study to point to another remarkable use of the archive in *Crossing the River* which is precisely reflected in the first part “The Pagan Coast”.

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<sup>49</sup> The Louisiana digital library provides a biography of John McDonogh along with examples of letters sent by freed slaves documenting their voyages in Liberia. As stated, John McDonogh (1779-1850) was a merchant, land speculator, plantation owner, slaveholder, and philanthropist of Baltimore and New Orleans. At his plantation near New Orleans, he gave his enslaved persons religious and vocational training as well as the ability to purchase their freedom after fifteen years of work. He collaborated with the American Colonization Society to send about 80 of his freed slaves to Liberia in 1842. In his will, he bequeathed the bulk of his fortune to the cities of Baltimore and New Orleans for the purpose of building public schools for poor white and freed black children <https://louisianadigitallibrary.org/islandora/object/fpoc-p16313coll51%3A62162>.

Phillips employs the same form of letters written by enslaved Africans from the letters collected by Bell Irvin Wiley's slave letters entitled *Slaves No More: Letters from Liberia, 1833-1869* (1980)<sup>50</sup> notably "Letters of the John McDonogh Negroes" (1779-1850) who was a merchant and philanthropist.

Most of these letters have recorded the enslaved Africans' struggle during the long voyage to Liberia between 1820 and 1861. Despite the discouragement and disappointment reflected in many of the letters, the settlers demonstrated a remarkable capacity to overcome the hostility of nature and to endure with courage and dignity. Bell I. Wiley has collected and annotated 273 letters written from Liberia by former enslaved Africans. Accordingly, to read the letters is to reach a new understanding of the meaning of slavery and of freedom; "one senses the strength of the black family that distance did not splinter; one wonders at the religious faith that endured through the unimagined hardships and disasters" (Wiley 1980). Phillips adapts some of the content written in these letters in his novel, from which I picked some illustrations:

We are all well, with the exception of young York, upon whom the sea-sickness vented itself with uncommon fury, and whose childish body has yet to recover equilibrium. (Phillips 17)

Liberia is a fine place to live in. I was at first astonished to see the bushes that grow in the streets, and the boldness of the nature all about, but my persons now accustomed to these strange sights. Thank God I have been spared to reach here in good health and by His permission do still enjoy it. The town of Monrovia is well-watered and timbered, and if a person could have a little capital he would do very well. (Phillips 18)

I will share with you a few words about the animals in this place. I have been visited by a cunning leopard in the past few days, who has taken off with both goats and hogs, two of each if my count is correct. I watched out for this creature but could never see him. Leopards often visit Monrovia, where they walk the streets at night committing great depredations...Recently I killed a snake of nine feet in length, and the proud possessor of a tremendous girth. He was black and red in colour and basking on the margin of the river with an air of unfettered superiority. In addition, we have quite a variety of handsome birds, although their names still elude me. (Phillips 24-25)

A little aid from you, dear father, would do me much good at this time. "Giving doth not impoverish". I would be glad to plague you a little to see if you would send out some trade goods, that I might in the due passage of time answer with coffee, ginger, arrowroot and other materials that I will presently crop from land. Good white shirting, shoes, stockings, tobacco, flour, port, mackerels, molasses, sugar, and a small flitch of bacon and other little trifles as you find convenient to

send. Though cotton is raised in this country there is at present not so much as to be able to manufactures clothes. (Phillips 25)

Dear Father, Saint Paul's River, September 1843

I embrace the present opportunity writing you a few lines hoping that these may find you well and all my friends that are with you. I am well at present. (George R.Ellis McDonogh letter 1843)

My Dear Father, Saint Paul's River, March 10<sup>th</sup> 1839

I am taking this favourable opportunity of writing a few hasty lines in the hope that they might be conveyed to you by the departure of the vessel Mathilda which will presently leave these shores for America. (Phillips 29)

The above excerpts are detailed illustrations taken from Nash's letters that were originally sent to his slave master Edward. He provides glimpses into his daily life and challenges in Liberia. Although they are not directly taken from the original letters, with the exception of the last example taken from "Letters of the John McDonogh Negroes," we can see that Phillips adapts the same words with rather few amendments. Most of the letters share the same address such as "Dear Father (60), Dear beloved benefactor (17). I intend to provide another illustration of Phillips's adaptations that seem insignificant on the surface but ask for a careful reading to reveal Phillips's intentions.

To better contextualize Phillips's adaptations another example seems relevant to reveal his intention:

Hon Sir, I have taken this opportunity of addressing you a few lines to inform you that I am still in the land of the liveing and enjoying the rightes of man for although I am **in a land of darkness I have nothing to fear. My wants are few and of course easily supplied,** Not like you who are liveing in a land of milk & honey and yet never satisfied. I have lived in the same land myself and had the pleasure of enjoying all that the heart could wish for or that would make one happy and yet I was not willing to denie myself of the lease thing. But alas, what a change has since taken place. **Things that seemed to have been of so much value to me in those times are no more to me now than idle dreams.** When compared with my present views of them, **all that I now wish for is just enough to make me comfortable and happy while I live in this world, for we are told in scripture that we can carry nothing out of it when we go hence.** (Bell I. Wiley, ed. *Slaves No More: Letters from Liberia* 1980, 117)

Since the passing of my wife and child, **my wants are few, and of course they are easily supplied in this land of darkness. I have nothing to fear.** America is, according to my memory, a land of milk and honey, where people are not easily satisfied. **Things that seemed to me then to hold so much value are now, in this new country, and in my new circumstances, without value. All**



**that I now wish for is enough to give me comfort and some small happiness whilst I dwell in this world, for I have learned, by means of sad experience, and by close study of the scripture, that we carry nothing out of this world when we go hence. (Phillips 84)**

Despite the apparent concise “modified” version of Phillips in this citation, there is an apparent sense of duality between the old detailed letter written by an enslaved African and the new concise version is noticeable. Visually, Phillips starts by correcting all the grammar and spelling errors in the official version. For instance, words such as “living”, “the rightes”, “living”, “denie,” are appropriately corrected in the text. Significantly, these intentional alterations or corrections might also lead us to think about Phillips’s desire behind *correcting* “the archival document” as if Phillips slightly alters the version so as to align it with the present and give it a sense of “order”. He pushes the reader to think about the language used in the official archives and how language itself forms a discourse that differs from one moment to another. This technique reminds us of Genette’s analysis of “narrative time”, distinguishing “the time of the thing told and the time of the narrative” as explored here:

Narrative is a ... a doubly temporal sequence...: There is the time of the thing told and the time of the narrative (the time of the signified and the time of the signifier. This duality not only renders possible all the temporal distortions that are commonplace in narratives (three years of the hero’s life summed up in two sentences of a novel or in a few shots of a “frequentative” montage in film etc.) More basically, it invites us to consider that one of the functions of narrative is to invent one time scheme in terms of another scheme<sup>51</sup>. (Genette 33)

Genette’s explanation cited here could be associated with the notion of “anachronism”<sup>52</sup>. As defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term signifies “an error in chronology; the placing of something in a period of time to which it does not belong (especially. one which is earlier than its true date). Other dictionaries define it as “the representation of someone as existing or something as happening in other than chronological, proper, or historical order, “one that is out of its proper or chronological order, especially a person or practice that belongs to an earlier time”. Both meanings are evolved around an idea that exists out of its time in history and also something placed in the wrong period in history, something that belongs to the past rather than the present”. In the context of our analysis, Phillips changes the

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<sup>51</sup> The quote is taken from the English version *Gérard Genette Narrative Discourse An essay in Method (1980)*, translated by Jane E. Lewin. I would also include the French version as stated by Genette: « Ordre 1 (Temps du récit): Le récit est une séquence deux fois temporelle. Il y a le temps de la chose racontées et le temps du récit (temps du signifié et temps du signifiant). Cette dualité n’est pas seulement ce qui rend possibles toutes les distorsions temporelles qu’il est banal de relever dans les récits (trois ans de la vie du héros résumés en deux phrases d’un roman, ou en quelques plans d’un montage « fréquentatif » de cinéma, etc. Plus fondamentalement elle nous invite à constater que l’une des fonctions du récit est de monnayer un temps dans un autre ». Gérard Genette, *Figures III*, Editions de Seuil, 1972, p.78.

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=anachronism>.

official version, that belongs to the past, offering another “narrative mood” and “corrected version”. In contrast to the official version of the slave narrative, in which the slave must embellish the language to convey a sense of powerlessness and dependence on the slave master, Phillips’s language appears to be more direct and straightforward through the naming of things. In the above-mentioned letters, Phillips describes the letter changing the original version emphasized through a different mood, despite using the same words. In doing so, Phillips’ text emancipates the slave’s vulnerable and needy voice into one that is more complex and direct.

Likewise, in “The Pagan Coast”, the letters sent by Edward to his former slave Nash Williams are never answered just as those sent by Nash to his master which seem: “full of the usual childish requests for tools, seeds, money, and other necessities of life, positively bristled with the spirit of faith” (Phillips 8). Nash’ letters are entirely destroyed by Edward’s white wife to restrict any communication and link between an enslaved African and his master. To illustrate, the letters of Edward and Nash disappear into a surrounding silence limiting any further expected connection or encounter. The following section, I focus on the differences and similarities between the fictional text and the archival source through juxtaposing Hamilton’s logbook against Newton’s journals.

### 2.2.3 Hamilton’s Logbook vs John Newton’s Journals

Hamilton’s journal adapts the same form and entries of the official document which seems a common use in eighteenth-century journals and logbooks as in the case of *The journal of Slave Ship Mary* (1795) in which “several entries suggest the harsh discipline imposed by Captain Sterry to maintain control of the ship”.<sup>53</sup> This journal, a log book of the daily activities of the 232-ton slave ship Mary, documents in detail a voyage undertaken by ship owner and slave trader Cyprian Sterry. The ship set sail from Providence, Rhode Island, on November 22, 1795, and arrived on the west coast of Africa on December 24, 1795. Under the command of Captain Nathan Sterry, the crew acquired and then subdued African men, women, and children at several ports along the Senegambia, Windward Coast, and Gold Coast. It departed the coast of Africa with 142 African men, women, and children on June 17,

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<sup>53</sup> <https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/handle/10822/1055276>.

1796. It arrived in Georgia on August 19, 1796. In this section, I focus on the differences and similarities between the fictional text and the archival source. It is worth noting that Lars Eckstein's study has also addressed such comparison, however in this study the emphasis is put on other examples. The following analysis will be based on extracts from Newton's journal and Hamilton's logbook as the following table aims to further illustrate:

<i>Crossing The River</i>	John Newton
Title Journal of a voyage intended (by god's permission) in <b>the Duke of York, snow, from Liverpool</b> to the Windward Coast of <b>Africa</b> , etc, commenced the 24 <sup>th</sup> August 1752	Title Journal Kept on board the Duke of Argyle, Snow from Liverpool to Africa, Commenced the 11 <sup>th</sup> August 1750
Names                      Quality James Hamilton    Master John Piece.            1 <sup>st</sup> Mate Discharged 21 <sup>st</sup> Dec.1752	Names                      Quality. John Newton            Master John Bridson.    1 <sup>st</sup> Mate, deceased 20 <sup>th</sup> January
<i>Fortune</i>	
Blank	Laus Deo (Be to God) (P3)
4th October [1750]: "Carpenter employed in fitting up the stateroom to serve as a shop on the Coast" (10).	6th October [1752]: "Carpenter fitted up state room to serve as a shop on the Coast" (102).
6th October: "Removed most of India cloth from hold into cabin. Got ship's arms chest aft. . . . All hands engaged . . ." (102)	5th October: "[R]emoved most of the India cloth. . . . [G]ot the ship's arms chest aft. Were all hand so engaged . . ." (10).
11th October: "Caught a small <b>shark</b> " (103).	10th October: "Caught a small <b>dolphin</b> " (10).
11th October: "By 2 p.m. a great deal of lightning and thunder. Very strong riplings . . ." (103)	12th October: "[A] great deal of lightning and thunder. Very strong riplings" (10)
11th October: "Got soundings at about 35 fathoms, white sand and black stones" (103).	16th October: "At 2 p.m. got soundings again about 30 fathoms, white sand and black stones" (11)

Both Newton and Hamilton's journals share the same title pages, crew lists, names, occupations and the dates of death. Phillips used almost eleven names from Newton's journal for the first voyage, nevertheless he slightly edited the first names allowing his editing to be noticeable. Visually, both journals include the same information stating the day of the week, date, and month written in italics, followed by descriptions of the weather. Equally important, the tone and rhythm of both journals look alike including personal feelings and emotions shared on board. Phillips 'copies' almost the same entries respecting the same length and details that might be interpreted as a strategy to reveal the importance of using an authentic document serving to commemorate and remember the atrocity of the slave trade in the eighteenth-century, uttered by a British slave trade as a testimony to what happened. Focusing on the difference between the two versions located in the table above, one can clearly see the similarities with slight amendments in terms of the dates. It is worth highlighting that the only amendment apparent is the substitution of "dolphin" with "shark". While "dolphin" may be interpreted metaphorically as a symbol of protection and peace, "shark" suggests predation and conveys a readiness for attack. Furthermore, it can be associated with notions of power and authority. Nevertheless, Phillips continues to inform the reader of the day-to-day conditions on board, citing the deaths and suffering of crew members and enslaved Africans, as illustrated by the following example:

1<sup>st</sup> January (1751): At 2 am departed this life Andrew Corrigal, our carpenter, having been 10 days ill of a nervous fever, buried him at daylight. (Newton, Journal 30)

23<sup>rd</sup>, April (1753): At 7p.m departed this life Edward White, Carpenter's Mate, 7 days ill of a nervous fever. Buried him at once. (Phillips 116)

Despite the similarities between the two texts, Phillips's language insinuates a different approach to certain on-board death rituals, such as for the carpenter who needs to be buried right away. According to Phillips, death is viewed as a comfort and relief to the dead person who needs to be quickly buried allowing this move to the next life. The quick burial is also interpreted differently considering Hamilton's quick decision of burying "at once" the dead slave, in contrast to Newton's burial at "daylight" which can be interpreted as pitiless. In the same regard, in her article, "Pastiche, Collage, and Bricolage: Caryl Phillips Hybrid Journals

and Letters in *A slave Trader in Crossing the River* (2018), examines how Phillips's "ventriloquism", as she describes, the slave journal demonstrates how a modern novel can show the trauma of slavery by borrowing from historical documents. This technique lends itself to remembering the past and adds fictional elements that show how any memory is constructed. Furthermore, in the context of our comparative analysis, it is anyway difficult to disregard that in both Newton's and Hamilton's diaries enslaved Africans often die 'unidentified' due to the lack of evidence as well as absence of any personal identification recorded in the slave ship journal:

9<sup>th</sup> January (1751): This day buried a **fine woman slave, No.11**, having been ailing for some time, but never thought her in danger till within these 2 days; she was taken with a lethargic disorder, which they **seldom** recover from. Scraped the rooms, then smoked the ship with tar, tobacco and brimstone for **2 hours**, afterwards washed with vinegar. (Newton, Journal 29)

20<sup>th</sup> April (1753): This day buried **2 fine men slaves, No 27 and 43**, having been ailing for some time, but not thought in danger. Taken suddenly with a lethargic disorder from which they **generally** recover. Scraped the men's rooms, then smoked the ship thoroughly with tar and tobacco for **3 hours**, afterwards washed clean with vinegar. (Phillips 116)

It is important to note that enslaved Africans were deprived of any identification or name. They were simply alluded to by numbers. Phillips has taken a different approach to this idea of naming. For instance, Martha's daughter has changed her name from "Eliza Mae" to "Cleo" in the second section of his novel (Phillips 94), a new name that Martha refuses to acknowledge. This process of changing names can be interpreted as a voluntary rupture with her origins. Martha's daughter material wellbeing, which appears excessive to her was purchased by an equally offensive ignorance of the fate of her predecessors. In the same context, in *The Interesting Narratives of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, Equiano narrates his personal experience of switching names":

In this place, I was called Jacob, but on board The African snow I was called Michael (Edwards34) ... While I was on board this ship, my captain and master named me Gustavus Vasa. I at that time began to understand him a little, and refused to be called so, and told him as well as I could that I would be called Jacob; but he said I should not, and still call me Gustavus; when I refused to answer to my new name, which at first, I did, it gained me many a cuff (Equiano ed. Edwards 63)

The resistance to being called by a new name, as in the case of Martha and Equiano, can be found in the logbook of the ship Mary. Adam Rothman, a historian, speaks about the dead enslaved during the journey of the Atlantic slave trade: "we don't know their names, we don't

know their biographies. We don't know where they came from. We don't know anything about their families. All we know is what's recorded in this journal."<sup>54</sup> He adds that the logbook keeper—probably one of the captain's assistants—recorded enslaved people's deaths in "the numbest way" possible. Each demise is noted simply by a number indicating the voyage's growing death toll"<sup>55</sup>.

Both Hamilton and Newton's logbooks incorporate the same details and words. However, the dates, number of enslaved Africans, gender and the duration have been amended along with precise aspects approaching the recovering process from this particular disease. The burial place is indeed the same in both versions as bodies will be thrown in the sea which has nothing to give except for a very much uncovered grave. The sea, here, symbolizes the same graveyard in which we can distinguish both the traces of the archives and the fate of death. The question of death has been the focus of some researchers as Andrew Sluyter. In his study "Death on the Middle Passage: A Cartographic Approach to the Atlantic Slave Trade" (2020), Andrew Sluyter offers a recent cartographic representation of the Middle Passage providing a dynamic map documenting database on the death of the enslaved Africans<sup>56</sup>(1752-1790). Analyzing "logbooks and death" records over the slave ships, he states:

The vast majority of logbooks, even considering only those of slave ships, do not contain information about deaths or much else beyond observations and calculations related to navigation, weather observations, and remarks about encounters with other vessels. Instead, captains typically kept information about deaths in separate ledgers such as the "Account of mortality of slaves aboard the ship *James*," compiled by that vessel's captain in 1676 (Smallwood 2007: 135–47, fig. 5.1). In contrast, forty-two of the MCC logbooks record the deaths of enslaved Africans by day and noontime position (latitude and longitude), often together with marginal drawings of skulls next to the entries about navigation, weather, and currents (fig. 2). None of the entries specify the age at death or its cause. Captains assessed sexual maturity on the basis of physical appearance, designating those older than their mid-teens as *vrouwslaaf* (woman slave) or *manslaaf* (man slave) and those younger as *jongenslaaf* (boy slave) or *meisjeslaaf* (girl slave) (Negrón 2020: 25–7). Twenty-five of the MCC logbooks with data on deaths pertain to voyages by thirteen vessels between the Gold Coast of West Africa and the Dutch colony of Suriname in northern South America between 1752 and 1790. (Sluyter 8)

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<sup>54</sup> Quoted in Theresa Machemar's magazine article "A Newly Digitized Logbook Documents Life and Death on a Slave Trading Ship. "The Mary" departed Africa in mid-June 1796 with 142 enslaved men, women and children on board.

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/logbook-documents-life-and-death-slave-trading-ship-180975880/>.

<sup>56</sup>[https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1KBHJB2IKV1\\_IW5ORh5A1q5RJUE4ejur&ll=5.104618403217343%2C-35.6924234375&z=3](https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1KBHJB2IKV1_IW5ORh5A1q5RJUE4ejur&ll=5.104618403217343%2C-35.6924234375&z=3).

Apart from the differences in treating the bodies of the dead, both documents use a diction intersected with words such as “death”, “burial disorder”, which reminds the reader of the recorded scene of slavery, where enslaved Africans lie close to each other, not able to move freely. Illness and death among the enslaved Africans also had a devastating and fatal effect for the living ones left in a traumatic status.

Caryl Phillips himself, portrays his own anxiety and alienation during a journey on the ship narrated in *The Atlantic Sound* (2000). The writer endeavours to connect his own experience with the history of millions of Blacks who were forced to be displaced from their motherland and shipped as “human cargoes” and products for capital interests. Commenting on his own self-despair, he describes his own experience:

The next day depression washes over me, and come night I find myself roaming the ship in an insomniac’s daze. I watch the horizon rising and falling as the ship rolls lazily from side to side. This is the most depressing time, for as I witness the sun ascending on the vast unresponsive expanse of sea and sky, the bleak sight only serves to remind me that there is no prospect of land for days, that there is only the prospect of another day and the undoubted difficulty of trying to endure another night. (Phillips 11)

The statement above encapsulates an emotional state of alienation and a deep uncertainty about the future. Through vivid images of the Middle Passage, the writer brings into the present-day experiences, the traumas associated with the memory of the slave trade. In a similar vein, Phillips shares his own experience of “depression” while on board a cargo ship, illustrating the psychological states that a lone traveler at sea might experience. Phillips depicts the experience of an African as an individual who “is consumed with anxiety, and discovers himself to be floundering in a place of despair (Phillips 17).

When setting side by side Phillips’ and Newtons’ journals, the reader can distinguish how in *Crossing the River*, Hamilton set a new standard in the shared details about the crew on board, information that Newton purposely omitted or neglected, for once documented it might ruin his sense of organization and leadership as a slave captain. The comparison of the logbook’s echoes Phillips’s “manipulation” (Wallace 72) of historical document in spite of the few amendments made in which only the white voice of the slave master is heard whereas the enslaved were only referred to as numbers, voiceless and obliterated. As a result, fiction serves as an appropriate setting in which the archive can be altered and *transformed* to “defend the dead”. For the purpose of our investigation, a further illustration merits to be included:

29th March [1751]: I give and take a good deal of raillery among the sea-captains I meet with her. They think I have not a right notion of life, and I am sure they have not. They say I am melancholy; I tell them they are mad. They say, I am a slave to one woman, which I deny; but can prove that some of them are mere slaves to a hundred. They wonder at my humour; I pity theirs. They can form no idea of my happiness; I answer I think the better of it on that account; for I should be ashamed of it, if it was suited to the level of those who can be pleased with drunken debauch, or the smile of a prostitute. We shall hardly come to an agreement on these points; for they pretend to appeal to experience against me. (Newton, Letters 57-58; emphasis in original)

10th January [1753]: **I take** a good deal of raillery among the sea captains, for they know I have not a secure knowledge of life, and I know they have not. They **claim** I am melancholy; I tell them they **have lost their wits**. They say I am a slave to **a single** woman; I **claim** they are a slave to hundreds, **of all qualities**. They wonder at my lack of humour, **I pity theirs**. They declare they can form no idea of my happiness, I counter with knowledge that being pleased with a drunken debauch, or the smile of a prostitute, can never give one such as I pleasure. They pretend, **all the while**, to appeal to experience against me, **but I stand firm**. (Phillips 109)

In contrast to the norms of a slave master's logbook of which could include a weather forecast, both letters focus on the slave masters' emotions and feelings overlooking insights into enslaved Africans' emotions and interests. Phillips uses almost the same terms adding few words as "take, claim, to a single, have lost their wits, of all qualities, I pity theirs, all the while, but I stand firm". These alterations suggest an indifference towards the others, leading to a "single centered" discourse of a white master against enslaved Africans. Newton's own perception towards his voyages not only reflect a sense of remorse and guilt due to his inhumane mission but also his memories of "home":

I considered myself a sort of goaler or turnkey and I was sometimes shocked with an employment that was perpetually conversant with chains, bolts and shackles. In this view I had often petitioned in my prayers that the Lord (in his own time) would be pleased to fix me in a more humane calling, and (if it might be) place me where I might have more frequent converse with his people and ordinances and be freed from those **long separations from home** which very often were hard to bear. (Newton 96)

Friday 21<sup>st</sup> May... During the night a hard wind came on so quick, with heavy rain. Occasioned a lofty sea, of which I was much afraid, for I do not remember ever meeting anything equal to it since using the sea. At dawn brought the ill-humoured slaves upon deck, but the air is so sharp they cannot endure, neither to wash nor to dance. **They huddle together, and sing their melancholy lamentations. We have lost sight of Africa**. (Phillips 124)

The idea of home is differently perceived, in both texts, Phillips chooses another ending to his journal in contrast to that of Newton's desire to reach home. This ironic desire does not fit with his official mission of separating the enslaved Africans from their home and families. Indeed, Newton's slave trade provides the foundation of his own family in the deconstruction



of other families. Hamilton ends his diary, instead, by the voice of enslaved Africans who were silenced in the archives but heard in the fictional text as if he wanted us to “hear their melancholy lamentations” and suffering. Through Hamilton, Phillips presents a white man’s response to the plight of enslaved African” huddling together and singing” their trauma and agony due to this “Rough Crossings”.<sup>57</sup>

There is another aspect of the journal that merits attention, as it provokes a somewhat different adaptation to the archive. The very fact of removing the journal from its original context has the effect of foregrounding the language used by Hamilton and highlighting certain characteristics of his style:

Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> August:

All night had a very wild sky, the Aurore Borealis or Northern Lights flying about the unusual quickness. After daylight came on extreme thick, and flying about with unusual quickness. After daylight came thick and the gale encreased. At noon blows a meer fret; clinched the cables round the main mast, and veered the sheet cable to the better end. (Newton 6)

Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> August

Mostly very thick weather and excessive hard gales about WSW West. At 2pm let go the starboard anchor under foot. (Newton 6)

Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> September:

All night northern lights flying about the wild sky. Daylight came on thick and the gale increased about WSW and West. At noon let go the standard anchor foot. (Phillips 102)

In the above excerpts, Newton personifies the weather relying on ‘animism’ through using adjectives typically retained to characterize a person citing for instance; “indifferent”, “smooth” “thick”, and “wild sky” (102). Furthermore, he makes highly impressionistic, almost poetic observations about natural phenomena: “All night northern lights flying about

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<sup>57</sup>*Rough Crossings* is Caryl Phillips’s stage play adapted from Simon Schama’s *Rough Crossings*, first performed on 14 September 2007 at Birmingham Repertory Theatre. The book focuses on the story of the enslaved African people who were encouraged by the British, during the American war of Independence (1776-1783), to escape their American captors (“owners”) and serve on the loyalist side. In return for this service the enslaved Africans were promised their freedom. While bringing this hidden story into the light, Schama’s narrative exposes the limitations of historiographical methodology where the epistemological foundation is undermined by the repression, silencing and misrepresentation of the enslaved subjects who are central to the story.

the wild sky” (102). In this respect, the effect that metaphor and figurative language have on readers’ emotional responses has been highlighted by David Miall in his research on affect and fiction reading. In the case of *Crossing the River*, the effect of this style reinforces the historical authenticity of the text and also underlines by contrast the brutality of Hamilton’s remarks about the way he treats rebellious sailors and enslaved Africans. Ultimately, the hybrid nature of the ship’s log, with its blending of “commercial detachment” and poetic description, complicates the response of the reader.

Phillips’s text might be taken as the voice of the victims due to the absence of any reliable accounts of the site of trauma from the perspective of the victims. There is a rather substantial number of documents which provide insight into the perpetrator’s point of view. John Newton’s *Journal of a Slave Trader, 1750-1754*, according to Lars Eckstein appears a “cold detail” in which he records the triangular slave trade from the point of view of a slave ship captain (Eckstein 3). In Phillips’s fiction, characters and events are framed within a particular historical time. Nash’s story for instance, is set in the sailing of the “Mayflower of Liberia”, in February 1820, from New York city to Sierra Leone with eighty-six African Americans on board. Nash, the freed slave, is sent to Sierra Leone, to establish a colony and what is called “The American Colonisation Society”. In 1824, the colony was named Liberia and its capital was named Monrovia in honor of President James Monroe. Likewise, in “Somewhere in England”, Phillips refers to authentic dates and historical figures within the Second World War. Phillips engages his reader to experience the horrors inscribed in history to “still remember” what happened in the past. Critics and writers frequently refer to the necessity of remembering the past as recovering the lost past that can redeem the future and help reconstructing the individual’s identity. In her article “A Chorus of Common Memory: Slavery and Redemption in Phillips’s *Cambridge* and *Crossing the River*” (1998), Gail Low refers to the German philosopher Walter Benjamin while studying the connection between the past and the present in Phillips’s novels. To illustrate, Low emphasizes the significance of the act of remembering in contrast to what Benjamin refers to as “the amnesia” of history:

To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it the ways it really was. It means to seize hold of memory as it flashes up in moment of danger. Historical materialism wishes to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to be singled out by history at a moment of danger...Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly conceived that even the dead will not be safe from the enemy he wins. (Benjamin 127)

The act of returning to history stands to be “a redemption project”, as Low states in her article. This particular idea coincides with Judith Herman’s urge to return to the past as a remedy to recover from trauma. In her study, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (1992), Herman reshapes the way we think about and treat traumatic events. She explains how “like traumatised people, we need to understand the past in order to reclaim the present and the future. Therefore, an understating of psychological trauma begins with rediscovering history” (Herman 2). In the context of our analysis, rewriting the history of slavery allows Phillips to foreground the trauma his ancestors underwent and at the same time restore connections with the silenced voices of Blacks during slavery. In so doing, history refers to the voice of his community, i.e., the collective trauma and its importance for the dislocations of identity that concerned not only the ancestors but their descendants.

In this respect, the ancestors’ stories and their art represent a field to which communities relate and appropriate as determinants of identity. The rediscovery of memory, according to Phillips, is a way of restoring continuity to a disrupted culture as the return to the past creates certain connections between the self and the other. Likewise, in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), Cathy Caruth demonstrates that:

The possession of the past extends beyond the bounds of a marginal pathology and has become a central characteristic of the survivor’s experience of our time. Yet, what is particularly striking in this singular experience is that the insistent reenactments of the past do not simply serve as testimony to an event, but may also bear witness to a past that was never fully experienced as it occurred”. (Caruth 151)

To put it another way, trauma is more than just a record of the past; rather, it is the power of an experience that has not yet been fully acknowledged. History, like trauma, is never simply one’s own, it is rather the way we are implicated in each’s trauma (Caruth 24). Upon reading *Cambridge* and *Crossing the River*, one can notice an important difference between both texts in terms of the material used. While *Cambridge* is featured by its “hybrid and a syncretic fabrication” (O Callaghan 40), marked by the many different sources depicted, *Crossing the River* draws mainly on a single source (Newton’s Journal). Lars Eckstein refers to a letter sent by Paul Edwards to Phillips criticizing his first draft of *Cambridge*:

The Cambridge section uses so much material from Equiano and other sources in a wholly undisguised way that I doubt the value of the narrative. It is not as you thought, simply a problem of plagiarizing your sources, I think rather that the narrative degenerates into easily recognizable pastiche, a kind of impersonal

patchwork with little contemporary value since the original sources have said it all already. I think that the narrative of *Cambridge* must derive much more from your own imagination, but as it stands, what you do is repeat material from the past. That's not what a modern novelist must do with material like this (e.g. Sargasso Sea), which is to make a new thing. (Eckstein 70)

Eckstein contradicts Edwards' insights on the novel since he considers Phillips's work is rather an "imaginative performance belying any charge of dull repetition text, *Cambridge* clearly brings newness into the world" (Eckstein 75). According to Eckstein, these insights ignore the sheer craft and aesthetic brilliance of Phillips "montage" technique. As a reader, it can be argued that Phillips's versions do convey the vision of a contemporary Black British writer of Caribbean ancestry who blurs the lines between the literary text and the archive. In his two novels, his singular approach to slavery challenges the historical record's sufficiency. To put it differently, the slight contributions made, as a Black writer, could uncover political and ethical aspects. His intention lies in awakening the memory of the slave trade in the modern reader minds and pushing him/her further to the archival sources to explore more about history, that might be insufficiently known by the reader. Phillips considers the novel an attempt to:

dramatically rewrite, using the sources and what skills I possess as a novelist, material which is largely (though by no means totally) inaccessible to the general reading public. I am attempting to make something new out of something "old". In the process I hope I created two characters (and a supply cast) the memory of whom linger in the minds if those who read this fiction. It might even send them back to the original sources to find out more. (Eckstein 72)

Phillips's attempt to 'rewrite' history in light of the archive raises the question of the accessibility of these materials, which are inaccessible to readers regardless of Phillips's endeavour "towards a non-judgmental retrieval of unheard stories from the past" (Ledent 6). Nevertheless, in her article "Silence Louder than Any Noise": Caryl Phillips's *Crossing the River* and Steve McQueen's *12 Years a Slave*", Josiane Ranguin describes this palimpsest as "leading to a form of in-text coaching on how to read a historical document that could anaesthetize the reader to the horrors of the enslavement process through its imitation of an authentic historical document" (Ranguin 62). This yearning to retrieve the past into the present serves to bring back memory of the slave trade spoken by a white captain, a white witness amended by a Black writer. As if Phillips tries to challenge the reader and enables his fiction to be a door of "return" to what should not be forgotten. By adapting John Newton's *Journal of a Slave Trader*, Phillips 'documents' properly the legacy of slavery to fit with the

modern language. In line with such adaptation, Ranguin depicts Phillips's imitation to the archive as a "performing art", performing the past in fiction:

Caryl Phillips simulates John Newton's writing technique and weaves the slave trader's very words or sentences into his fictional text. The process of commodification is made possible by a cognitive operation of detachment, distancing and silencing of empathy required to accomplish such a mission. This aesthetic manipulation, the "mi-micking" of Newton's text, aims at making the past erupt into the present of the reader's consciousness. Caryl Phillips' literary technique seems to invite the reader to an instance of performance art. According to Maud Hagelstein, such an irruption of art in the present is what constitutes the artistic performance: "By proposing through their performance 'a slice of life' (in the strong sense of the term), performing artists offer the spectators the possibility of a renewed experience of active perception". (Ranguin 60)

This incorporation of Hamilton's fictional journal in *Crossing the River* along with Newton's *Journal of a Slave Trader* reveals its fundamental, albeit simplified, resemblance to the original. In this regard, because of the slight alterations to the original document's dates, Marcus Wood may dismiss Phillips's work in light of this similarity. These dates, surprisingly, are not really accurate in the original document as per the editor's final note at the last page of Newton's *Journal of a Slave Trade*. The following note declares that some of the information is not always deemed consistent:

It is difficult to be sure of the topography of the Windward Coast as it was in the time of Newton's voyages. Contemporary charts and maps are inaccurate, the towns and trading stations were often short lived, and some were given several different names. This map shows only those places mentioned in the published part of the Journal, and the names are spelt as Newton normally spelled them in the Journal, but he is not always consistent. The exact position of some of the towns has not been shown; and some of the names refer to districts as well as rivers. (Final page of the Journal)

This passage returns to the question of how trustworthy and accurate official documents of the archive are as sources for historical narratives. The following section examines Phillips's novel *Cambridge*, in which he juxtaposes Emily's and Cambridge's fictional voices and two distinct narratives within the same text. This juxtaposition echoes Phillips's "ingenious move" establishing a dialogue between two literary traditions. In this regard, Lars Eckstein states how each part appears "an elaborate montage of innumerable scraps and bits of actual historical texts that are masterfully puzzled together and adjusted to form a singular coherent narrative" (Eckstein 5). These texts reflect individual voices, that Eckstein defines as "genuine and idiosyncratic" yet simultaneously representative of other historical discourses.

## 2.2.4 *Cambridge* vs the Archives

In this section I provide an overview of *Cambridge*'s narrative that resembles both the content and form of slave narratives of the nineteenth century. Most notably *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written by Himself* (1814) will be given specific attention to. A third brief part of the novel supplements the perspectives of Emily and Cambridge with another report of Brown's murder. It comes in the guise of an anecdotal account stylistically reminiscent of West Indian journals, and clearly takes the planter's point of view. The events recounted, however, are focalized exclusively through the eyes of Emily Cartwright: the Prologue exposes her thoughts and feelings in free indirect style.

Unlike *Crossing the River*, which is structured into four parts, *Cambridge* is composed of three major parts: Part one is devoted to the travelogue of Emily Cartwright, who embarks on a journey to her father's Caribbean estate to escape an arranged marriage to a much older man. The journal she keeps on her trip takes up over two-thirds of the novel. Her diary contains her personal impressions of the Caribbean. Emily's journal refers to a confrontation with an educated Christian slave called Cambridge. The second part of the novel, which seems much shorter than Emily's journals, gives us Cambridge's view as set down by himself before he is hanged. He recounts his life, starting with his childhood in West Africa. Cambridge was kidnapped and carried off to the coast, survives the Middle Passage, and was immediately returned to England. Then, he was entangled into Christianity. Cambridge's narrative resembles in both content and form the slave narratives of the nineteenth century notably *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written by Himself* (1814.) A third brief part of the novel supplements the perspectives of Emily and Cambridge with another report of the murder of Arnold Brown. When Emily arrives at the plantation, she finds that her father's plantation manager has disappeared, and a man named Arnold Brown has taken over. Brown is a brutal slave owner, who manages to seduce Emily and impregnate her. Brown's enslaved mistress, who is mentally unstable, is incensed over this, and Emily begins to fear for her own life.

This scene is written in the guise of an anecdotal account stylistically reminiscent of West Indian journals or chronicles, and clearly takes the planter's point of view. Also seen in *Crossing the River*, the three pieces of the novel are framed by a prologue and an epilogue

written in the third person that feature a decidedly modern style quite distinct from the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century language of the main parts. The events recounted, however, are focalized exclusively through the eyes of Emily Cartwright: the Prologue exposes her thoughts and feelings in free indirect style:

England. The ship was ready to sail. She remembered. A tall carriage drawn by a pair of horses bedecked with shiny harnesses. Father returned. What now? And daughters scarified to strangers. A woman might play upon a delicate keyboard, paint water-colours, or sing. Her father conducted himself as a stern audience. He stood before her, his legs slightly apart, his hands clasped behind his back. She sat upright, her hands knitted together in her laps. A woman must run the household, do the accounts, command the domestic servants, organize the entertaining, but her relations with her children were to be more formal. (Hence the governess and the nursemaid.) She remembered her mother, who died when she was a young girl... (Phillips 3)

The free indirect style of the Prologue introduces Emily's personal situation and instability to the reader. Her feelings and emotions are hidden in her journal but only through the prologue can we have access to her personality and the trauma she went through. In so doing, Caryl Phillips deconstructs his perception of Emily, the white Englishwoman, and constructs a white vulnerable woman who needs to learn how to live in the "chaotic world of men and freight" (Phillips 7). In contrast to Emily's eighteenth-century narrative journal, Phillips devotes the Epilogue to Emily's thoughts and feelings with a contemporary vision of a twentieth-century narrative style:

At the dead night, Emily climbed from her bed. She stood naked before a mirror that was powdered with the light dust of neglect. She noted (with a resigned sigh) that the masonry had truly tumbled from all corners. She noted that beauty was in the process of abandoning her, that the lined ruins of her face were telling a story did not please her. My God, I'm only... Emily had aged as pregnant women age. Her face and hips had broadened as one. (Phillips 182)

Emily's voice reflects a modern woman whose body shape and beauty standards have changed as a result of pregnancy. Her anxiety and discomfort echo a twentieth-century female thought. This remarkable language shift in tone and style embedded in the Epilogue and juxtaposes with that of the journal in the novel. It is useful at this juncture to highlight how this playfulness of language and perception reflects Phillips's creative pattern of narrative in *Cambridge*.

As previously mentioned, Phillips borrows extensively from original sources, including whole sentences from the eighteenth-century slave narrative *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789) as well as nineteenth-century journals with the aim of

capturing an authentic voice and revealing the inadequacy of relying upon a single source or single source or standard account. In his study, Lars Eckstein notes that Phillips has *integrated* more than twenty historical sources for Emily’s narrative alone (Eckstein 68). To be more specific, Emily’s narrative is composed of the travelogues written by British visitors to the colonies during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Emily’s section is also displayed closely on women’s travel writings, as Janet Schaw’s *Journal of Lady of Quality* (1972) and Matthew Lewis’s *Journal of a West India Proprietor* (1833), newspapers report reproduced without any amendments from “Mrs. Flannigan’s Antigua and the Antiguans (1844). Lady Nugent’s *Journal of her Residence in Jamaica from 1801 to 1805*.

### 2.2.5 Emily’s Journals vs Janet Schaw’s *A Journal of a Lady of Quality*

In her study, “Historical Fiction and Fictional History: Caryl Phillips’s *Cambridge* analysis of *Cambridge* (1993), Evelyn O’Callaghan writes that Phillips’ extensive word-for-word quotations prove that he “has gone to great pains to establish the historical “authenticity” of his fiction but that his central aim is to draw “attention on the connection between the fictional and historical narratives” (O’Callaghan 38). The most important source texts in this respect seem to be Janet Schaw’s *A Journal of a Lady of Quality*, namely here, a journal written by Scotswoman, Janet Schaw, who at the beginning of the nineteenth century travelled from Edinburgh to the Caribbean. Her journal recounts the impressions of an aristocratic Scottish lady on her travels to the Caribbean in the 1770s. While Lars Eckstein has focused on different sources used in Emily’s journals such as Mrs Carmichael’s *Domestic Manners and Social Conditions of the White, Coloured, and Negro Population of the West Indies* (1833), Matthew Gregory Lewis’s *Journal of a West India Proprietor* (1834) and *The Monk* (1796), Lady Nugent’s *Journal of her Residence in Jamaica from 1801 to 1805* (1907) and a number of other travelogues and sources, I suggest looking at another journal, which Eckstein and critics use less often. The following table includes excerpts from *Cambridge* juxtaposed with Janet Schaw’s *A Journal of a Lady of Quality* (1921):

Emily’s Narratives

Janet Shaw’s *A Journal of a Lady of Quality*



We are now on board (4)

In the coming weeks and months, my observations, for good or ill, shall be set forth in a journal, It is hoped that by the time I return to these beloved shores. I shall have a record of all that I have passed through (7)

And so I prepare to leave England which, will all its fault, still bears the title of "my home". My heart is heavy and even the prospect of new and more beautiful scenes cannot altogether relieve my sadness.

The chamber to which we are confined is no more than six or seven feet with a narrow plank. This is the only way I can describe it.

I am happy to report that only does *gentle* Mr Brown appear to have forbidden the black Christiana to sit at the dining table, he seems to have confined her and her primitive obeah to the negro village. The effect of the household slaves has been truly miraculous, for without the vulture presence of this negress casting a shadow over their persons they have all adopted a sunnier aspect. (80)

We are now got on Board (19)

I propose writing you everyday, but you must not expect a regular journal, I will not fail to write whatever can amuse myself, and whether you find it entertaining or not, be guided by my own immediate feelings (20)

I had long taken root in my native soil, yet it is not the spot of earth that gave me being I call my country. (20)

Our bed chamber, which is dignified with the title of state room, is about five foot wide and six long.

The truth is, I can observe no indulgence they allow themselves in, not so much as in scandal, and if I stay long in this country, I will lose the very idea of that innocent amusement; for since I resided amongst them, I have never heard one woman say a wrong thing of another. This is so unnatural, that I suppose you will (good naturedly) call it cunning; but if it is so, it is the most commendable cunning I ever met with, as nothing can give them a better appearance in the eyes of a stranger (113)

We met the Negroes in joyful troops on the way to town with their Merchandize. It was one of the most beautiful

Christmas is almost upon us and we should, black and white alike, be enjoying a period of rejoicing and spiritual renewal. Instead, I am daily subjected to tensions which test my fragile nerves, so much so that almost by the hour I feel myself sinking back into that weak state which si marred my arrival on this island. (123)

sights I ever saw. They were universally clad in white Mus- lin: the men in loose drawers and waistcoats, the women in jackets and petticoats; the men wore black caps, the women had handkerchiefs of gauze or silk, which they wore in the fashion of turbans. Both men and women carried neat white wicker-baskets on their heads, which they balanced as our Milk maids do their pails. (108)

As far as the form is concerned, *Cambridge*'s text also reproduces some of Lady Nugent's stylistic techniques as writing some words in italics. The following words: "the song" (20), "nigger" (17), "children of the sun", "the institution" (16), and "jumby" (106), are written in small italics. Similarly, certain words are both written in italics and smaller case such as: "grand" (6), "high station" (6), "the finest men" (6), "a perfect beauty" (6), "hunter" (250), "must" (255), "vivacity" (255), "tête à tête" (286).

Expanding on the analysis of Phillips's reliance of the archive, Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace invokes the question of historical archives and the use of history in *Cambridge*. She claims that a variety of documents, including narratives, journals, and other writings, are shown to provide stories that are highly subjective, self-serving, and biased. Her argument merits full presentation:

If history has been "penned by ghost", the ghost has no special access to the truth. There is a narrative that bespeaks someone's interest, and no one can tell his or her story without recourse to the master's discourse. Neither is history something that can be handed to a reader by a narrator in control. Instead, the reader must mediate among the various accounts, drawing his or her own conclusions in the process. (Wallace 88)

Wallace emphasizes the reader's ability to delve deeply into the historical accounts employed in his fiction for a better understanding of his creative process. The same dialogism between fiction and history is made in Gail Low's criticism that considers this as an "ongoing

process”, of the fulfillment of a potentiality, which lies dormant in origins. History, therefore, is embedded in the production of specific narratives and it is only through this process of inclusion one can discover the differential exercise of power that makes some narratives possible and silences others, borrowing Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s words. The reader’s response then is highly appropriate in the process of understanding history and interacting with the voices crafted by the writer. Phillips’s fictional novels often embody such dynamic interaction in which the characters are connected to and with each other. In his narrative composition of *Cambridge*, Phillips relates his character Emily to many female historical figures such as Lady Nugent. There is no doubt that both texts are closely interwoven with one another despite the slight alterations made by the writer. This is best demonstrated by contrasting a few instances of Emily’s narrative with Lady Nugent’s journal.

#### 2.2.6 Emily’s Journals: Emily’s Narrative Vs *Lady Nugent’s Journal*

This section provides yet another type of allusion that is prevalent throughout *Cambridge* and may also help us to understand *Lady Nugent’s Journal: Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago*, reprinted from a Journal Kept by Maria, Lady Nugent, from 1801 to 1815, issued for Private Circulation in 1839 and edited by Frank Cundall seems another that has inspired Phillips in the process of writing Emily’s narratives. According to the editor, the journal was written for Maria, Lady Nugent’s pleasure and that of her children and was not intended for publication, making the most candid references to private matters. The following extracts, which provide a detailed description of the Great House, are taken from Emily’s narratives and Lady Nugent’s journal further illustrate this allusion:

This house is as comfortable as possible. The rooms are good, and well furnished, and the situation is delightful. The town of Montego Bay is situated in an Amphitheatre of very high hills. In front a most beautiful bay, full of vessels, and open to sea. On the hills are all the gentlemen’s houses, or those not immediately shop-keepers. These are interspersed with gardens, palms of all sorts and altogether the prospect is lovely. The heat, however, is great, and we suffer a good deal from occupying the state apartments...All the windows in the Great House are equipped with Venetian blinds which permit the free movement of air. (Nugent 119)

The Interior of the house is grand, as I said. **The rooms**, however, are not ceiled, and the beams protrude to afford a better circulation of air. The central air is furnished with sofas for the purpose of relaxation, and the walls sport many prints

and maps, some of which relate to navigation, a great number being of local interest and depicting the divisions of land and the breadth and extent of the estates. The most interesting of these maps is one which shows the trafficking islands in relation to each other. I was able to discern that our own island, amply blessed with beauty, is nevertheless modest in size. (Phillips 29)

These examples, which I quote at length to depict the explicit differences and similarities in both versions, reflect how Phillips relinquishes his strategy of literal adaptation of the original text to rather preserve the same linguistic style along with the similar thematic aspects. Here, both versions portray the Great House in details including the surface, the rooms, the air, the overall traffics, and the island position. Equally important, 'aesthetic discourse', involving the categories of ornamentation, decoration, beauty, architecture and taste among others was a standard of travel journals or writing as, in the case of Lady Nugent's Journal. This aesthetic discourse can be further illustrated through another example selected from Emily's narrative:

The entrance hall led into a central hall of handsome dimensions, both lofty and sumptuously decorated in mahogany finishing. On either side of this hall were bedrooms, and at the end of this tropical Guildhall was a wide and spacious veranda where one might sit outside and take the breeze. So overwhelmed was I by the opulence and beauty of this construction that I almost forgot my desire to rest and recover some of my senses. (Phillips 27)

Unlike Emily's harsh criticism and racist attitudes towards enslaved Africans, surprisingly enough, Lady Nugent's journal is devoid of such attitudes as she has often expressed her empathy for them. This idea is best illuminated through her own words, in which she felt upset over learning how enslaved Africans might stand for hours in putting the sugar into the hogsheads:

Then there were several negroes employed in putting the sugar into the hogshead, I asked the overseer how often his people were relieved. He said every twelve hours; but how dreadful to think of their standing twelve hours over a boiling cauldron, and doing the same thing; and he owned to me that sometimes they did fall asleep, and get their poor fingers into the mill; and he shewed me a hatchet, that was always ready to sever the whole limb, as the only means of saving the poor sufferer's life! I would not have a sugar estate for the world! (Lady Nugent 86)

Emily's version, yet, seems to be completely devoid of any sense of empathy and affinity towards Blacks as the following excerpts will further demonstrate:

The negro father, having been deprived of authority and power over his children, and wielding no responsibility for their welfare, is the least attached to his offspring. The mother, upon whom the child is dependent for nourishment during its first year, is by natural law party to a deeper involvement, but none of the sacred responsibilities which ennoble the relation to child to parent is present in this world. Unfettered by requirements of support and education, the grace of the parental affections is lost to both father and mother, and it becoming more

breeding, bearing, and suckling, and nought beside. Without wishing to gloss over their errors, I must acknowledge that negroes appear to be generally good-humoured in the highest degree, though untampered to the civilized ways of man (Phillips 39- 40)

(A negro) should always show respect towards white people, and suffer no undue freedom of conversation or indulgence in trivial humour from those beneath him. A negro-man such as this must indeed be difficult to acquire. As they began to march I made note that male and female were naked down to the waist. (Phillips 41)

Emily portrays the family love between Blacks as “brutish gratification of animal desire” (Phillips 39). The image of the powerless father and irresponsible mother conveys a sense of insecurity for the child. Another aspect that characterizes Lady Nugent’s discourse, which is similar to Emily’s discourse, clearly figures in her perception towards enslaved Africans. Her attitude often reflects a certain aggression and brutality or lack of remaining civilized. Her use of such terms reveals a certain atrocious attitude toward enslaved Africans. Language appears to be a playful device that Phillips manipulates to depict Lady Nugent’s manners and style as the following example will further illustrate. The same scene is narrated differently in Emily’s version because she records the dinner customs and variety of food in such a critical and satirical tone:

I don’t wonder now at the fever the people suffer from-here- such eating and drinking I never saw! Such loads of all sorts of high, rich, and seasoned things, and really gallons of wine and mixed liquors as they drink! I observed some of the party, to-day, eat of late breakfasts, as if they had never eaten before- a dish of tea, another of coffee, a bumper of claret, another larger one of hock-negus; then madeira, sangaree, hot and cold meat, stews and fries, hot and cold fish pickled and plain, peppers, ginger sweet-meats, acid fruit, sweet jellies-in short, it was all as astonishing as it was disgusting. (Nugent 78)

Of the mean itself there was little which I could find fault, excerpt perhaps its extravagance. The table is clearly one of wasteful plenty, in violation of all rules of domestic propriety. I have never seen such rich and heavily seasoned food:land-and sea-turtles, quails, snipes and piegons, doves and plover. Excellent port, pepperpot, and then heavy vegetables which bore some resemblance to potatoes and cabbage, but were only near-cousin to these familiar staples of my diet. Dishes of tea, coffee, bumpers of claret, Madeira, Sangaree, were all to be followed with citrus fruits and tarts of pineapple. (Phillips 31)

To better explain Lady Nugent’s description of food above, I will use Mary Prince’s utterances, craftly expressed in *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian, Related by Herself*, who “often wondered how English people can go out into the West Indies and act in such a beastly manner” (Prince 43). Lady Nugent’s detailed description about the table here, foregrounds Emily’s voice regardless of the tiny adjustments made by Phillips. What appears

to be most critical in this portrayal is the subordinate and sophisticate tone, through the term “disgusting” underlying the bad taste of life. These manners oppose with those of George Nugent’s wife who served as Jamaica’s Governor from 1801-1806. Likewise, textual representations of the island’s landscape and descriptions of the island road can be found in Emily and Lady Nugent’s journals: “the roughness of the road caused me a little discomfort, a sensation with which I was not altogether unfamiliar having survived my first tempest” (Phillips 22-23), “the road to-day was very bad and intricate, so that we were obliged to have a guide to Golden grove” (Nugent 92). In Phillips’s text, the language of superiority and arrogance used in Lady Nugent’s journal is repeatedly mentioned. However, this allusion could also be interpreted as a desire to connect with these archival materials and offer the reader a fictional window into the colonial mindset.

Christianity is indeed configured through Lady Nugent and Emily. In the last day of the year, Lady Nugent’s recites her prayers thanking God’s blessing for Christianity and asking him to lead her in her mission of “instructing the poor negroes, and succeed in making them to better understating their duties as Christians” (69). Once her mission meets the light, she will then be the happiest in reaching that purpose. Similarly, aiming at spreading Christianity in the souls of the enslaved Africans, Emily’s intention roams around one aim, that of “a revolution in the moral conduct of the negro” (Phillips 56). In what follows another comparative approach will be established through comparing Cambridge’s discourse with Olaudah Equiano and Ignatius Sancho. These juxtapositions evoke certain techniques of montage and collage that demonstrate Phillip’s adaptation of the archival text to make it understood by his modern reader.

### 2.2.7 Cambridge’s Narratives vs The Interesting Narratives of Olaudah Equiano

#### *Cambridge*

I begged my master for full and proper instruction in Christian Knowledge so that I might be received into church fellowship with both experience of the bible and a conviction of belief. To this end, my master, at his

#### *The Interesting Narratives of Olaudah Equiano*

My master always greeted me with the greatest kindness and reposed in me an unbounded confidence; he even paid attention to my morals, and would never suffer me to deceive

expense and with his blessing, sent me to study under a Miss Spencer of Black heath, who proved a most patient and virtuous instructress. I earnestly wished to imbibe the spirit and imitate the manners of Christian men, for already Africa spoke only to me of a barbarity I had fortunately fled. To this end I embraced this magical opportunity of improvement. Reading and Writing, common arithmetic, and the first elements of mathematics, I acquired all of these but none without some difficulty. (Phillips 143)

him or tell lies, of which he used to tell me the consequences; and that if I did so God would not love me; so that from all this tenderness, I had never once supposed, in all my dreams of freedom, that he would think of detaining me any longer than I wished. (Equiano 58)

The above extract demonstrates the prophetic image of the white master in the archive and fiction since he is often associated with education and “enlightenment” making all efforts to lead enslaved Africans to civilization. Instead of copying word for word, Phillips uses allegory as a literary device to convey the image here. He recognizes the need to allude to the archive as Sancho letters for example which are considered by George Gregory in his essays “Historical and Moral” (1785) as “striking instances of genius contending against every disadvantage, resulting from want of encouragement, and of early cultivation” (Sancho Letters edited by Vincent Caretta xix). In addition, Thomas Clarkson, a leading abolitionist, states of Sancho, in *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Particularly the African* (1786)(translated from Latin Dissertation , which was honored with the first prize in the University of Cambridge from the year 1795, with additions) “his letters are too well known, to make any extract, or indeed any farther mention of him, necessary” (Caretta xix), Phillips’s reference to letters resonates with what Caretta has termed the “epistolary class”:

Cambridge

Ignatius Sancho

The Lord intended commerce to enable man to develop the friendly bent of his social affections. Finding in scattered locales it was hoped that

Commerce was meant by the goodness of the Deity to diffuse the various goods of the earth into every part-to unite mankind in the blessed

man might forge the sweet blessed security of peace and friendship, while diffusing the goods and commodities of his native land. Such enterprise, with Christian religion as its true companion, would be of profound benefit to any shore fortunate of me enough to be rewarded with the arrival of traders with soldier-like fortitude, and honest values. (Phillips 134)

chains of brotherly love-society- and mutual dependence: the enlightened Christian should diffuse the riches of the Gospel of peace-with the commodities of his respective land – commerce attended with strict honesty- and with religion for its companion-would be a blessing to every shore it touched at. (Sancho 131)

Using Ignatius Sancho's text in Cambridge's narrative serves as a rhetorical source and model. As stated above, Phillips has visibly modified and rewritten his source-material preserving the same content but not necessarily the same structure. By doing so, the writer traces his adjustment through ellipsis. This literary device is used in narratives which enable the reader to fill the gaps and omit the unnecessary words. Here, Phillips incorporates Sancho's memories of his enslavement in *Cambridge* but at the same time adjusts the original text. For instance, Phillips omits dashes from Sancho's text to further transform the sentences to make them more compact. Phillips's slight modification makes Cambridge's narrative appears more like a 'montage' than a 'pastiche'. As Eckstein has further demonstrated in his study, let us recall the distinctions between montage and pastiche, two techniques that characterize Phillips's writings. While "pastiche" reproduces a stylistic imitation of another work of art or literature, "montage" is a similar technique to collage, in that it also involves bringing together several elements (Eckstein 73). Phillips, on the other hand, adapts the original source in his own way, rendering the text more accurate to the contemporary reader. In addition, Phillips incorporates other genres into the same fictional text, including newspaper announcements and journals dealing with slavery. Again, the original document is subverted, even though the differences appear to be minor. While this current section has treated journals, Phillips employs other materials like "Runaway Slave Advertisements", but in his own way. This transformation, though slight, conveys the potential for giving his text greater intricacy and elements.

### 2.2.8 Runaway Slave Advertisements in *Cambridge*:

In his essay "Re-making Market: White Abolitionist Uses of the Texts of Slave Advertisements from Coleridge to Dickens and Stowe" (2000), Marcus Wood explains how



“newspapers and broadsides advertised lost horses, and other livestock, alongside escaped slaves in the same columns in order to facilitate identification, the majority of advertisements also tended to emphasize physical peculiarities. Distinguishing marks resulted from disease, accident, or from branding and physical punishment, whether deliberate torture or casual brutality. Paradoxically, the scars and deformities listed recreated the enslaved African’s body as powerful and

Cambridge

Runaway Ads (1745-1775). A selection<sup>58</sup>

*Run away from his **master**, a Negro Boy of the Mungola country named Jamaica. Under five feet high, about fifteen years old, very black features. This Sambo was formally the property of William Jones, deceased. He is very ill-made, being lame in one leg, stooped in appearance, and Falstaffian in girth; he had when he went away a coarse dark blue lined frock, a thick-set waistcoat, tolerably dirty leather breeches, and set about his head an old velvet jockey cap. A suitable reward will be given to any person who will lodge him in any goal. (Phillips 149)*

RUN away from **the Subscriber**, on the 24th Ult. a likely NEGRO GIRL about 16 Years of Age, named ESTHER, formerly the Property of Mr. Miles King of Hampton. She has lost a Joint of one of her Fingers of her right Hand, had on a blue Plains Jacket, and a Negro Cotton Coat. will give 20 s. if she is taken up within 20 Miles of this City, and if at a greater Distance 40 s. and delivered to me in Williamsburg. JOHN SHIPHARD. (Virginia Gazette (Williamsburg), 8 June 1776)

A negro Boy, named STEPHEN; **he is a brisk, sensible lad**, about 16 years of age, **is very artful and cunning**, has been much whipped, which his Back will show, and has several Scars in his Face. He stole, when he went away, sundry Clothes, and about 3 Pounds Cash. He was seen on the 12th Instant, in King William County, on a grey Horse, and was going towards Matopony River; but being met by one of his Acquaintance, he may perhaps change his Course from the Northward to the Southward, for fear of Discovery. . . (Aaron Trueheart. VG, 8 & 15 May 1746)

1768-“a new Negro fellow” . . . a likely new Negro fellow, of the Mungo country [West Africa], about 5 feet 7 inches high, and appears to be about 25 years of age . As he was only landed in the country three days before his elopement [escape], he could therefore have no particular route to prosecute, nor can he speak English sufficient to give any account of himself. . . Gibson & Cranberry, VG, 23 June 1768)

1745—Jack, “the other”

<sup>58</sup> <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/enslavement/text8/virginiarunawayads.pdf>

two new Negro Men, imported from Gambia in the Brig. Ranger, and sold at Newcastle the 5<sup>th</sup> of September last; they understand no English, and are near 6 Feet high, each; one of them is named JACK, a right Black, with a Scar over the Right Eyebrow; **the other** a yellow Fellow, with 3 small Strokes on each Side of his Face, like this Mark (l) . . . They stole a fine Damask Table-Cloth, 10 qrs. square, 5 Yards and a Half of fine Scot Linen, 3 Yards and a Half of Scots 3 qr. Check, a white Holland Shirt, and a Silk Hand-kerchief. . . . Margaret Arbuthnot. VG, 3-10 Oct. 1745

JOHN MILLER, a short well-set Fellow, wears his own short Hair, has a large Scar in his Forehead, is about 5 Feet 2 or 3 Inches high, and about 28 Years of Age, **he talks very much, and is very deceitful**; Had on, when he went away, a grey Bearskin Jacket and Breeches, an Osnabrig Shirt, no Stockings, and Country Shoes. . . . They took with them, a Negro Lad, named Jack, about 18 Years of Age, a short well-set Fellow, has lost the greatest Part of his Toes with the Frost, is a very brisk lively Fellow, **and remarkably black**. They stole out of my Stable, Two Horses . . . The Negro Boy took with him, a small grey Horse . . . .. Whoever takes up said Servants, and Negro, and brings them to my House, in Loudoun County, near Rocky-Run Chapel, shall receive the above Reward, and if taken apart, Five Pounds Reward for each. WILLIAM CARR LANE. It is supposed they have black's themselves, as there was some Coal and Tallow found in a Kettle of theirs. (*Maryland Gazette*: **May 5, 1768.**)

The advertisements constituted a “perpetual catalogue of the abuse of the slave body as such had the potential to be subverted by anti-slavery authors” (Wood 81). In *Omniana* (1812), Samuel Taylor Coleridge criticizes this horrifying comparison between animals and enslaved Africans, establishing an ironic framework that allows the discussion to veer into satire:

What a history! Horses and Negroes! Negroes and Horses! It makes me tremble at my own Nature! -Surely, every religious and conscientious Briton is equally a debtor in gratitude to Thomas Clarkson, and his fellow labourers, with every African: for on the soul of every individual among us did a portion of guilt rest, as long as the slave trade remained legal. (Coleridge 356)

The runaway evokes a sense of metaphor for white moral failure. Phillips slightly alters this announcement by changing a few words to add a certain satire and irony to these archival

materials, in contrast to Coleridge, who uses satire to redirect this power back toward enslaved African societies and enslaved African governments. In doing as such, he opens the way for a satire growing out of the mediation of slave advertising. In *Cambridge*, Phillips involves another archive, “runaway journal announcements”, also commonly known by “fugitive slave ads”<sup>59</sup>. Although they are slightly different from the official document, Phillips’s runaway advertisements can be seen as another example of his archive’s transformation. There are typically four components to runaway ads; descriptions of the runaway, information to hasten the runaway’s capture, the reward offered, and the name of the person placing the ad, often called a “subscriber”. These advertisements often revealed, directly or indirectly, enslaved Africans’ resistance to enslavement beyond the act of running away, evident in these excerpted advertisements from the *Virginia Gazette* and the *Maryland Gazette*. As the illustrations above reflect, I have included examples of previous “Runaway Ads” juxtaposed with Phillips’s ‘altered’ versions of Runaway Ads in *Cambridge* to better distinguish the differences between both versions.

The writer adds an ‘ironic twist’ to the announcements by altering the names, characteristics, and purposes of the announcements. His direct language echoes a sense of irony in contrast to the official announcements (right side). Phillips incorporates an announcement of a “Jamaica” who had run away from his Master but turned out to already be dead. Therefore, there is no reason for this enslaved African not to be free. In addition, the advertiser’s name is not mentioned. As regards ‘authenticity’, it may be important to mention that the source from which these announcements were taken is not revealed and only inserted between quotation marks: ‘Again’ I would announce, ‘from an English Newspaper’ (Phillips 149). Besides, Phillips’s description of this fugitive would make it difficult for his master to pursue him. Phillips’s version of the runaway announcement is ironically designated in a manner that no one would be interested to find him or her. For instance, the following sentences further provide physical descriptions of the runaway: “very ill-made, being lame in one leg, stooped in appearance, and Falstaffian in girth”. Conversely, the descriptions provided in the historical journal only reflect ‘appropriate physical appearances’ provided by *The Maryland* newspaper: “he is very deceitful, he is a brisk, sensible lad, about 16 years of age, is very artful and cunning”. In addition, a sense of inadequacy and contrast in the preceding description is reflected in one of the *Gazette*’s announcements. As the example

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<sup>59</sup> A collection of fugitive ads can be found in the Library of Congress blogs, posted by Arlene Balkansky following this link <https://blogs.loc.gov/headlinesandheroes/2019/10/runaway-fugitive-slave-ads-in-newspapers/>.

above entails, Phillips's choice of "Jamaica" as a name for his runaway reminds us of Marisa J. Fuentes's character Jane, in her study, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (2016). Jane was labelled as "a short black skin negro, has her country marked in her forehead and a fire brand on one of her breasts, likewise to the small of her back, and a stab of a knife in her neck" (Fuentes 13). In *A Genealogy of Resistance and Other Essays*, NourbeSe Philip also describes the trauma inflicted on the enslaved bodies as "inscribed with the text of events of the New World. Body becoming text. In turn, the body African-dis place-place and s/place of exploitation inscribes itself permanently on the European text. Not on the Margins. But within the very body of the text where the silence exists" (Philip 303).

The enslaved African body exemplifies the testimony of enslavement that is inscribed within the text; in other words, the archive exposes the traumatic experience of slavery and delves into the injustice of history that is embedded in the text itself. The writer turns to these accounts to scrutinize the brutality that marks the enslaved African body in the archive. There is also an interconnectedness between the body in the archive, the material body, and the enslaved body African body in literature. In similar fashion, *Crossing the River* demonstrates another depiction of the runaway experience reflected in Martha's internal focalization. To illustrate this, the section of "West" embodies the narrative of Martha Randolph, who was sold into slavery alongside her brothers Nash and Travis (the three African children evoked in the prologue) and ended working on a plantation in Virginia. Martha is a direct victim of slavery. In this context, she develops a very "peculiar" bond with her daughter Eliza Mae, a bond forged out of suffering, resilience, and abnegation. When her Master dies, Martha discovers that she and her family will be sold at auction: "Slaves. Farm animals. Household furniture. Farm tools. We are to be sold in this order. [...] My Eliza Mae holds onto me, but it will be to no avail. She will be a prime purchase" (Phillips 76-77). Her experience of running away from her new master evokes Sethe's running away from the Sweet Home plantation in Morrison's *Beloved*, a shared experience of escaping which resonates within the extended family described by Paul Gilroy as "the black Atlantic" (Gilroy 1995). Martha's runaway experience is well illustrated in the following passage:

That night, Martha packed her bundle and left the house. For where, she was not sure (don't care where), being concerned only with heading west (going west), away from the big river (away from Hell), and avoiding nigger traders who would gladly sell her back over the border and into Missouri. The dark night spread before her, but behind the drifting clouds she knew the sky was heavy with stars. (Feeling good). And then Martha heard the barking of dogs, and she tumbled into a ditch. (Lord, give me Lucas's voice) She waited but heard nothing, only silence.

(Thank You.) Eventually, Martha climbed to her feet and began to run. (Like the Wind, girl) Never again would she stand on an auction block. (Never.) Never again would she be renamed. (Never) Never again would she belong to anybody. (No sir, Never) Martha looked over her shoulders as she run. (Like the wind, girl). And then, later, she saw dawn announcing its bold self, and a breathless Martha stopped to rest beneath a huge willow tree. (Don't nobody own me now.) She looked up, and through the thicket of branches she saw the morning star throbbing in the sky. As though recklessly attempting to preserve its life into the e-heart of a new day. (Phillips 80)

Martha's decision to run away in an attempt to reach her daughter Eliza explains one of the many reasons behind these runaway announcements. It is remarkable to notice the different connotations in terms of naming the enslaved Africans. While Phillips's text identifies his runaway by an appropriate name "Sambo", runaway enslaved Africans are most of the time referred to by offensive terms such as "mulatto", "negro fellow", "very likely negro-man", "very likely young Virginia born negro man", "a mulatto slave", "a new negro fellow", "the other". This selection of names incites a specific humiliation, deprivation, and irreverence since it is also related to sexual annotations or non-human labels as "Dick", "pig", "Nick" or essentially with an oxymoron figure as "Henry Perfume". This historical document is altered by Phillips who inserts a "deconstructive" advertisement for "slaves for sale". Phillip's textual alteration leads us to reflect on how the archive itself subverts the overdetermining power of colonial discourse by considering the language and discourse used here.

Along these lines, commenting on the term "runaway", Wood alludes to Clarkson who turns it into a humorous twist:

I find in this Gazette, that more than one hundred slaves are advertised as having run away from their masters, and as then detained in the goals or workhouses of the different parishes where they were taken up!!! What a fact is this!! More than a hundred runaways appear in one Gazette to have been taken up and committed to goal!!! But I may ask, runaways from what? Why, according to the accounts if our opponents they must been runaways from happiness, runaways from comfort. (Clarkson, Negro Slavery 1)

Clarkson's statement above conveys an ironic perspective on these advertisements, which typically appear in the classified's sections of newspapers offering a reward for the runaway's recapture and return. The terms "happiness and comfort" come as a paradox against the reality of slavery aligned rather with pain and discomfort. In line with slave advertisements, Phillips tries to include another advertisement "Slave for Sale" as a parody to critique this regular feature of the local press for most of the eighteenth century.

Runaway ads can be of interest for modern and contemporary artists. Glenn Ligon's

exhibition “Runaways” (1993) is a great example of this refiguration of the archive in modern art. It is displayed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art as part of the permanent collection (the series of “Provocative Visions: Race and Identity”) and mainly revolves around a series of ten lithographs based on nineteenth-century advertisements that Glenn Ligon combines with drawings from newspapers and anti-slavery pamphlets. In an interview conducted by Thelma Golden (1997), Ligon explains how “Runaways is broadly about how an individual’s identity inextricable from the way one is positioned in the culture, from the ways people see you, from historical and political contexts” (Ligon 1997). In order to look at the runaway experience from a modern scope, Ligon has requested friends of his to compose a comparative depiction from himself to those from the enslaved Africans advertisement:

RAN AWAY, Glenn, a black male, 5’8”, very short haircut, nearly completely shaved, stocky build, 155–165 lbs., medium complexion (not “light skinned,” not “dark skinned,” slightly orange). Wearing faded blue jeans, short sleeve button-down 50’s style shirt, nice glasses (small, oval shaped), no socks. Very articulate, seemingly well educated, does not look at you straight in the eye when talking to you. He’s socially very adept, yet, paradoxically, he’s somewhat of a loner.

RAN AWAY, a man named Glenn, five feet eight inches high, medium-brown skin, black-framed semi-cat-eyed glasses, close-cropped hair. Grey shirt, watch on left hand. Black shorts, black socks and black shoes. Distinguished-looking.

The descriptions above do not include the same details. They are primarily based on appearance and do not contain any offensive language. Nevertheless,<sup>60</sup> it seems important to mention that the physical descriptions provided by Ligon’s friends can be found in another form of advertisement that Phillips has tried to reformulate in his own language.

### 2.2.9 “Slave for Sale” Advertisements in *Cambridge*

In his essay entitled “Slave—for—Sale Advertisements and Slavery in Massachusetts 1704-1781” (2002), Robert E. Desrochers, Jr. states how most sellers included a short

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<sup>60</sup> The *North Carolina Runaway Slave Notices* project provides online access to all known runaway slave notices (more than 5000 items) published in North Carolina newspapers from 1751 to 1865. These brief notices provide a glimpse into the social, economic, and cultural world of the American slave system and the specific experience within North Carolina. Working from microfilmed copies of these rare publications, the project team scanned the notices to provide digital images, create full-text transcripts and descriptive metadata, and develop a searchable database. The NCRSA website includes digital scans of the notices, contextual essays to address their historical research value, full text transcripts, an annotated bibliography to aid researchers, and a searchable database. 4 August 2022. <http://dlas.uncg.edu/notices/>.

description of enslaved Africans' physical characteristics, ranging from sex to medical background, often complemented by a brief and usually enthusiastic character assessment. The terminology used often implies powerful physical ability which normally serves to enhance the selling of these enslaved Africans. Such terminology, Desrochers adds, "includes descriptions such as able, stout, sturdy, hardy, brisk, spry, active or simply valuable, ingenuous, industrious, good natured" (Desrochers 635). In the context of our analysis, Phillips revisits these advertisements not only to deconstruct the language of the master but also to subvert disrespecting stylistic norms of the "English language":

*To be Sold, a handsome creole wench named HARMONY alias AMY. Fourteen years of age, she reads but a little. She has a scar on her breast occasioned by a burn, and a toe cut off each foot. Any person who may have a mind to the said girl, is desired to apply before the 30<sup>th</sup>. (Phillips 148)*

This subversive announcement might be taken as if Phillips satirizes the archive since the reader has free access to these slaves for sale advertisements. Phillips's advertisements would not encourage anyone to purchase an enslaved African. Such deconstruction of the archive and the language inscribed in these records may be interpreted as a response to atrocities, injustices and discriminations held in these records. Another example that best illustrates such textual reformulation can be traced in Phillip's use of irony. In other words, in the description above, the oxymoron reflected in the term "handsome" and the name "harmony" do not convey the current context since there is no harmony in such description of a powerless enslaved African with a breast scar. Purposefully, Phillips's announcements clearly lack the potential for skill, health, and well-mannered behavior that are typically included in official documents or announcements. Consequently, one can understand how Phillips interacts with the archive in a subversive and provocative way to expose the genealogy of sufferance related to the slave auction through the figure of this slave girl sold into auction.

The Black British writer deconstructs historical trauma by transforming the "English language", or "the wounded English language" (Phillips 149). To put it differently, his deconstructive investigation of the colonizer's and master's language offers an alternative to the myriad types of traumas and silence that confine Black identity to a white archive. He suggests a few new components that construct a textual distinction. This process of responding to the discourse of the 'Other' through possibilities of transformation is not dissimilar to the one that occurs when a writer "refashions norms of thought to realise a new

possibility”<sup>61</sup> (Attridge 34). Phillips responds back to the archival white language, and in doing so he further establishes an ethical goal to bring justice to the other. It is possible that this transformative approach to the archive can be perceived as creative and inventive. This recalls the distinction that Derek Attridge made between originality and creativity best illustrated in his article “Innovation, Literature, Ethics: Relating to the Other” (1999):

The creative act, however internal it might seem, works with materials absorbed from what we can broadly call a culture or a *mélange* of cultures (including, among other things, aesthetic, scientific, moral, religious, economic, and political practices, institutions, norms, and beliefs), and it is on cultures that it has its inventive effects. To be creative in the limited sense I mean, the mind needs only the materials it happens to have, whether shared or not, but invention—which is the only way in which creativity can be culturally registered—requires a close engagement with the circumambient cultural matrix. The most innovative artists or scientists have usually had an exceptionally great capacity to incorporate cultural materials and have therefore been able in turn to make the strongest impressions on cultures. (Attridge 36)

Drawing on Attridge’s insights above, Phillips’s rewriting of the archive fits perfectly with this notion of creativity. The Black British writer’s deconstructive approach over the colonizer and the master’s language evokes an alternative to the different varieties of trauma and silence of which could confine Black identity to a white archive. In altering, transforming, and adding new elements to the document a form of “difference” is generated. Pursuing this idea of difference further, in *Writing and Difference* (1967), Jacques Derrida points out that writing does not passively record social “realities” rather precedes them and gives them meaning in recognition of the differences between signs within textual systems. Following this comparative approach, the next section proposes another illustration of Phillip’s adaptation of a slave narrative, namely Ignatius Sancho in his novel *Cambridge*.

### 2.2.10 Lexical Imitation: *Cambridge* Vs Ignatius Sancho

Apart from the texts previously mentioned, Phillips further adapts slave narrative forms, among which we can cite *Letters of the late Ignatius Sancho, an African* (1782). Ignatius Sancho (1729-1780), a story foretold as born on a slave ship crossing the Atlantic from Africa to the West Indies in 1729. His earliest personal memories refer to his experience

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<sup>61</sup> Derek, Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature*, Psychology Press, 2004.



as a working child slave in London. He was famously known by his letters which were collected and published by John Nichols in 1782. Sancho's letters were judged by reviewers as part of "the Epistolary class", the genre of published collected correspondence whose roots can be traced back to the three famous Roman models: Cicero, Pliny, and Seneca" (Caretta xx). These letters mark the eighteenth century which has been called, Caretta states, the "golden age of letter writing" (xxx) and highly recognized and recovered in the twentieth century. My emphasis is on Ignatius's letters language rather than its thematic perspectives as a way to further illustrate the argument at issue in terms of Phillips's reliance on the archive through adjusting the writing style.

In this regard, Caretta identifies certain aspects that might serve our analysis namely the spelling of certain words. For instance, incorporating the various spellings of proper names, such as the interchangeable use of "I" and "J". It seems important to mention that punctuation has not been modernized unless the original usage would confuse or mislead a reader from the 20th century. Likewise, obvious errors in printing, such as dropped or inverted letters, have been silently corrected. Stylistically, Sancho's letters have marked a use of italics words that the following comparative table further highlights:

*Cambridge*

*Ignatius Sancho*

**Chaise longue (3)**

Wise as knowing 24

**His début (9)**, inform- a quack (10)

**Tant pis (52)**, per annum (81)

Children of the sun- the institution (16),

Continency, bible (86)

Nigger (17), Song (20), sangaree (20) carib Indians (24), jet woman (26), aunt Stella (36), creolization/creole (38), calabash (43), souse (44), home (46), news (47), hamlet (51), housekeeper (52), mulatto (52), musteefino (53), a coda (53), mustee (53), a sambo (53), chegoe (54), ordeal (54), addicted (55), teaching of massa (56), preachings of massa (56), carpenters (59), book keepers (59), bricklayers (59), affection/island road (61), ground level (63), Sable-belles (66), Guinea-me, (67), motherhood (68), were you a free man in Africa (70), How old were you on your arrival in the

**Apropos (86)**, every morning (91), fellow creatures (92), and I do not love you (92), so much for chastiment- a pretty way of thinking (100), vanity (158), mauvaise handt (179), is pesorpher Quidois: intelligible Shandean neologisms (182),

Money, territory women, houses, camels, elephants, books (204)

Powder, proff (214),

En militaire- quite the thing (216), that uncommon

West Indies (70), But what of your friends and family in Africa (70), English (70), Master Bruin (71), jumbys (70), eloquence (72), ape-woman (73), obeah (74), But what is her role on the estate? (74), Amours (74), to fait Stella (77), sangaree (81), mango (81), king sugar (82), trash (83), ratoons (84), full consideration (86), discord (86), sambo (92), Beveridge (93), dark brother (94), Ebenezer chapel (98), island road (100), home (102), elegance (102), goodness (242), after many years knowledge (243)

### **Cambridge Narrative:**

The Ebenezer Chapel (103), traffic flow (104), sambo (105), creole (105), a jumby (106), creoles (108), niggers (108), misses and massa (108), shrubs (109), al fresco (110), bon mots (115), remembrance (117), ancient (119), lunatic (120), en route (123), middle way (123), intelligent negro (128), **Creoles** (133), **Christian** (134), princesses (138), guardians (139), bookish (140), companion (142), comical (143), gallants (145), black evil (145), her mansion (146), Christian (153), English (155), home (156), their (158), master (158), husband (159), marriage (159), wife (160), disobedience (161), the black Christian (161), poor wife (161), wife (161), **wife** (162), impertinence (164), Ebenezer Chapel (165),

In *Cambridge*, similar to novels of the seventeenth century, Phillips adapts the practice of including foreign language, words, and phrases such as Latin. These terms, external to the English text, can be understood as “mots d’emprunts” or ‘borrowing’. Such practice also alludes to the adoption of language elements from another idiom, such as proper names or nouns like ‘the Bible’. The research’s findings are listed in the table above along with some instances of these external components. Unlike Ignatius Sancho’s terms, Phillips’s text highlights specific expressions which are repeated throughout *Cambridge* stating for instance “home”, “wife”, “Christian”, “creoles”. Drawing on these particular words, our focus, then, gradually shifts from the visual resemblance of the highlighted form into grasping their potential substances. It may be argued that Phillips’s choice of words is not as random as it may seem. In short, the terms mentioned above allude to other concerns such as belonging (home), family/institution (wife), religion or belief (Christian), language (creoles). Like most of Phillips’s novels, *Cambridge* delves into such provocative concerns. Furthermore, Phillips’s obsession with the notion of “home” might be justified through his excessive use of the term in his literary works. For instance, “Home” embodies the title of section two of *The*

*Final Passage* (1985) while “going home” appears to be the final section’s title in *The Lost Child* (2015). *A View of the Empire at Sunset* (2018) opens with “Going Home” and section two is called “Home” as well.

Further demonstrated in this section are the techniques of “montage” and “collage.” We can perceive their employment as a manifestation of the complexity and plurality of the official document of which is made use as both ‘open to interpretation’ and to alternatives. These techniques testify the way by which the Black British writer re-creates and reproduces history. Such visible transformations through the fictional text reflect how the literary text can be seen as a “lieu de mémoire” where the past and the present are simultaneously conjured. The literary text as a new archival space for remembering and reconstructing Black identity will be the focus of the following section.

## 2.3 The Literary Text as a New Archive: Transatlantic Slavery and Literature

### 2.3.1 Fictionalizing History Against Amnesia: The Archive/ Identity and Memory

Considerable attention has been given to the way a fictional discourse can be a powerful medium to commemorate the slave trade and remember the legacy of slavery. These memories of slavery are globally connected to trauma held in history due the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism. In the context of this chapter, Phillips’s intertextuality, as he explains, emanates in the writing of history itself that cannot be fulfilled through a singular discourse. Consequently, writing about transatlantic slavery is a task that no doubt cannot and should not be taken easily; it demands artistic genuineness and the perpetual reflection that can be highlighted through literary strategies and aesthetic choices. In keeping with this idea of literary engagement, Lars Eckstein raises this concern by referring to Theodore Adorno’s essay “Commitment”, in which he assembles a “fictionalization” of the Jewish holocaust and its overwhelming immensity of suffering and death:

The morality that forbids art to forget the suffering for a second slides off into the abyss of its opposite. The aesthetic stylistic principle... make(s) the unthinkable appear to have had some meaning; it becomes transfigured, something of its horror

removed. By this alone an injustice is done to the victims, yet no art avoided the victims could stand up to the demands of justice. (Adorno, qtd in Eckstein 3)

Eckstein explains the challenges of rewriting history, notably transforming traumatic historical experiences as the holocaust or the slave trade into “ethical and political” reconfigurations. These challenges seem “complicated” by a relative scarcity of historical evidence more generally, yet particularly by the sheer absence of any reliable accounts of the site of trauma from the perspective of the victims. Thus, making visible this ethical impulse to unearth the stories of the past and imaginatively bridge the gaps and silences contribute to this engagement in giving justice to the victims through literature and art.

Caryl Phillips’s response to the difficulties of remembering the transatlantic slavery is rooted in a hesitance to personally “inscribe himself into the stories of the past” (Eckstein 4). His fictional text to a large extent resides in the faithful and imaginative imitation and recreation of historical voices that we must remember. His most radical experiment in this fashion is certainly embedded in *Cambridge* through which he has created a dialogue between two distinct juxtaposed voices, Black and white. Consequently, it seems important to look at these literary strategies to better understand his real intentions. Phillips attempts to remember how slavery has left a legacy of trauma for enslaved Africans which goes beyond eighteenth century to reflect current issues of racial inequalities. In the case of *Crossing the River*, for instance, the individual memories of Nash, Martha, and Travis are interwoven to connect with Joyce who foregrounds the trauma of World War Two in the last section of the text. These connected memories mark the very ending of the novel embodied in the African father’s voice who remembers having “sold his three children” because “the crops failed”:

A many-tongued chorus continues to swell. And I hope that amongst these survivors’ voices I might occasionally hear those of my own children. My Nash, My Martha. My Travis. My daughter Joyce. All. Hurt but determined. Only if they panic will they break their whistles and ankles against Captain Hamilton’s instruments. A guilty father. Always listening. There are no paths in water. No signposts. There is no return. A desperate foolishness. The crops failed. I sold my beloved children. Bought 2 strong man-boys, and a proud girl. But they arrived on the far bank of the river, loved. (Phillips 237)

Memory generates certain wounds and traces from the past that impact the self and the other, and evoke voices that haunt our present. In *Crossing the River*, the father is still listening to his children’s voices after almost two hundred and fifty years. His consciousness is almost connected to the memory experienced by his children and his own memories of selling them. These traumatic memories operate in this duality of representing owner of past traumas and

origins of present ones. This idea is further illustrated in Ron Eyerman's article "The Past in the Present: Culture and the Transmission of Memory" (2004), in which he underlines that representing slavery as a form of memory is central to individual and collective identity. He writes:

Memory is conceived as derivative of collective memory. It is the collective memory which orients a group, providing the temporal and cognitive map... Collective memory unifies the group through time and over space by providing a narrative frame, a collective story, which locates the individual and his and her biography within it, and which because it can be represented as narrative and as text, attains mobility. The narrative can travel, as individuals travel, and it can be embodied, written down, painted, represented, communicated and received in distant places by isolated individuals, who can then, through them, be remembered and reunited with collective. (Eyerman 161)

Remembering the past through narratives leads to the formation of collective identity. In the repeated narratives about slavery, contemporary writers offer a space of interactions, and connection to time and confront the trauma held in the past. Going back to the term 'amnesia', as its meaning suggests, forgetfulness, has been differently addressed by other contemporary writers as David Dabydeen who advocates for a "creative amnesia". By creative amnesia Dabydeen implies: "to desire to forget. It is a sense of restlessness in yourself, of knowing that you never know what you are at any one stage. Therefore, it is best just to envelope yourself in a kind of total forgetfulness out of which something might emerge" (Dabydeen 42). Here, Dabydeen offers another configuration of amnesia in postcolonial writings since he refers to the possibility of a constructive forgetfulness about the original trauma.

Traumatic memories, however, are "the assimilated scraps of overwhelming experiences which need to be integrated with existing mental schemes and be transformed into narrative languages. It appears that in order for this to occur successfully, the traumatized person has to return to the memory often to complete it" (Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 176). Nash, Joyce and Martha are all torn between remembering and forgetting their memories. Narratives of trauma are essentially marked by this simultaneous necessity of remembering and forgetting. This duality of remembrance and forgetting, as often described in trauma studies, resonates with the act of sharing and telling one's trauma, as a potential therapy. In this regard, in her study, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), Cathy Caruth demonstrates how the possession of the past extends beyond the bounds of a marginal pathology and has become a central characteristic of the survivor's experience of our time. Yet, what is particularly striking in this singular experience is that the insistent reenactments

of the past do not simply serve as testimony to an event but may also serve as a record of the past but, more importantly as the power of an experience that is not yet fully owned. History, like trauma, “is never simply one’s own, it is rather the way we are implicated in each other’s’ trauma” (Caruth 24). In *Crossing the River*, the journeys of slavery, the Middle Passage and the Second World War contribute to shaping the characters’ identity.

A central aspect of this study is the focus on how memory and witnessing are deeply intertwined with the form, which offers the possibility of creating what Eckstein calls “the vision of a transnational political and social culture whose return to Black Atlantic history involves less the attribution of guilt than the recovery of a sense of sincere responsibility for past, present and future” (Eckstein 115). Both *Cambridge* and *Crossing the River* unfold against the oblivion of the slave narratives to establish a link between nineteenth century and twentieth century and underscore the power of history to reconstruct Caribbean identity. In this text where past and present come together, the representation of history is further juxtaposed to signify a complexity and multiplicity of truth. To rearticulate this claim, Phillips creates a dialogue between all these slave narratives to question the impossibility of “singularity in Literature” borrowing Attridge’s words. In his study, *The Singularity of Literature* (2004), Attridge refigures his insights on particular terms as “invention”, “singularity”, “otherness” “alterity”, “performance” and “form”. Through his insights, he connects literature to the realm of ethics, and argues for the ethical importance of literature, demonstrating how a new understanding of the literary might be put to work in a responsible creative mode of reading. The writer’s mission parallels with the historian’s desire to restore the archives and bring it onto life through the fictional text. The following last part demonstrates Caryl Phillip’s intentions behind using the archive and draw attention to his dynamic approach.

### 2.3.2 The Fictionalization of the Archive

In a reaction to criticism, Caryl Phillips points out that his narrative approach focusing on his power/right of freely using the archive, as he declares in his following response:

[...] The novel is an attempt to dramatically rewrite, using the sources and what skills I possess as a novelist, material which is largely (though by no means totally) inaccessible to the general public. I am attempting to make something

‘new’ out of something ‘old’. In the process I hope I have crafted two characters (and a supply cast) the memory of whom might linger in the minds of those who read this ‘fiction’. It might even send them back to the original sources to find out more. [...] I drew freely upon many sources, which is my right. I am, however, a little more concerned about being “found out” as the author of a narrative that ‘degenerates into easily recognizable pastiche’, or as somebody who has used the same material ‘mechanically’! [...] Some craft has gone into the meaning of this new fabric. But, as they say, ‘he would say that, wouldn’t he’!<sup>62</sup>(Phillips 72)

Phillips explains that his personal intention as a writer is to add novelty to ‘old materials’. At the same time, this technique of ‘pastiche’ helps the reader to dive deeper into the original sources. Recognizing his use of the archive in *Crossing the River*’s acknowledgments reflects how the archive, as a source, should be kept alive and recovered, then reproduced to serve the contemporary issues still existing as racism against Blacks. Phillips has “displaced archives”<sup>63</sup> from the past into the present to bring together different voices to comprehensibly explore memory and offer new perspectives and insights in the field of archives.

This comparative chapter has demonstrated how the archive can be displaced and removed from the place of its creation to be given another dimension, shape, and structure. In particular, it is concerned with displacements; those removals that should not be considered as arguably ‘illicit thefts’ or plagiarism as some critics have approached, but somehow legitimized by virtue of the fact of their being removed to be more efficient for today’s readers. The literary text would make it possible to fill the gaps in history by giving birth to the bodies of the dead and souls into disembodied literary discourse and at the same time bring to light the inadequacies of the archival text itself. This argument can be found in Michel Lisse’s statement that “fiction doubles history, replaces it, displaces it; fiction is part of history, it is its prosthesis, its artificial, technical supplement that supports it, brings it to life” (Lisse 59).

To construct history through the lens of the present, it seems pertinent to note how these official sources must be interpreted in order to fit into an appropriate overview or narrative. To put it another way, it is necessary to make use of the archive in order to uncover hidden aspects of the past and interpret it from the perspective of the present. In his 1992 essay “Dreams and Play: Historical Method and Methodology”, Robert Connors encourages researchers to begin with a hypothesis and go into the archives and “play” with them. Upon

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<sup>62</sup> Caryl Phillips, handwritten draft of a letter to Paul Edwards, undated, in “Cambridge Words and Early Writing,” Uncat MSS15, box no.10, folder 6. Quoted in Lars Eckstein. *Remembering the Black Atlantic: On the Poetics and Politics of Literary Memory*, 2006, p. 72.

<sup>63</sup> James Lowry, *Displaced Archives*, 2017.

reading his novels, Caryl Phillips constitutes knowledge through revisiting the slave narratives and modernizes the archive. Therefore, these contemporary neo-slave narratives generate a new archival practice in the present and serve to be a 'counter archive'. This discourse engages the contemporary reader's response in the process of investigating the archive intertwined in the literary text, and it lies precisely in the complex subversion of a genuine discourse to form another discourse. However, this response requires what Edward W. Said would call a "contrapuntal reading" (Said 66) to interpret colonial texts taking into account both the colonizer and the colonized. In his study *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Edward W. Said defines "contrapuntal reading" as reading a text with "an understanding of what is involved when an author shows, for instance, that a colonial sugar plantation is seen as important to the process of maintaining a particular style of life in England" (Said 66). Said further highlights that this kind of reading means "involving both processes, that of imperialism and that of resistance to it" (Said 66). This approach seems necessary in drawing connections between the generic discourses in the novel. It is reading a text with an awareness both of the "metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts" (Said 51). The question of the archive in Phillips's text goes beyond a mere revisiting to historical documents and gives voice to the silenced archives to produce a 'hybrid archive'. Given Stuart Hall's sociological/cultural studies framework, it seems evident to say that Phillips has evaded the trap of imitation to craft a new contemporary archive while keeping in mind that the archive should be understood as diverse and open to interpretation.

This effect of hybridity is already noticeable in Phillips's own adaptation of his works since *Crossing the River* initially emerged as a radio play *Crossing the River*, broadcasted in 1985 and performed by Caryl Phillips. In an interview with Maya Jaggi, Phillips points out:

The radio play lasts 11 minutes; I wrote it in 1984 or 1985 for Radio 3, and it explored the guilt of a father who has sold his children into slavery. It was just voices, a strange haunting piece which I'm not sure many people understood. I met one of the actors in the Bush a year later and he asked me what the play was about, so I realized there was room to develop this theme. When I started to think about the novel the structure of the play, which was fragmented yet held together by the fathers' guilt, appealed to me, I thought, let me clarify this. (Phillips 25)

The above statement resonates with the idea of continuity and a deep concern with the history of slavery. As a discourse, the archive is made up of records that may or may not be considered historical sources. In this essentialist conception, the archive is presented as devoid of any historiographical relativity. However, it could be argued that the archive



continues to operate in accordance with a set of standards, which the writer may alter or edit to fit the current issues or injustice and traumatic memories. As a result, the fictional discourse attempts to alter and possibly complete what the archive has left unsaid in order to shape our understanding of the past. The context is different, the issues are different, and the archive itself is a problematic source that serves more than just as a host or source of documentation for understanding the past.

Caryl Phillips ‘recycles’ some of the old materials, which could be understood as a recollective or narrative act to remember and (re)narrate the past in order to commemorate history. In this way the writer generates a creative use of the archives that “goes backward so that narrative, its twin and counterpart may go forward: memory and narration move along the same line only in reverse directions” (Davis and Gates 149). In bringing up the very blended nature of slave stories, one needs to recognize how the fictional text helps to offer a mixed version of history without losing sight of the past.

This chapter has studied the encompassing archive in the fictional text, making use of other critics’ analysis. A stylistic examination of these texts is bound to offer a different reflection. Even when certain words appear to have been copied, a slightly different picture emerges, as we continue to grapple with the traumatic past including diversity and authenticity. I attempt to offer a few examples where Phillips adapted the archival document creating his own versions. This fictional move from the archive as a source to the archive as a subject gained currency across the undisciplined space of critical history and in a range of fields energized by that fictional reformulation. What marks Phillips’s text is the new conversation established between history, of archive and of fiction that rejects any form of singularity rather generates continuous complexity. Moreover, the fact of combining other genres in the same text reflects Phillips’s own techniques to revisit history offering the reader access to the archive. The archive’s adjustment can be perceived as a sense of emancipation brought by Phillips to enslaved Africans through few words building a “vocal plurality and hypertextuality” (Ledent 11).

Phillips’s techniques of montage and collage seem to echo another concept of recycling— “a unique mnemonic design”<sup>64</sup>—in the study of the archive. The outcomes drawn from the recycling crafts are that the historical materials reflect the plurality of the slave trade history and the dynamics of the archival texts to no longer be kept separate, instead (re)used,

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<sup>64</sup> Lars Eckstein. *Remembering the Black Atlantic: On the Poetics and Politics of Literary Memory*, p. 69.

(re)visited and (re)written by contemporary writers. This chapter has examined the stylistic differences between the archive and a literary text. By juxtaposing slave narratives with neo-slave narratives, one can think of the contemporary fictional text as “multiple and diverse while remaining unique” (Misrahi-Barak43). Furthermore, Phillips attempts to reconcile both fictional and biographical impulses exploring the way in which the archive affects his characters’ stories. He achieves this by incorporating additional genres of newspaper advertisements, journals, letters, and slightly altering his use of language to refine his style. His writings demonstrate polyphonic representations of Caribbean literature by evoking a certain continuity.

The ‘ekphrastic’ responses most characteristic of the works of David Dabydeen and Fred D’Aguiar become the focus of the next chapter, which aims to investigate yet another dynamic process of the archive. They have re-constructed and re-imagined the past, focusing on the politics of identity in the Black Atlantic, through their provocative literary and artistic responses. Further attention will be given to re-writing/re-righting back the Slave past in the proceeding chapters. I will examine Dabydeen’s *Turner* in comparison with JMW Turner’s 1840 painting *The Slave Ship (Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying, Typhoon Coming On)*. I hope to demonstrate that the child voice in Dabydeen’s *Turner*, transforms history with a redemptive newness and his hybrid discourse intertwines with Fred D’Aguiar’s *Feeding the Ghosts* to which both texts embody an imaginative return to the past.

## Chapter Three

### The Ekphrastic Response: David Dabydeen and Fred D'Aguiar Write the Visual Archive

This chapter explores Black British writers' "ekphrastic" responses to the eighteenth-century visual archive. It traces how David Dabydeen and Fred D'Aguiar respond to William Hogarth and Joseph Mallord William Turner by deconstructing the visual through analysis of singularity and multiplicity. To begin, it is relevant to note that recent studies have explored the concept of "ekphrasis" as a process to reinterpret art. For example, in her chapter *Ekphrastic Poetry as method*, published in *Geopoetics in Practice* (2020), Candice P. Boyd argues how it might be possible to reimagine ekphrastic poetry as a research method for interrogating what she calls "non-representational geographies" (Boyd 163). In his essay "Ekphrasis: Theory" (2015), James A. W. Heffernan examines how ekphrastic poetry can turn a work of art into a story that expresses the mind of the speaker; and how ekphrastic fiction turns the work of art—whether still or moving—into a story that mirrors the mind of a character. In line with these insights, my chapter deals with the question of how eighteenth-century art is re-contextualized and re-constructed in both fiction and poetry to reproduce innovative, complex, alternate, and provocative written discourses.

My aim is to investigate the ekphrastic literary responses to the visual archive rather than prove texts in my corpus as ekphrastic reproductions. The main techniques I will draw attention to are fictional and poetic imagination, fragmentation, collage, and montage. Such complex ekphrastic responses engage the contemporary reader and the viewer to fill in the gaps and understand the past from the perspective of the present mainly in terms of the legacy of slavery, and the Black presence in visual art.

Before proceeding with my analysis, I will first address the meaning of the term "ekphrasis". As a word, its origins are derived from Greek. It comes from *ekphrazein*: *ek* means "out", and *phrazein* means "tell" (*OED n.d.*). *The Online Oxford English Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines "ekphrasis" as "a verbal description of, or meditation upon, a non-

verbal work of art, real or imagined, usually a painting or sculpture”. In her Chapter six “Ekphrasis: painting in words” (2007), Claire Preston defines and explains the concept as follows:

Ekphrasis, a species of vivid description, has no formal rules and no stable technical definition. Originally a device in oratory, its development as a poetic figure has somewhat confused its taxonomy, but broadly speaking it is one of a spectrum of figures and other devices falling under the rubric of *enargeia* (‘vividness’). The term ekphrasis appears only belatedly in classical rhetorical theory. Discussing representation in his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle approves the ‘enlivening of inanimate things’ with vivid description, the ‘do[ing] of something to the life’ as a kind of imitation, in metaphors which ‘set things before the eye’. Quintilian regards vividness as a pragmatic virtue of forensic oratory: “‘representation’ is more than mere perspicuity, since instead of being merely transparent it somehow shows itself off ... in a way that it seems to be actually seen. A speech does not adequately fulfil its purpose ... if it goes no further than the ears ... without ... being ... displayed to the mind’s eye.’ The rhetor Dionysius of Halicarnassus (fl. 30–7 Bc) makes the first surviving use of the term ekphrasis, but it was during the Second Sophistic (1st–4th c. AD), when earlier Greek rhetoric became the model for Latin practice, that the term was given firm definition and purpose. (Preston 2014)

In his article “Ekphrasis” (2015), in which he examines celebrated figures like François Boucher, *Le peintre dans son atelier*, Albrecht Dürer, *Autoportrait à l’âge de treize ans* (1484), Cherubino Alberti (Italie, 1553-1615), *Une figure allégorique (Justice ?)*, Jean Luc Nancy analyzes ekphrasis and its interpretations :

This series of fragments embodies as many ways of approaching the image (painting, drawing, photography) and the relationship it arouses between seeing and saying. In offering a precise definition of ekphrasis that neither commentary, analysis nor evaluation can exhaust—indeed, it is described as “words coming from the work”—, the author brings it into play by writing as closely to the image as possible and by attempting to “respond” to whatever is perceived in the image at first glance, each and every time and regardless of its craft or content. In the coda, the notion of ekphrasis is looked at in relation to that of ekphrasis, thus subverting the relationship between text and image once again, as well as performing a shift from the writing of images to the image of thought. (Nancy 2015)

Certain key words can be retained from these definitions as a frame for this chapter, notably: “vivid description”, “representation”, “respond”, “seeing”, “saying”, and “subverting”. These clarifying words are closely aligned with former analysis of Dabydeen and D’Aguiar’s techniques of transforming the visual archive into a new ‘palimpsest’ to reveal political, social and ethical interests concerning the Black presence.

I intend to emphasize both literary and thematic approaches used to encourage a

reinterpretation of the visual archive. To this end I have divided my chapter into three main parts: the first section entitled “David Dabydeen’s *A Harlot’s Progress* (1999): Revisiting William Hogarth’s *A Harlot’s Progress* (1732)”, offers a reading of David Dabydeen’s fiction *A Harlot’s Progress*, a work that is inspired by William Hogarth’s *A Harlot Progress* (1732). The second section, “Rewriting Back the Past: Buried in the Visual Archive and Reincarnated in the Fictional Account: David Dabydeen’s *Turner* and Fred D’Aguiar’s *Feeding the Ghosts*” serves to decipher Joseph Mallord William Turner’s painting *The Slave Ship “Slavers Throwing overboard the Dead and Dying”* (1840). Dabydeen approaches Turner’s representation from the perspective of an enslaved Black child. I show that Dadybeen retracts and awakens this figure’s account from its original submersion in the painting. The last section in this chapter, “Fred D’Aguiar’s *Feeding the Ghosts: An Imaginative Return, a Hybrid discourse*” focuses on Mintah’s imaginative return. Considerable attention is given to the representation of Mintah as a kind of rebirth within her Black community and a reincarnation of Black history.

The use of visual arts from the eighteenth-century is common to the corpus in this chapter. Both Dabydeen and D’Aguiar’s fictional and poetic texts give voice to the ‘invisible’ Black figures in eighteenth-century visual art and transform works of art into stories narrated by “visible” Black figures. This chapter lends itself to the understanding of the archive as ‘dialogical’, previously articulated by Rodney Harrison, as a product of a constant dialogue between history and the present day (Harrison 116).

I seek to provide some context for the paintings under scrutiny to appropriately situate my literary consideration. Foremost is the fundamental challenge of portraying the invisible and unseen voices of oppressed people. Fred D’Aguiar and David Dabydeen have responded to this absence in different ways by creating frequently-imagined works out of the archive and rendering the invisible visible.

## 3.1 David Dabydeen's *A Harlot's Progress* (1999): Revisiting William Hogarth's *A Harlot's Progress* (1732)

### 3.1.1 From the Visual Archive to the Fictionalized Archive

David Dabydeen's fictional and poetic writings, investigated in this chapter, draw from the British artist William Hogarth and Joseph Mallord William Turner. This section aims at analyzing Dabydeen's fictional account *A Harlot's Progress* (1999) contrasted against Hogarth's series of prints *The Harlot Progress* (1732) which tells the story of the harlot Mary Moll Hackabout in six plates devoid of any textual references or titles. It begins with Moll's arrival in London, to be later taken as a mistress by a Jewish merchant. The second plate, displaying Moll as a mistress to the merchant, shows the little enslaved African boy who is the main protagonist of David Dabydeen's *A Harlot's Progress* (1999). Moll's story ends with her dying from syphilis. In my analysis, I will focus on the young enslaved African boy. He is first pictured in the painting in a small shape that is visually connected to the tiny teacup and the monkey, fitting them all into an aesthetic of femininity and miniaturisation. This small African boy is shown as Mary Hackabout's young Black servant<sup>65</sup>. Notably degrading representations that bring subjects to the status of "fashionable accessories" (Molineux 496). She also studies the complex ways in which Hogarth reworks: "the image of the anglicized Black enslaved African as an empty icon of fashion and socio-sexual corruption" (Molineux 496). The designs on the plate include the images and texts that are scattered across Hogarth's scene, offering symbolic interpretations of sexual allusions, imperialism, and race. It is important to note that the appearance of Africans in Hogarth's painting is reminiscent of another painting entitled *Taste in High Life* (1742) in which an African boy is satirically represented in oriental dress. By looking at the original archival material, the muted image of this enslaved boy is transformed in Dabydeen's writing into an active figure showing the possibility of reinterpreting performed silences.

Dabydeen incorporates visual screenshots taken from Hogarth's series of artworks as introductions to each section in his novel. Many visual images are included by Dabydeen such as the aforementioned little African servant, but also broken porcelain pieces, a bawd, a

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<sup>65</sup> This idea is further illustrated in Catherine Molineux's article "Hogarth's Fashionable Slaves: Moral Corruption in Eighteenth-Century London", in which she relates this representation of a servant to other Black servants featured in many eighteenth century British portraits.

falling mask, a dressed monkey, Moll's dead figure and a portrait of two harlots carrying spots of disease on their faces. All these substantial images 'cut' from the original painting, seen in the center of each chapter opening, convey a hybrid form in which a combination of the visual and fictional emerges as means of inscribing the archive into fiction. These visual figures, on the other hand, might allude to the archival context depicting the cycle of corruption, sexual economy, imperialism, slavery, and demoralization that portray the corruption of British society in the eighteenth century. The archival storehouse, therefore, is no longer associated with purity, morality and ethical values, rather constitutes a subject of criticism. Hogarth's series evinces a period of social, political, economic, and cultural transformation. Mixing the visual with the textual, Dabydeen offers viewers a dynamic interaction with the archive. His narrative removes Mungo from his silenced frame in Hogarth's work and offers the reader with an imaginative textual figuration to 'narrate' and 'tell' what happened in history. This is further suggested by his explicit allusion to Hogarth's work in terms of choosing the same title and including images from the paintings.

One of the defining motifs of Dabydeen's *A Harlot's Progress* resonates with the writer's adaptation, appropriation, and recreation of the archive. The British-Guyanese writer adapts key historical figures in England, notably Mr. Pringle, the abolitionist who visits Mungo as a ghost in his autobiography and was inspired by the historical figure "Thomas Pringle", an abolitionist who, among others, published in 1831 the autobiography of Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave. Related by Herself*. To further illustrate the idea of re-writing/righting the archive, I turn my attention to the character of Mungo and his process of narrating his own autobiography in opposition to his appearance in Hogarth's series of paintings. I will later address the character Mungo in greater detail, however, I would like to first address the experience of reading the novel, David Dabydeen's *A Harlot's Progress*. The novel is structured into nine narrative parts, starting with a prologue in which the marginalized young Black servant in Hogarth's painting (plate 2, "Quarrels with Her Jew Protector") takes the lead as a protagonist.

Surprisingly enough, Mungo, Dabydeen's protagonist's name, is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "a cloth made from recycled woven or felted material" alluding to the idea of 'recycling' the archive, i.e., in Hogarth's art. It is worth mentioning here the different connotations and uses of the term 'recycling'. To refer to my previous chapter, Caryl Phillips's narrative techniques convey a different 'recycling' of eighteenth-century documents immersed in a twentieth-century fictional framework. He accomplishes this through adding

words, correcting grammar and spelling mistakes, and adapting the same names. Conversely, Dabydeen's perception of recycling is characterized by imagination and creativity in the interpretation itself, notably his provocative approach to the visual archive. Dabydeen takes a visibly singular approach that differentiates his fiction from that of his Black British fellows. This process of 'writing' the visual archive from Mungo's perspective will be further discussed in the following section.

### 3.1.2 Re-telling History: Mungo's Version in the Game of the Archive

Dabydeen's fiction transforms the scene of plate two. He takes the silent image of this little African boy, named at different times in his life as Mungo, Noah, and Perseus, and represents him as the main character. This character explicitly affirms in the novel that he: "would be the ruined archive of [his] tribe but also its resurrected expression, writing the discovery of the New World of Whiteman" (Dabydeen 36). In contrast to Hogarth's paintings, Dabydeen's *A Harlot's Progress* narrates the request of the Abolition Committee to tell them about his life, precisely the life of an eighteenth-century enslaved African man forcibly brought to England, where he accidentally appeared in one of William Hogarth's engraving. Mungo decides that he cannot but disappoint his "patrons' expectations" (Dabydeen 5). According to him, if a story has to be told, that story will not be made into the slave narrative written to appeal to the white man's moral and rational consciousness. Mungo will not, as his so-called benefactors expect him, mark the turning point of his life by drawing a clear demarcation between the innocence of his African childhood, the absolute evil of slavery, and the righteousness of Christian charity. Dabydeen points out: "the trauma of the slaver's iron stamped upon his forehead, as well as the many years in England, have turned the Black man into a hybrid subject" (Dabydeen 67). Given similar contexts, the only archive that can be collected from the past would be only a "ruined archive" (Dabydeen 67). This conception, Dabydeen tells us, "is one where the Black man has almost forgotten his land, his community, and his family, and the only means he has of fashioning himself as their resurrected expression" (Dabydeen 36). Mungo declares that such "an act of writing would kill [him]" (Dabydeen 36). As such, the reader is actively involved to judge Mungo's version and consider his ethical authenticity in narrating his story. In the following lines, Mungo addresses to his reader a request of his/her judgement of his version of the story, despite Mr Pringle's intention to 'craft' a version that fits with the abolitionist committee's concerns:



But you, my sympathetic reader, will judge whether I serve Captain Thistlewood faithfully by presenting him as a good and loving master; or whether my slavery to him is an act of self-mutilation, like the pauper's, or whore's or urchin's. Mr. Pringle's version of Captain Thomas Thistelwood is untroubled. (Dabydeen 75)

This excerpt demonstrates how Mungo addresses his reader directly to, and the two become immersed in the writing of history. This direct interaction with the reader is commonly used as a literary device in different slave narratives, citing for instance *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African written by Himself* (1814) and Harriet Jacob's *Incidents in the Life of A Slave Girl written by Herself* (1861), in which authors often narrate their lives in a direct address to the reader. To compare Mungo's narrative with the former, I would like to draw attention to a few examples of slave narratives in which this style is employed albeit in different ways. For example, in contrast to Mungo's hesitation and ambiguity, Olaudah Equiano's voice in his autobiography appears to be more confident and straightforward:

I hope the reader will not think I have trespassed on his patience, in introducing myself to him with some account of the manners and customs of my country. (Equiano 18)

I have already acquainted the reader with the time and place of my birth. My father, besides many slaves, had a numerous family, of which seven lived to grow up, including myself and a sister, who was the only daughter. (Equiano 19)

READER, be assured this narrative is no fiction. I am aware that some of my adventures may seem incredible; but they are, nevertheless, strictly true. I have not exaggerated the wrongs inflicted by slavery; on the contrary, my descriptions fall far short of the facts. I have concealed the names of places, and given persons fictitious names. I had no motive for secrecy on my own account, but I deemed it kind and considerate towards others to pursue this course. (Preface by the author Linda Brent known as Harriet Jacobs, 1861)

Making space for the potential of conjuring cross-racial alliances against the institution of slavery, this dialogue between narrator and reader contends with the idea that "empathy is double-edged," as Saidiya Hartman demonstrates in *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (1997) who states: "showing such appeals for empathy placed restraints on authors of slave narratives as they crafted their testimony into writing" (Hartman 19). In the novel, Mungo's fictional narrative is rather ambiguous and obscure to be taken as a testimony of the past, in contrast to other slave narratives as Frederick Douglass's 1845 *Narrative* that Henry Louis Gates Jr. describes as "classic in its

elegant simplicity and its gripping readability”<sup>66</sup> (Gates 6). This uncertainty and deficiency in the language reflect Mungo’s inability to narrate and ‘write’ his life. It is worth including, however, that the context seems different especially since Mungo’s amnesia is purposely framed as a defense against the abolitionist’s intentions in publishing his autobiography. Put differently, the narratives of Mungo are characterized by a lack of details and ambiguity, from which we can deduce some fragments that he himself claims “no one could remember them in detail” (Dabydeen 30). This incoherence and ambiguity resorts in Mungo’s text breaking from all norms of authenticity and precision in its approach to writing an autobiography about slavery.

It is also worth noting that Mungo’s struggle to recover these past memories appears to be a constant obstacle throughout the novel. Consequently, such fragmentation forces the reader to try to make sense of an inconsistent and incomplete narrative. As indicated by his words, the main memory he can review from the past is that of his mother; however, this is as yet not precise enough:

How else can you explain, dear reader, the care with which she nurtured me? My first and only memory of Africa is of being cradled in her arms, possibly tenderly, most likely with such fierceness she appeared a beast intent on eating me. It seems that I spent all my life in that distant time and place lying in her arms. I recollect nothing precise but her ferocious and salivating visage”. (Dabydeen 40)

The struggle for consistency that Mr. Pringle brings to the forefront through Mungo’s narrative serves as a compelling lens through which we perceive a profound incoherence in our understanding of the past; there are clear parallels here to show how the memories of Atlantic slavery have been erased, perhaps giving a path to reparation from this trauma. Mungo’s recollections, marked by this deliberate omission, stand as a powerful testament to the collective trauma endured during that ominous period of history. Notably, amid the broader amnesia that enshrouds this historical narrative, Mungo’s mind clings to a singular, permanent memory — that of his mother. Mungo’s recollection of his mother becomes a symbol of resilience, a flickering flame that refuses to be extinguished by historical forgetfulness.

Furthermore, in line with the central question of incorporating the archive into the fictional text, Dabydeen likewise refers to “slave-for-sale advertisement”. In Chapter Two,

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<sup>66</sup> Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *The Classic Slave Narratives*, New American Library, 1987, p.6

similar integration was identified in Caryl Phillips's *Cambridge*, of which I analyzed a few examples. Dabydeen, on the other hand, adapts yet another typography, form, and language to fit the setting of his novel:

FOR SALE, fresh from the upper coast of Dahomey, a *choice youth*, sixteen or so in age, HANDSOME in demeanor but for some slight tribal scarring on his forehead, and UNBLEMISHED in all other parts, with an eagerness to please, HAVING BEEN IN THE SERVICE OF THE REPUTABLE CAPTAIN THISTLEWOOD who has blooded him, taught him sufficient language and purged him of *Negro habits*. He is of excellent hygiene and carries himself with UNCOMMON DIGNITY, and will make an assured servant at table. He answers to the name of NOAH, and will be disposed of at 2 o'clock at Johnson's Coffee House next Friday'. (Dabydeen 164)

As a response to his "slave-for-sale" advertisement, Mungo questions the use of another name showing his preference for "Noah" since he hopes "to find some meaningful echo in it, some clue to his original state" (Dabydeen 165). On the other hand, Mungo delineates a universal name chosen by white people associated with "Negur", "Blackamoor" and "Boy" among other words the sailors used to refer to enslaved Africans (Dabydeen 164). It is relevant to this analysis as Dabydeen's intention is to transform and turn Mungo from an enslaved little boy to a "Great man". He achieves this by making reference to the giving of different names to enslaved Africans. This 'fictional' status contradicts his marginalized 'archival position' in Hogarth's painting (Dabydeen 165). Mungo's new status includes the inconsistent fragmented narrative he scarcely 'strives' to produce. Despite the known abolitionist's intention behind urging Mungo to recount "any story", there is another metaphorical provocation in the 'telling' side. We might perceive this as a means to break with silences in history. Literary silences are further articulated by Michel Trouillot who identifies these narrative forms as "silences", of which he defines as:

Silences enter the process of historical production at four crucial moments: the moment of fact creation (the making of sources); the moment of fact assembly (the making of archives); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of narratives); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of history in the final instance). These moments are conceptual tools, second-level abstractions of processes that feed on each other. As such, they are not meant to provide a realistic description of the making of any individual narrative. Rather, they help us understand why not all silences are equal and why they cannot be addressed-or redressed-in the same manner. To put it differently, any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences, the result of a unique process, and the operation required to deconstruct these silences will vary accordingly. (Trouillot 26-27)

Trouillot's lines above highlight the intricate nature of silences within the historical production process, emphasizing four pivotal moments where these silences permeate and shape the narrative. Trouillot's conceptual tools provide a framework for understanding that silences are not uniform across all narratives. They underscore the uniqueness of each historical narrative as a bundle of silences shaped by specific processes. This perspective challenges the notion that all silences can be addressed or rectified in the same way. Instead, it calls for a nuanced approach that recognizes the distinctiveness of each historical narrative and tailors efforts to deconstruct silences accordingly. In the same vein, Dabydeen is skeptical of the historical account of abolitionists in this work. Ironically, Mungo represents a "hunger for understanding as to the link between barracoon and brothel, rank nigger and perfumed pet" (Dabydeen 4), and the author's sarcastic intention that veers on explicit:

Mr Pringle, realizing that Mungo is a ruined archive, resolves to color and people a landscape out of his own imagination, thereby endowing Mungo with the gift of mind and eloquence. For the book Mr Pringle intends to write will be Mungo's portrait in the first-person narrative. A book purporting to be a record of the Negro's own words (understandably corrected in terms of grammar, the erasure of indelicate or infelicitous expressions, and so forth) would bring great dividends for the Committee for the abolition of slavery. (Dabydeen 3)

In a state of amnesia and challenge to recall his early life, Mungo is described as a "ruined archive". This is most visible when he is reflecting on his position as a witness who is unable to recall anything or frame any 'authentic' testimony. Nevertheless, Mungo "must create characters, endow them with traits and peculiarities, and sow dialogue between [them] to make luxuriant plots of the pages of his notebook" (Dabydeen 67). Here, the question of 'imagining' and 'creating' a story leads us to think about the nature of his status as a representative and somehow sole witness to history within his community. Despite his state of amnesia and turmoil, Mungo tries to create his own version, bringing the reader to the fact that often the oppressed are left out of the archive. Mungo's amnesia further shows that if they are included, it is only in brief glimpses through the biased stories of oppressors.

Maintaining a historical narrative framework, Saidiya Hartman's essay "Venus in Two Acts", discusses the fate of an enslaved girl who appears in the archive of slavery as a dead girl mentioned in a legal indictment. Her work challenges the biased discourse of the archive. This challenge to the archive is explained further by Hartman: "we only know what can be extrapolated from an analysis of the ledger or borrowed from the world of her captors and

masters and applied to her” (Hartman 2). Hartman articulates how Venus was voiceless and that all she could find out about Venus was through a brief discussion about murder told from the perspective of the oppressor. In the same context, Hartman underlines how the archive is, in this case: “a death sentence, a tomb, a display of the violated body, an inventory of property, a medical treatise on gonorrhoea, a few lines about a whore’s life, an asterisk in the grand narrative of history” (Hartman 3). Drawing on Hartman’s statement about the archive, we can reconsider Dabydeen’s intention in representing Mungo as an active agent from the past to narrate the story. We can consider Mungo’s own “English” against the silence left in the archive itself as a mission that remains unaccomplished towards the end of the novel. This past constantly generates negative associations to be considered as “the starting point of an ongoing traumatism and as a necessary explanation to current inequalities suffered by Blacks” (Trouillot 17). These notions of traumatism might justify Mungo’s fragmented and non-linear narratives.

In this process of ‘narrating’ the archive, Mungo’s character reminds us of Aminata Diallo in Lawrence Hill’s *The Book of Negroes* (2005), which is in turn inspired by the historical document found in 1783 and consists of a series of books that list enslaved Africans evacuated from the United States at the end of the American Revolution. The main protagonist, a former enslaved African who writes her memoirs for abolitionists in 1802, insists on writing her ‘own narrative’ rather than ‘telling it’ to an abolitionist. Aminata’s position echoes that of Mungo who asserts the control of his own story through his own created trope of forgetting, editing, inventing, and imagining his life journey. These tools of defense used by Mungo can be found in his words, since he “can change memory, like [he] can change [his] posture” (Dabydeen 2). This inventive narrative process engenders a complex polyphonic text featured by monologue, first person, and third-person narratives that develop more confusion and chaos about his life. In a similar vein, in her study *The British Slave Trade and Public Memory* (2006), Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace criticizes the notion of telling the untold story, precisely because “we stand to learn much more than some narratives have been willing to tell us”. (Wallace 104). As regards Dabydeen’s text, in her section “Telling the Untold in A Respectable Trade and A Harlot’s Progress”, Wallace mentions how Dabydeen’s novel suggests “the difficulty of telling the untold”<sup>67</sup> (Wallace 109). This notion of telling the untold recalls NourbeSe Philip’s poem *Zong!* that she often defines as “the story

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<sup>67</sup> Wallace has mentioned a story behind the printing of *A Harlot Progress* as narrated by Dabydeen: “The paper back cover of the first printing is unevenly laminated to imitate broken glass so convincingly that the book looks damaged. (I put back the first copy in the pile, thinking I could find a better copy)”, p.109.

that cannot be told but must be told”. Dabydeen’s purpose might be additionally considered as a way to fuse the embedding ‘untold’ story into the ‘told’ as a manner to bring another discourse. Wallace discusses this difference between “told” and “untold” stories as dependent upon commercialized relations between teller and audience. Even though Wallace emphasizes that “like any story brought to market, this novel simply cannot and does not tell at all,” and the difficulty of telling untold stories, she also adds, is illustrated by what she refers to as “the chaos of Mungo’s consciousness” (Wallace 108).

This chapter uncovers how contemporary writers have mined into the archive to reintroduce silenced and invisible key figures like the enslaved African boy to provide new perspectives into the past. In what follows, I will study how Dabydeen displaces London, the principal setting of *A Harlot’s Progress*, from history during eighteenth-century to further examine it from the perspective of perspective of the enslaved African boy.

### 3.1.3 Displacing the Archive into Fiction: London between Then and Now

As demonstrated in the previous section, the British-Guyanese writer displaces the enslaved African figure from the archive to place him into his fictional text as a way to reflect on the archive. This notion of ‘displacement’ brings to mind James Lowry’s *Displaced Archives* (2007), in which he examines the displaced archives as a consequence of conflict and colonialism through analyzing their impact on government administration, nation formation, human rights and justice. As mentioned in Chapter One, James Lowry’s term “Displaced Archives” refers to “any records that have been removed from the context of their creation and where the ownership of the records is disrupted” (Lowry 2). Lowry clearly suggests a theory for displaced archives that would be critical in its aim: “to explain injustices in cases of archival displacement, posit practical goals for their resolution, and provide a set of norms for achieving those aims—preliminarily affect, the imaginary and radical empathy” (Lowry 198). From this perspective, the displacement of the archive can be perceived, in the context of the novel, as a ‘reappropriation’ of an existing setting into the fictional text. For instance, both Hogarth and Dabydeen’s works depict London as a central location. As the following passage articulates, Dabydeen actually “displaces” London from Hogarth’s paintings into Mungo’s narrative stories:

It is Mungo's first tour of London. He is overpowered by the stench of offal and ashes littering the streets. Singboards shriek on their hinges but the people are even more distressing, wandering in all directions and bawling. 'Salt-salt-white- Wor-ster-shire salt'. 'I ha' white radish, white, and hard lettuce, white young onions' 'Buy a mat, a mat or a hassock for your pews'. 'Buy a fine mouse-trap or a tormentor for your felas'. 'Saloop, barely-broth, furmety, hot-pea-cods, oysters'. An apple woman shouts pippins and hot codlings. Others tout hot spiced gingerbread, mackerel, rhubarb, water cress, Shrewsbury cakes, oat-buns, taffety tarts, boiled tripe, pickled onions. The desperation in their voices is matched by people who are swarming to the baskets of food, grabbing whatever they buy and stuffing it into their mouths... Mungo is terrified by the scenes of hunger. 'Smoked, baked, barbecued, salted, pickled, stewed Negro, freshly caught Negro, tender and mild though from the wild', he thinks he hears someone calling out. (Dabydeen 159)

The complexity of London resides in conjuring the physical corruption of the image of London and what Mungo knew it to be as "a jungle of poor white beasts with savage looks who will eat [him]. And nothing remains of [his] village to go back to" (Dabydeen 239). Mungo connects London with his memories of slavery as he describes his walk to the Coffee house in the city as "a scene as infernal as the slave ship's hold" (Dabydeen 163). In the same spirit, Mungo appears "accustomed to the callousness of men", at the end, which is "not in the least discomfited" (Dabydeen 163). It could be conceived as a means for Mungo to adjust to his new identity and home that London, with its constant chaos, no longer disturbs him.

It seems important to clarify that the setting in Hogarth's paintings is not precisely portrayed in contrast to Dabydeen's detailed narrative technique, yet the focus is mainly on its impact on the development of Mungo's identity in the novel. Furthermore, London signifies a key trope in Mungo's life story since it turns out to be the place of his auction, where he will be sold quickly, since luckily "there will be fierce bidding for him" (Dabydeen 163), as one of Captain Thistlewood's agent confirms to Rima, Mungo meets a freed enslaved African girl in London. Dabydeen's response to the archive, through integrating 'screenshots', originally taken from the Hogarth series of paintings previously mentioned, makes reference to a text and image "intertextuality" that Bénédicte Ledent also describes in her article "Slavery Revisited Through Vocal Kaleidoscopes: Polyphony in Novels by Fred D'Aguiar and Caryl Phillips" (2005), describing Fred D'Aguiar and Caryl Phillips's novels:

complex polyphony may therefore be seen as an element meant to reproduce the heterogeneity of our post-colonial societies that have been changed for ever by slavery and its aftermath, thus as a form of representation of reality, paradoxically absent from so-called

realistic novels which are based on a unitary perspective and a linear narrative. (Ledent 292)

Ledent suggests that this is evident in the way Caribbean writers often create a dialogue or a reference outside texts from earlier centuries. The transformative technique of incorporating visual elements into the textual discourse, as represented by Dabydeen, introduces a nuanced interplay between dependence on historical references and the novelty of dealing with the archive. Transforming and adopting the visual into the textual, as adapted by Dabydeen, invokes both a sense of dependence and a novelty of dealing with the archive. Dabydeen's technique of transposing London in his text onto his memory suggests a contemporary form of ekphrasis but also serves as a vivid illustration of the complex dynamics inherent in archival exploration. In this process, the act of transposition becomes a literary tool, a means by which Dabydeen not only pays homage to the past but also reconstructs and reinterprets it through the lens of his own experiences. Through the contemporary ekphrasis employed by Dabydeen, the archive becomes a living entity, subject to reinterpretation and adaptation, and the text emerges as a dynamic space where the past and present engage in a continuous and evolving dialogue.

Dabydeen incorporates elements from the visual arts and from other historical texts written in the eighteenth century. It might be useful to observe Dabydeen's reference to "the outline of slave narratives" at the beginning of the book, in which Mr. Pringle intends to adapt as potential chapters for Mungo's book that he eventually "crosses them out and begins again" (Dabydeen 7). This passage provides another illustration of intertextuality. In fact, Dabydeen explicitly cites the most typical structure of slave narratives in the first draft of the chapters:

1. Africa
2. Voyage to the Americas in Slave Ship
3. Plantation Labour
4. Voyage to England with Captain Thistlewood
5. Service in the Household of Lord Montague
6. Purchase of Mungo by Mr Gideon, a Jew.
7. Debauched by Service to Moll Hackabout, a Common Prostitute.
9. Descent into the Mire of Poverty and Disease.
10. Redemption of Mungo by the Committee for the Abolition of Slavery. (Dabydeen 4)

The titles above represent common slave narrative chapters that Mr Pringle outlined for



Mungo's story. Mr. Pringle's intention as an abolitionist to 'adapt' Mungo's narrative into something purposeful to deal with slavery makes this structure seem inappropriate. The chosen structure is more 'emotional' and 'positive' due to the adjectives added and the choice of terms such as "The Beloved Homeland of My Birth: Africa", "Paradise Lost: The Terrors of my Expulsion to the Americas in the Bowels of a Slave ship", "The Pitiless Sun: My Plantation Travails etc., etc." (Dabydeen 7). For instance, the term "cross" entails multiple meanings from which we can state 'intersection', 'extend across', 'connection', all of which seem to make a positive assemblage. However, in the context of the novel, "crossing" the common slave narratives to create and adapt a new, appropriate version could also be seen as an attempt to erase the written heritage of slave narratives and an abolitionist rejection of Black heritage. On the other hand, it could also be deciphered as Dabydeen's intention to replace this textual discourse with a more modern adapted version. Ironically, Mr. Pringle alters the form here to assist Mungo reaching the fame that he couldn't reach in Hogarth's painting:

This much Mr Pringle imagines, for his only source of information is Hogarth's portrait of Mungo as a boy-slave to the harlot Moll Hackabout. Some thirty years have elapsed since Hogarth's celebrated print, and Mungo has disappeared from memory. Only by the most dedicated effort of the abolition Committee, in compiling a census of London's blacks, has Mungo been unveiled. Mr Pringle's resolve is to make him visible again, like a comet summoned into view by God's design; and though too advanced in age for the enjoyment of it, the book would endow Mungo with the fame, if not fortune, he once possessed. (Dabydeen 4)

The marginalized Black figure in this passage transforms the visual archive into an active agent in the process of remembering the atrocity of slavery. The visibility of Mungo as the protagonist induces the writer's response to British art as a rejection of the Black figure's disappearance from memory. To restate, the Black British writer seeks to produce something new so as to empower Mungo to tell his own story. To this end, Catherine Molineux's article "Hogarth's Fashionable Slaves: Moral Corruption in Eighteenth-Century" (2005) argues that Hogarth uses Black Africans and meanings associated with them to articulate: "the effects of the fashion for shackles. By a parody of the Black figure's conventional position as a *ficelle* (a minor character who sets off the main character)" (Molineux 495). As such, Molineux clarifies, Hogarth "subverts the meanings (wealth, exotica, novelty, benevolence, imperial mastership) that the Black body inherited from portraits, literature, plays, and other prints" (Molineux 495).

In accordance with William Hogarth's work, Dabydeen creatively adapts the figure of the African boy and that of the Jewish merchant, recontextualizing them to underline a present colonial power. In Dabydeen's novel, Hogarth's Jewish merchant is denoted through Sampson Gideon, a doctor, who meets Mungo at the house of his master, Lord Montague. This trope of mixing figures within the same text justifies what Dabydeen asserts in his study, *Hogarth's Blacks: Images of Blacks in Eighteenth Century Art* (1985), how figures of the colonized in Hogarth's art "serve to remind us that Indians and Africans shared the same lowly status in seventeenth-and eighteenth-century England" (Dabydeen 34). These images also reflect "racial stereotypes as they are articulated through the interplay of word and image" (Casteel 122). In his art, Dabydeen claims that Hogarth's vision represents a society scarred by commercialism, and in which money has replaced human relationships. For instance, the upper classes, Dabydeen explains, expose their seedy sexual vices and inadequacies, their central fraudulence, and their brutal economic abuse of common people (Dabydeen 11).

Borrowing from Dabydeen, the progress of Hogarth's prostitute appears to advocate "a physical, moral, and eventual degradation that ends with death" (Dabydeen 101). In his novel, he rejects this trope when Mungo's faith refuses to end upon his death. Taking this initiative further, in *A Harlot's Progress*, Dabydeen rewrites the image of the anglicized Black African as a determined narrator or witness who pretends to forget what happened in order to save his community. His work collectively demonstrates a repositioning of the representations of Africans in the British archive.

Given that the archive recollects historical memory, one can appreciate the often—dense moments of recollection in Mungo's discourse. Dabydeen proposes a scheme of "creative amnesia" as a response to the instability of memory processes, allowing a complete forgetfulness through which "memories" of Africa paradoxically emerge. Through the appeal to the individual imagination, Dabydeen's work delineates a Black British approach. Precisely, in how it demonstrates memory as that can reconstruct identity in a composite manner. This approach is achieved through a theme of ambiguity which can be grasped as a rejection of the power of the colonizer. The most prominent example of this pattern can be traced in Mungo's account of his personal history. Mungo refers to his life as a "brief to the point of uncouthness". In the following lines Mr Pringle illustrates Mungo's storyline:

He cannot recall the name of his village but "it sound like

Barambondodo”. It be somewhere in Africa. The only feature of the country imprinted in his mind is its heat...he merely repeats,” Hot - hot place. Apparently, no birds, no wild animals, no trees existed; which is impossible to believe is, I opine, in the initial stage of dementia, brought on by the tribulations of a Negro’s life as much as by his advanced years. After a length of grim silence, lying in his bed like a picture of rigor mortis, he suddenly bolts upright and whispers to me, “Hot-hot place”. Fire! Fire! The katran bush burn down. White”. Then he drops back into bed, stares at the ceiling and falls asleep with his eyes open. (Dabydeen 2-3)

Mr Pringle’s narrative account of Mungo’s life raises the question as to what extent one can ever rely on memory given the post-traumatic unintelligibility of an incoherent discourse. Throughout *A Harlot’s Progress*, Mungo claims to have been brought to England by enslaved African traders after being born in a village in West Africa. On board of the slave ship, he was baptized, taught English, and sexually abused by Captain Thistlewood. Arriving in England, he was prepared for sale by Betty the washerwoman and later purchased by Lord Montague, whose wife Lady Montague treated him like a pet monkey; a figure that recalls Hogarth’s art. Finally, he flees the Montagues to join Mr Gideon the Jewish doctor, who aids him in rescuing the city’s poor women during which he meets Moll Hackabout. It is important to mention here, Dabydeen relies on slave narratives written in the eighteenth century to frame the story, such as those written by Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, Ignatius Sancho, and Olaudah Equiano. Despite some ambiguous excerpts in Mungo’s text, in terms of coherence and linearity, his story is somehow molded as a fragmentary and non-direct telling that conveys the complicated undertaking of ‘telling history.’ Through his state of “amnesia,” we consider the coherence of history itself as an imperfect return to the past.

Mungo’s memories are framed within a constant duality of remembering and forgetting. This duality can be found in the narrative form. Accordingly, referring to the complexity of these two terms, Rodney Harrison argues in his article “Forgetting to Remember, Remembering to Forget: Late Modern Heritage Practices, Sustainability and the Crisis of Accumulation of the Past” (2012) that:

the process of forgetting is in fact integral to remembering—that one properly form new memories and attach values to them without also selecting some things to forget. Remembering is an active process of cultivating and pruning, and not one of complete archiving and total recall and cause us to be unable to make confident decisions about which memories are valuable and which are not? (Harrison 580)

The implications of what Harrison calls “this piling up of heterogeneous, often contradictory

traces of the past in the present”, alongside the use of listing and inadequate preservation practices of documenting heritage, reveals that forgetting is innate to these processes. One cannot properly form new memories and attach value to them without also selecting some to forget. In his study on heritage, Harrison challenges the argument that heritage functions in the same way. He argues that the increasingly broad definition of heritage, and the exponential growth of listed objects, places and practices of heritage in the contemporary world, risks overwhelming memory rendering heritage itself both ineffective and worthless. Seeking solutions, Harrison considers sustainability and its implications in the making of cultural heritage. Sustainability, according to Harrison, asks us to question the strength of various material heritages to persist and endure into the future. Drawing on Harrison’s insights, Dabydeen refers in his preface to the concept of “active amnesia” as a possibility to forget the traumatic past and reconstruct new memories in the present.

This double-edged crisis of forgetting and remembering in Mungo’s mind is clearly highlighted in his story. His narrative refuses a linear or chronological telling. Already present in the use of third person in the prologue, Mr. Pringle asks Mungo at his bedside to tell his story to him so as to aid him in writing his biography as an Abolition Committee representative. Mr. Pringle later publishes this personal history as an autobiography written by Mungo. Mungo expresses his discomfort with the Committee’s aid to him with food and clothing knowing that they insist he: “return[s] their benevolence with the gift of confession” (Dabydeen 1). In the prologue, the narrative point of view shifts from the third person narrative to the first-person narrative through Mungo’s statement “I can write the story myself” (Dabydeen 5). The first chapter is narrated by Mungo who manages to ‘invent’ what has happened, for example being buried alive as a punishment for his crime. The next chapter, framed in the form of a monologue recounts a different beginning of Mungo’s life. In the same chapters, the reader has access to different stories told by the ghosts of the villagers murdered by the slave traders, who shared their stories and lives with Mungo so that he can talk about them. We might cite here the story of a woman called Ellar who asks Mungo to describe her in his story as “a beautiful woman in spite of her lame leg” (Dabydeen 60). Being a ‘witness’ to the stories told by other enslaved Africans, Mungo aligns himself with his community who together strive to “tell their stories” and make their voices heard. In the following lines, Mungo shares his own encounter with the ghost of Ellar:

Through the dizziness of wine, the ghost of Ellar approached,  
trembled into speech “tell the strangers that I was fabled throughout

the land for my comeliness, Ellar said, breaking into a grin and exposing gums stained with toba-juice. She raised her skirt and winked at me. Look! I am shaped for dancing”, and she swayed unsteadily on her lame foot. “Make them love me”, she laughed, throwing back her head in a gesture of frivolity, but the effort balanced her and she fell to the ground in an undignified sprawl. She raised her face from the dust. (Dabydeen 60)

The ghost of Ellar evokes the ghosts of women who have suffered during the Atlantic slavetrade. Again, taking his role as a ‘witness’, Mungo continues to recollect other stories heard. This recalls the genre of Black Oral History which involves oral testimonies and stories told by Africans narrating their journeys and trauma under the system of slavery. Dabydeen makes reference to this practice in the following excerpt, where Mungo recounts how other villagers “spun into the view” (Dabydeen 63). In this excerpt, Mungo recounts how other villagers “spun into the view” (Dabydeen 63). They “joined Ellar petitioning [him] to remember them in the best light. They thrust their face at [him] and slobbered their demands, the most nauseous being Kaka, the village beggar” (Dabydeen 62). Conversely, Mungo’s tribes also refer back to his tortured mother, a representation that Mungo refuses to accept, further seeking to subvert its historical truth. The death scene is narrated by one of his ancestors as follows: “your mother died at your birth, he said and as if to placate me, added, as women often do” ...You lie” (Dabydeen 63). In contrast, Mungo’s imagination depicts his mother as more resistant and powerful:

lying at the lip of the pit. Her clothes were taken from her body. They hauled me up to look upon her. Her head was broken, but she was not yet dead, for her feet shuddered, until Captain Thistlewood delivered her. He put his gun into her mouth. Everybody laughed and howled but the explosion shut them up, and there was my mother’s blood and bone everywhere on their skin, so that they had to scrub themselves with dust to make themselves white again. (Dabydeen 63)

This recounted scene of Mungo’s mother reinduces the experience of most enslaved African women endured during slavery. Despite the source of the testimony, Mungo considers this story a “lie”. Equally important to address is the term “body”, more often associated with violence and terror of white masters over enslaved Africans, is here evoked to recall traumatic memories. In this way, Mungo’s statement “is not yet dead” but reveals his rejection of such terror and violence. We can appreciate his rejection as a form of resistance to the trauma of slavery.

In the same vein, the study of Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives, Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (2016) deserves particular mention. Fuentes inspects the lives of enslaved women in Barbados, England, and South Carolina, bringing these women into the historical narrative with the intent of “bringing the discipline of history into a more transparent and reflexive frame” (Fuentes 144). Unfortunately, her efforts to reveal what was untold in the archive were already doomed to fail. In reality, she discovers the archive to erase all documents about enslaved women. She makes it clear in her text, affirming that “there were none of the voices [she] sought to document; no whole figures merged that [she] could trace beyond a momentary mention” (Fuentes 144). Rather, she finds in the historical document that women were listed on estate inventories only as “Phoebe, Mimba, or “Broken Back Bette”, and sometimes only as a negro, stripped bare of all that was meaningful in their lives” (Fuentes 145). In silencing the voices of these women, the archive gives room for literary writers and artists to honor their memories in their writings. Once again, it might be argued that fiction fills those gaps and unveils the silence left in the archive. It is worth noting then that history is produced from “what the archive offers” (Fuentes 145). For that reason, Fuentes urges the historians “to substantiate all the pieces with more archival evidence, context, and historiography and put them together into a coherent narrative form” (Fuentes 147). Clearly, delving into the archive presents challenges, as sometimes historians fail to find sufficient evidence, as in the case of Fuentes’s project. This absence and hole in the archive provide potential space to writers and artists to imagine and create evidence against this amnesia and erasure left in the archive. Fiction and art as disciplines are used as narrative devices and techniques to engage the past and posit new histories. Indeed, violence and trauma over women and people of African descent continue to exist in the present and must be confronted through appropriate contemporary disciplines.

In contrast to Fuentes’s approach, Ernest Alphen frames this “inexistence of memories or documents” as part of the archive itself. In his study *Staging the Archive* (2015) from which I have taken these few lines, Alphen explains further this notion of erasure which he deems to be part of the archival organization:

Those exclusions concern memories, documents and practices of knowledge production that are overlooked, not taken seriously, considered unimportant or as without value. Exclusions from the archive are inherent to any archival organization. This explains why memories and knowledge ‘outside the archive’ are also part of the archive, in the sense of being produced by archival rules of exclusion. “Archive” covers then two kinds of knowledge: knowledge that

can be articulated and objectified by convergent discursive rules and knowledge that remains overlooked because of the same discursive rules, now working as rules of exclusion. As a consequence, an archival organization has by definition an inside as well as an outside. (Alphen 225)

Alphen's thoughts above notably justify why many contemporary art and fictional practices foreground such exclusions from the archive. Creators present them as another archive. For example, Dabydeen tries to transform these exclusions into a textual archive by emerging stories from fragmented historical documents. In the text, the fragmentation of Mungo's narrative leaves room for uncertainty to be granted an official autobiography. His narratives are often contradictory and complex, insisting that no telling provides a real version of the truth. As if Mungo intentionally wanted to write his own version, not the version produced by his editor or requested to fit the abolitionist interest. Mungo often considers Mr. Pringle's motivation behind writing his autobiography as "sinful" (Dabydeen 143) since he thinks that "his blindness to the sin of enslavement, is mainly for the "sake of profit, that makes England vulnerable to foreign invasion" (Dabydeen 144). While Mungo has adequately resisted the hidden, this shows the unethical interests in writing his autobiography:

And I Mungo, am to pick the nation's conscience by a testimony of suffering, which Mr Pringle will compose with as much intelligence as a Jewish conspiracy. For I am to become a crucial instrument in Mr Pringle's scheme to rescue England from its enemies. Mr Pringle will demonstrate the slavery that lies at the heart of the catholic worship-slavery to doctrine slavery to Priests- and will contrast the freedoms fostered by Anglicanism. To do so would demand utmost care of thought and preparation of a watertight case, to convince the English merchants too of the virtues of abolition. (Dabydeen 144)

By revealing Mr. Pringle's interests in "narrating history", Mungo explicitly criticizes Hogarth's painting towards the end of the novel. It is noteworthy to interact with the original painting as a new way of providing another writing of the archive. As previously mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, Mungo is seen as a small decentered figure in the painting. However, in the fictional text he takes control of the narrative and becomes a powerful presence:

For though Mr Hogarth's art was not affordable to many, a dozen ballads and a dozen pirated versions of his pictures appeared, cheap enough for mass purchase. Once I was affordable only to the very rich, a slave worth countless guinea, but because of Mr Hogarth I was possessed, in penny image, by several thousands. To be sure I thus became an historic and memorable figure in the birth of

democracy in the British realm. Thankful as I was for such status, I still resented the ways my Ceres was portrayed, for the hacks and picture-makers embroidered our doings, sensationalizing them, spawning fresh scandal. They showed us in a tavern stinking of sweat and tallow, a picture of moral ruin. (Dabydeen 274)

Despite this original downgraded representation of Mungo as “possessed, in penny image, by several thousand”, his utterances above suggest a new status brought forward by Dabydeen to free Mungo from the dust of the archive into a more resisting and powerful rank. To put it differently, this ‘re-voicing’ of the silenced archive offers a new status to the archive on its own which might be regarded as a ‘deconstructed’ aspect. It is important to note that regardless of his clear motivation to be a powerful witness, Mungo’s autobiography remains unwritten until the end of the novel. The end of the novel evokes the image of Mungo in a state of mourning, “listening to the voice of Ellen and those of his community” (Dabydeen 279). He spends his days mourning the dead, listening to their voices, and haunted by their ghosts:

For all the voices will be Ellar’s, I know it, jungle howl, loud cackle or big-bosomed laugh, that make birds shoot from the trees in fright. I press my hands to my ear and sing and sing, but she still insurrect into my head, for there are some women-Ellar in particular- who no matter how strong the prison, secure the grave, will break out, torch the katran bush, blow with disobedient angel breath, fan the flames, that not even God’s Flood can drown them out, for when the waters ebb, there is smoke still, the first smouldering thing that arise is the spirit of Ellar. (Dabydeen 279-280)

These final lines provoke the moment of bringing to life the ghosts of memories and “learning to live with ghosts”, as Jacques Derrida puts it. Mungo is mourning his community, his mother, and all women who only exist as spectral voices. In *Specters of Marx* (1993), Derrida argues that the future depends on this adaptation “to learn to live with ghosts” (xviii). He goes far to stress the necessity to live in the present but remains connected to those already dead. The idea of mourning the dead conjures a sense of justice for the dead:

No justice...seems possible or thinkable without the principle of some responsibility, beyond the ghosts of those who are not yet born or who are already dead, be they victims of wars, political or other kinds of violence, nationalist, racist, colonialist, sexist, or other kinds of exterminations, victims of the oppressions of capitalist imperialism or any of the forms of totalitarianism. (Derrida, xix)

Drawing on Derrida’s insights on the concepts of “hauntology”, which is according to him, an ongoing process since the word itself, in its French form “Hantologie” insinuates the priority of being and presence with the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present nor absent,



neither dead nor alive. Hauntology thereby denotes a new aspect of deconstruction since Derrida calls on us to endeavor to speak and listen to the specters. In the wake of this idea of hauntology, one might find an answer behind the open-ended nature of Dabydeen's *A Harlot's Progress*, for the author did not make it clear if his character Mungo finally succeeded to write his autobiography or not. Despite the fact that the story remains untold, it is the women who direct Mungo's consciousness, life and future. Again, the image of women is constantly present in Dabydeen's text. This complex, fragmented, and open-ended narrative may also lead us to think about the complexity of writing history. In the context of the novel, Mungo is the only witness to what happened and his testimony serves as an understanding of the past. Despite Mungo's seemingly fragmented memories, his control over his memories might reveal his powerful control over Mr. Pringle, since he seems to be the only one who can master his memories which can be traced in Mungo's speech:

Memory don't bother me, that's' why I don't tell Mr Pringle anything. I can change memory, like I can change my posture, fling the blanket away, spring out of bed, dance a step or two of a cotillion, and babble into his blank pages the most lively of syllables. But a man had got to be grateful and feed Mr Pringle's curiosity return for all the pity he lavish on me, the shilling here, the new breeches there. (Dabydeen 2)

At the beginning of the novel, Mungo appears uncomfortable with sharing his memories due to his claim of remembering nothing as we have already seen, however, he plays with memory serving his own desire to narrate and select all the scenes that marked his life. For instance, in a different passage in the novel, Mungo freely shares his childhood memories:

How else can you explain, dear reader the care with which she nurtured me? My first and only memory of Africa is of being cradled in her arms, possibly tenderly, most likely with such fierceness she appeared a beast of intent on eating me. It seems that I spent all my life in that distant time and place lying in her arms, fearful of her teeth, forever listening to her melancholy tales. I recollect nothing precise but her ferocious and salivating visage, though in moments of uncertainty she resembled what I have dreamt of my mother since I first ser sight on Moll: a firm-breasted woman doomed to wastage and disease. A young unblemished woman. The dream turns into a nightmare of tantalizing detail: there is a face, angular and ebony, chiselled from basalt. The eyes too, and nose, and carved in a geometry which latches with precision the proportion of the lips. Every feature is hard-edged and rigid. The body carries itself with an appropriate sternness of movements. The limbs are planned, contained; it walks the earth with measured cuneiform of gracefulness. (Dabydeen 40)

Again, the image of the mother, or the woman, is replicated in the above passage as a strong

and unforgettable memory for Mungo. Unlike Hogarth's English society that condemns Moll, Mungo feels the presence of his mother through Moll, displayed as a harlot in the archive. The figure of the father is also evoked in Mungo's narrative since he started his narration with bringing back his father requesting Mr. Pringle "to properize it in [his] best English" (Dabydeen 11):

Pa is far. He is never here. He is never. He is tilling field or fighting war. One time he come home. I bury in my mother, sleeping, so he part me from her and put me away, by the door. I could cry but I am glad he is here, at last. He spread a warm cloth over me and because it is dark, he run his fingers along my face, tracing me in his mind. He will recognize me forever by tracing me so, howsoever dark things be. I don't cry because I want him to be my father. (Dabydeen 11)

Dabydeen recalls the absent father which reminds us of the father's voice in Caryl Phillips's *Crossing the River*, but here instead, we hear the voice of this little child, lost and disconnected because of his father's displacement. It seems almost as if he were responding to Phillips's father who sold his children into slavery.

In the novel, Mungo shares the way he has appeared in Hogarth's art:

For though Mr Hogarth's art was not affordable to many, a dozen ballads and a dozen pirated versions of his pictures appeared, cheap enough for mass purchase. Once I was affordable only to the very rich, a slave worth countless guinea, but because of Mr. Hogarth I was possessed, in penny image, by several thousands. To be sure I thus became a historic and memorable figure in the birth of democracy in the British realm. Thankful as I was for such status, I still resented the ways my Ceres was portrayed, for the hacks and picture-makers embroidered our doings, sensationalizing them, spawning fresh scandal. They showed us in a tavern stinking of sweat and tallow, a picture of moral ruin. (Dabydeen 274)

Dabydeen's *A Harlot's Progress* not only denotes eighteenth-century representations of Blacks, but critically reflects upon the individualist ideas of contemporary society. According to the Guyanese writer, the conflict between individual freedom and collective suffering and pleasure is an ongoing tension in the present. In *Hogarth's Blacks Images of Blacks in Eighteenth Century English Art* (1987), he points out repeatedly that Indians and Africans are put in the same category of "primitivism and servitude in eighteenth-century art and popular images" (Dabydeen 100). In so doing, he asserts that Africans and Asians should be united as peoples victimized by an economic system despite cultural differences. Mungo has already expressed his rejection to the appeal of Mr. Pringle, who seeks "a sober testimony that will

appeal to the Christian charity of an enlightened citizenry” (Dabydeen 5). Ironically, Mungo’s story will be used to emancipate him along with millions of enslaved Africans.

It seems relevant to add how Mungo’s utterances are crafted in a mixed language of an Early Modern English and creole language by simply telling without truly telling the story; “Pish! Where the bee sucks their suck. Let me talk dis and dat till the day come that I die soon.” (Dabydeen 5). This complex intermingled discourse might echo the complexity of telling the past from the perspective of Mungo.

Drawing on the above analysis of Mungo’s narrative structure, it becomes clear that the writer chiefly focuses on the new representation of the archive. In doing so, he transfigures his narrative into a metaphor for traumatic memory which keeps vivid not only the Black figure but also the aspects of enslaved African traumas. Dabydeen’s textual depiction of the visual transforms this marginalized figure in the archive into an utterly new contemporary figure. And since the new conjures emotion and trauma, it also suggests a form of resistance. Under the sway of such ambiguous refiguration, contemporary readers may develop a feeling of engagement towards the past and question the archive as inscribed and deciphered in the fictional discourse. In what follows, I will look at additional representations of ekphrasis embedded in Dabydeen’s *Turner* and Fred D’Aguiar’s *Feeding the Ghosts*. Both of them share in common subverted versions of J.M.W. Turner’s 1840 painting “Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying” (commonly known as “the Slave Ship”).

While Dabydeen’s poem displaces from the painting’s frame one of the enslaved Africans “who has been drowned in Turner’s and awakens him from his death to “begin anew in the sea, D’Aguiar novel depicts Mintah’s return as a symbol of Black history’s reincarnation and a rebirth for her Black community.

### 3.2 Re-writing Back the Past: Buried in the Visual Archive and Reincarnated in the Fictional Account: David Dabydeen’s *Turner* (1995) and Fred D’Aguiar’s *Feeding the Ghosts* (1997)

### 3.2.1 Poetic Ekphrasis and the Articulation of the Past: A Dialogue Between Art and Poetry in Dabydeen's *Turner*

#### 3.2.1.1 Transforming the Archive from Image into Word

Ekphrasis, as mentioned earlier, is a process of interpreting art into another discourse or form. In terms of poetry, it usually involves poetic responses to an image or a sculpture. David Dabydeen's poem "Turner" is inspired from J.M.W. Turner's 1840 painting "Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying" (commonly known as "the Slave Ship") that he faithfully selects as a cover to his poem. Lars Eckstein describes the poem as a "stunning piece of ekphrastic literature" (Eckstein 121), a writing that engages in an intimate dialogue with manifest images in the words of Eckstein. What Marcus Wood also identifies as a "verbal representation of a visual work of art"<sup>68</sup> (Wood 29). I believe that a brief description of the painting is required for a better understanding of Dabydeen's interpretation.

Turner's painting portrays a stormy ocean depicting the slave ship trying to resist over the high waves in the background. Upon looking closely at the painting, the viewer can clearly see body parts projected from the sea: a pair of miniature hands and a leg that belong to enslaved Africans who have been thrown overboard. Visually, the colorful sky and the vast ocean cover almost the painting. The hands appear in the middle and the leg is positioned on the lower right side. In the preface, Dabydeen describes his poem in a few lines reflecting how his work focuses "on the submerged head of the African in the foreground of Turner's painting. It has been drowned in Turner's (and other artists') sea for centuries" (Dabydeen 7). Similarly, as Mungo in *A Harlot's Progress*, Dabydeen displaces from the painting's frame one of the enslaved Africans and awakens him to "begin anew in the sea but he is too trapped by grievous memory to escape history" (Dabydeen 7). This reincarnation and "desire for transfiguration or newness or creative amnesia" seems, however, "frustrated" as the poet puts in his preface (Dabydeen 7). This interconnectedness between the past and future generates the voice of this child: "the agent of self-recognition is a stillborn child tossed overboard from a future ship. The child floats towards him. He wants to give it life, to mother it, but the child—his unconscious and his origin—cannot bear the future and its inventions, drowned as it is in memory of ancient cruelty" (Dabydeen 8).

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<sup>68</sup> This definition is initially provided by James A.W. Heffernan in his essay "Ekphrasis: Theory" published in the 2015 *Handbook of Intermediality*, p. 35- 49.

There is a paradox in the image of this child who is simultaneously portrayed as a “stillborn from all the signs” of trauma and “a miracle of fate” (Dabydeen 9). What is surprising though is Dabydeen’s choice of “Turner” as the captain of the slave ship in his poem. To illustrate, Turner represents both Dabydeen’s character and the British artist’s name. This combination not only embodies a sense of criticism but also creates an interaction between the text and the archive. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Dabydeen’s response to the British painter Turner is provided from the start. He states:

The intensity of Turner’s painting is such that I believe the artist in private must have savoured the sadism he publicly denounced. I make Turner the captain of the slave ship (The still born child is also named Turner). Turner’s well-chronicled love of children is seen in another light, as is his extreme prudence with memory. (Dabydeen 8)

‘Turner’ turns out to be a key figure in the poem especially when thinking of the term which denotes the archive, the captain of the slave ship and the still-born child as well. This significant merging induces the reliance on each other to address the legacy of slavery. As such, one can say that Turner represents memory, history and the future. Turner’s ambiguous status will be further illustrated in the following brief part based on some examples taken from the poem.

As a central intertext for Dabydeen’s poem, the poet connects the bodies in the painting with the memories shared by the child mostly shaped by death, loss, displacement and abuse. This image subverts the colorful painting of Turner. In this regard, Eckstein depicts Turner’s painting as a:

Sublime seascape dominated by hues of brown and red; just left of the centre, a ship struggles in a turmoil of waves, while at the bottom right, the shackled leg of an African slave, attacked. By fish and seagulls, emerges from the waters. (Eckstein 122)

Eckstein’s depiction above reminds us of John Ruskin’s admiration of Turner’s painting in terms of its powerful visual aesthetic depiction of the sea as a main subject, neglecting the painting’s furious content. Ruskin’s analysis of the painting engenders a provocative annihilation of the atrocity of the content, a fact that urges Dabydeen, as a Black British writer, to respond to similar injustices found in his poem *Turner*’s preface:

Ruskin thought that “Slave Ship” represented “the noblest sea that Turner ever painted... the noblest certainly ever painted by man”. He wrote a detailed account of the composition of the painting, dwelling on the genius with which Turner illuminated sea and sky in an

intense and lurid splendour of colours. “If I were to rest Turner’s immortality upon any single work, I should choose this”. (He did by buying the painting). Its subject, the shackling and drowning of Africans, was relegated to a brief footnote in Ruskin’s essay. The footnote reads like an afterthought, something tossed overboard. (Dabydeen 7)

This explicit intertextuality foregrounds Dabydeen’s harsh criticism towards the painting and Ruskin’s superficial tribute to the subject of the painting is only mentioned in a footnote. In contrast to Turner, Dabydeen takes the slave ship as its central icon and narrative focus. However, some scholars, who closely examined both works, believe that there is a similarity between them. For instance, Marcus Wood indicates, in his study *Blind Memory* (2000), that both Turner and Dabydeen share an “ability to see beauty in the transformations enacted by death in water” (Wood 55). Turner, Wood explains, “transmogrifies a scene of carnage into a celebration of life, and bathes all in the colors of putrefaction and evisceration” (Wood 55). Drawing on Wood’s insights, it seems relevant also to add that Dabydeen transforms in his language the image of the sea into a space of death and rebirth at the same time. He explicitly embraces the image of the sea as a major energy of Turner’s death scene:

But the sea  
Will cleanse it. It has bleached me too of colour,  
Painted me gaudy, dabs of ebony,  
An arabesque of blues and vermilions,  
Sea-squats cling to my body like gorgeous  
Ornaments. I have become the sea’s whore  
Yielding. (Dabydeen 19)

Dabydeen’s lines above demonstrate a conjuring image in which the sea becomes a sign of color, beauty, softness and vivacity. The sea is no longer a scene of the drowning crime but more powerfully a place of reincarnation embracing the dead bodies and giving them life. This example might be placed in the context of the archive as a source and resource from which the poet can establish a creative dialogue between words and images. Equally important, the sun in Turner’s painting strikes the viewer becomes transmuted into a source of blindness in Dabydeen’s poem. Dabydeen demonstrates this metaphoric transformation through his repetition of the sea image throughout the poem. One can note here the dynamics of the literary text in transforming the visual archive from the image into the words. However, the intention does not seem to be the same since *Turner* as a long narrative poem that gives voice to the submerged enslaved African in the foreground of the painting. *Turner* tries to construct a new life out of a traumatic past.

Dabydeen's complex language provokes a state of fragmentation and loss since the colorful image of the sea is later deconstructed and displaced from its state of beauty into guilt. This abrupt alteration coincides with the moment of awakening since this African boy only realizes the darkness and blackness of the sea once he "woke to find /Only Sea" (Dabydeen 23). This status of awakening resonates with his forgetting to what happened before; he has "forgotten the words" (Dabydeen 23). This constant remarkable state of shattering between remembering and forgetting can be also found in the following lines:

I had forgotten the years, now wakened  
 By the creature that washed towards me.  
 Yet another ship passed, familiar sails stretched  
 Upon racks of wind, ropes taut against spars,  
 Enough to rip a man's hand trapped there,  
 Careless with rum, wistful for a shore  
 ... For years I had forgotten the years  
 Until it broke the waters, close  
 To my face, salt splash burning my eyes  
 Awake. (Dabydeen 17)

This moment of awakening from the horror of the past and seeking newness is distracted by another voice calling him "nigger". This term is used several times in the poem, uttered by another stillborn child tossed overboard from another slave ship:

'Nigger', it cries, loosening from the hook  
 Of my desire, drifting away from  
 my body of lies. I wanted to teach it  
 A redemptive song, fashion new descriptions  
 Of things, new colours fountaining out of form.  
 I wanted to begin anew in the sea  
 But the child would not bear the future  
 Not its inventions, and my face is rooted  
 In the ground of memory, a ground stampeded  
 By herds of foreign men who swallow all its fruit... (Dabydeen 41)

Hearing the word "nigger" erases all the speaker's desire to forget the past. At this particular moment the requested transformation to divorce from "the body of lies" and seek "a redemption" does not exist anymore, because the memory of the past will last forever, forming a ghost. This new voice heard by another stillborn child destabilizes the process of healing from the trauma and stop the searching of "another image of himself...to heal or curse, harvests, ceremonies" (Dabydeen 42). It also erases the creation of a new land and a new family; "No stars, no land, no words, no community/No mother" (Dabydeen 42). In an interview with Kwame Dawes as part of *Anglophone Caribbean Poets Talk Yuh Talk* (2000), Dabydeen contends how the self cannot be reconstructed since "the layers of the self have

been buried in a forgetfulness” (Dawes 197). With respect to *Turner*, he explains how his poem deconstructs painting as it is “the submerged black figure in the sea, head first, not feet first”. However, its ending engenders a “great note of pessimism” that Dabydeen defines as which resides in the inability to recover something significant from the past. The poem intentionally takes a pessimistic ending to show his belief that the recovery of traces from the past is hopeless.

Another way to engage with this ekphrastic response to Turner’s painting can be found in Dabydeen’s creation of the names of animals, birds, and fishes in the poem. The following selected names from the poem “Flambeau, Sulsi, Aramanda” seem to be all fabricated as Dabydeen himself explains in an interview with Kwame Dawes (1994):

I just plucked them out of my mind one late whilst writing. The desire was twofold: one was to erase recognition of a particular landscape, whether India or African, and secondly, to suggest the possibility of remaking a landscape by renaming it, which is of course going against the colonial experience. The second thing is that I deliberately set the poem in the sea, and the sea is actual, not just as location of the drowned man, but in the rhythm of the poem. The drowned man’s landscape is ghostly and part of that ghostliness is the fabricated names of the fauna and flora. This is another aspect of creolization: I don’t want to be “authentic” about the Indian experience nor do I want to be ‘authentic’ about the Indian experience because I’m neither; but I am both in a kind of ghostly way (Dabydeen qtd in Dawes 205-206)

Dabydeen’s illustration about his position above demonstrates his unique and singular writing process. The way he plays with words and describes differently birds and animals figured in the painting leaves the reader with a new perspective and approach to poetry. The poem then goes beyond the image to be transformed into a universal singular text at times that might be considered as “the other” text. This reminds us of Derek Attridge’s concepts of singularity, alterity and inventiveness (Attridge 64). The experience of singularity in Dabydeen’s poetry involves an ‘inventiveness’ and ‘invention’ of words that constitute a linguistic different text. In spite of the experience of singularity as inseparable from *inventiveness*, Attridge stresses its involvement in an apprehension towards *otherness* (Attridge 67). This otherness might be perceived in using other languages or traditions within the same text. That is to say, Dabydeen evokes the oral tradition of Africa through crafting different tales narrated by his ancestors.



However, this singularity in the poem does not disregard Dabydeen's other techniques, such as storytelling, as is evident in the following lines, in which he recalls the sources and stories through a reconstruction of his past and serves as the poem's engine:

Only Manu Knew, stuffed with the yam  
Of supplicants. He squats in the midst  
Of their gifts of dozi, plantains, cola seeds,  
Rubs his belly and yawns. He will summon up  
The spirits in his own time. He chews  
A twig, picks the stodge from his teeth, spits,  
Whilst his women, fat with child or afterbirth  
Mix the ancient ingredients, arrange  
The sacred bowls around his body.  
He looks on hazily, burps. The villagers  
Wriggle their ears but the spirits stay silent  
Until he darts his hands out at a bowl,  
Scoops up red jelly, daubs it on his face,  
Howls, The villagers scatter. They gather  
In the gloom at the back of his hut, whilst  
The Sun pours through a window upon his head  
Like a libation. Between shrieks he prophesies  
The stranger who will bring rain to fertilise  
The crops, and lamentation in the land,  
Who will bless us and decapitate the gods,  
Who will make marks on the earth with his finger,  
Writing boundaries, who will fashion metal  
With new sorcery to kill us in herds,  
Who will deliver us from evil and disease,  
Teach us new ways to reap and speak. (Dabydeen 29)

The choice of referring to these extensive long lines stems from its powerful metaphors that are bursting with meanings and allegories that require further investigation. The narrator's words here take the reader into African heritage telling stories and evoking memories of his former life: of the African oral tradition; of passing wisdom down through generations; of hierarchical social structures encompassing gods, ancestors and elders. The poem, therefore, navigates its way through fictional and fictionalized journey of transformation to widely expose the power of words to 'tell' what the image does not convey. Dabydeen's own poetic response to, and representation of, the painting goes beyond the visual to immerse the reader into the textual creativity. Dabydeen 'recycles' the visual archive clearly distinguished in the use of the word "Turner". This visible fusion reflects an ambiguous status that the following section will further illustrate.

### 3.2.1.2 Turner's Ambiguous Status

The repeated use of the term “turner” throughout the poem may hold contradictory functions. Turner is personified as an educator who represents a source of knowledge and education for children on board since he taught them how “to count, weigh, measure, abstract, rationalize” (Dabydeen 10). However, towards the end of the poem, this image of the “father” and educator is transformed into a symbol of sexual atrocity; “each day boys scramble at his feet, fighting to clean them first” (Dabydeen 14). This scene reminds us of the Black community, abused youth, women and children that Dabydeen has portrayed in the following lines:

Turner crammed our boys' mouths too with riches,  
His tongue spurting strange potions upon ours  
Which left us dazed, which made us forget  
The very sound of our speech. Each night  
Aboard ship he gave selflessly the nipple  
Of his tongue until we learnt to say profitably  
In his own language, *we desire you, we love  
You, we forgive you.* He whispered eloquently  
Into our ears even as we wriggled beneath him,  
Breathless with pain, wanting to remove his hook  
Implanted in our flesh. The more we struggled  
Ungratefully, the more steadfast his resolve  
To teach us words. (Dabydeen 40)

The passage above displays Turner's atrocious relationship with children, since he is no longer the teacher, nor the mother, but rather the rapist whose sexual desire exceeds all human values. The terms “desire”, “love”, and “flesh” underline this sexual abuse and represent an act of violence over these “boys”. Captain Turner seduces the enslaved African children into an abusive pedophilic relation. Therefore, “Turner”, bears out a double character of a savior and exploiter, suggesting the ambiguity and double investment of the system of slavery. What is sustained by Dabydeen through the use of the archive is his resistance to racism as a Caribbean writer. Consequently, connecting with Turner and making him the protagonist of his poem provokes a new response to the archive, empowering enslaved African voices muted in the original text. In this respect, on January 2018 during an interview I conducted with the British-Guyanese writer in Kingston, he made it clear how *A Harlot's Progress* and *Turner* depend on a “re-construction of archival documents to deal with slavery which is a main concern to understand [his] ancestors and [his] past”. In the same context, the writer explains

how his writing on the legacy of slavery functions as “a self-discovery” of his own past and identity as a Caribbean writer in an England ruined by race” (Dabydeen 2018).

Dabydeen’s fiction and poetry represent this reworking of the visual archive, transforming British art into words. The British-Guyanese writer’s return to the past evolves a postcolonial form of ‘ekphrasis’ that Mary Lou Emery redefines as a verbal account “of what cannot be fully seen in the painting, but only imaginatively envisioned through words” (Emery 35). We must also consider how Dabydeen connects images with text as a resurrection of the life and death of enslaved Africans in the archive. Dabydeen’s concern with retrieving and imagining the archive is similarly refigured in the work of other Black British writers such as Fred D’Aguiar, whose fictional text *Feeding the Ghosts* will be the focus of the following part.

### 3.3 Fred D’Aguiar’s *Feeding the Ghosts*: An Imaginative Return, A Hybrid Discourse

#### 3.3.1 The Literary Archive vs the Legal Archive

In reading *Feeding the Ghosts*, one can notice how Fred D’Aguiar has a different take on the *Zong* case. It is worth noting that re-writing from historical documents seems a personal position the writer has maintained as his own because he has always deemed this historical past as being part of his personality and his present. As a consequence, his poetry and novels deal with this notion of return to the past to further explore it on both the personal and historical levels. Therefore, the novel can be taken as a narrative that seeks to reconcile the respect for historical fact with the need to come to terms with slavery’s effects.

D’Aguiar attempts to interconnect history and fiction to allow his readers to revisit the past within his narrative imagination that re-visualizes the historical past in a fictional text. In this section, I consider a study of the dynamic fictional tropes present in his text as a form of resistance and power. This literary resistance functions as a fictional defense against the official documents the novel questions. I will then study the way the writer ‘crafts’ history and law to offer a dynamic archival return, that Wendy Walter has coined as “a dream archive” (Walter 101). I focus on the ways in which the archive is used and the ends to which this tendency is reproduced by the medium of fiction. This part at hand pursues the ekphrastic

response that fiction brings to the visual archive. First, I will attempt to analyze Mintah's symbolic presence as a reincarnated woman. I will then move my attention to the court trial where D'Aguiar stages the archive and re-imagines the trial so underscore how "the archive is back on stage".<sup>69</sup>

In his novel, Fred D'Aguiar transforms the archive into fiction to provoke a powerful discourse in which the archive takes another performative status with multiple voices from the past. In an interview with Maria Frías, D'Aguiar illustrates further on the idea of including multiple voices his novel:

The more testimonies we have about the past the better informed we are. A single consciousness which tries to order a linear narrative about the complex past is too exclusive and exclusionary. Ambiguity and contradiction are aspects of any return to the past so it is better to have it written in as a guarantee between characters in the text, rather than in a single authorial voice, since polyphony maximizes the number of readings inherent in any return; more "stuff" he recovered. It is something I picked up from the theatre. When you write plays, you hear how talk results in one thing leading to another so that one thing is another. A complex web around a theme is women as a result, rather than any simplistic linearity. Fissures open up in the text as characters add to and subtract from what others have said. Room for a reader to feel and talk back to the text is created as a result. (D'Aguiar 422- 423)

The profound hybridity of genre appeals to readers to participate in the understanding of this non-linear and fragmented narrative about the past. The reader is no longer a passive receiver, he/she becomes an active agent urged by the writer to interact with the injustice embedded in the past. As a reader, the exposure to a detailed description of the trial court erases the present time frame and stimulates imagination to think about how the case was taking place in the past. This creative practice to "put the archive on stage" in such a criminal trial shifts the archive from its static shelter to a more dynamic and engaging discourse producing a provocative conversation between the archive, the historical facts, and the fictional imaginary discourse. This return to the Middle Passage indicates a refusal to stop looking for what is *not* visible, as much as for what is, horrifically, represented in the painting and the legal system. Describing a contemporary critical literary turn, Aleida Assmann claims in her study, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives* (2011) that "in literary studies, the archive is a concept that, just like trauma, has moved into the center of poststructuralist

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<sup>69</sup> The original sentence is derived from Marianne Dugeon's study *Medieval and Early Modern England on the Contemporary Stage: The Past is Back on Stage*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2021.

and postcolonial discourse: in this career, however, it is often disconnected from the empirical institution and used in metaphorical ways as a highly suggestive trope” (Assmann 102). Assmann foregrounds the voice of artists to explore the contents of the archive and reclaim the information by framing it within a new context. In the same vein, Ian Baucom’s *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (2005) argues how the late twentieth century “inherits, repeats, and intensifies the eighteenth century” (Baucom 41).

The novel’s structure evolves around historical dates and settings that I believe are relevant to the discussion in terms of the author’s engagement with the archive. The slave ship *Zong* in 1781 and the courtroom of the Lord Chief Justice Mansfield in 1783, and Kingston, Jamaica<sup>70</sup> in 1833 function as major settings that D’Aguiar deploys to write Mintah’s story. The first part of the novel considers Mintah’s appearance as an enslaved African thrown overboard with the rest of the enslaved Africans due to illness and as a way to reclaim insurance fees. However, Mintah later survives and returns to the ship aiming at saving the surviving enslaved Africans with the help of Simon, who is Cook’s assistant. As a sign of punishment over these rebellious acts, the slave ship captain decides to jettison more enslaved Africans. The novel is divided into three parts; part one presents a detailed account of the transatlantic journey along with the murder. The second part imagines what might have happened during the court trial, and the last part is devoted to Mintah’s story of survival.

*Feeding the Ghosts* opens with a conversation between the captain and his crew about the actions he is about to propose in order “to preserve the ship and the remainder of its holdings so that [they] may recover [their] losses from the insurance” (D’Aguiar 12). This order of throwing overboard the enslaved Africans in the pursuit of profits becomes the

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<sup>70</sup> In his study *The Zong: A Massacre, the Law and the End of Slavery* (2011), James Walvin indicates how Memories of the *Zong* were never far below the surface in Britain in 2007. But what happened on that ship is also an important aspect of the history of Jamaica. The 208 African survivors from that ship, the people who saw and heard the killings, landed in Jamaica in December 1781, and for many Jamaicans, 2007 was not so much the bicentenary of abolition as the 226th anniversary of the *Zong*’s arrival. Thanks to the efforts of the Jamaica National Bicentenary Committee, a permanent stone memorial was erected close to the *Zong*’s docking place at Black River. A major unveiling ceremony, with plentiful media coverage, was marked by speeches from politicians and academics, and with frequent mention of the killings. The atrocity was declared by Professor Verene Shepherd, chairman of the Bicentenary Committee, to be ‘an important part of St Elizabeth’s [the local parish] and Jamaica’s history which needs to be exposed and its victims need to be memorialized in some tangible way.’ The Jamaica Gleaner recorded that the *Zong* incident ‘serves as a grueling reminder of the atrocities committed against our ancestors and the vagaries of a system that continued for too long. Shepherd concluded her address with the chilling lyrics of a popular Jamaican song, ‘Murderer, blood is on your shoulder’, p. 207-208.

subject of a court case in 1783<sup>71</sup>. This conversation follows the trial testimony in which D'Aguiar has altered some of the original names citing, for instance, the slave ship captain's name, Luke Cunningham, instead of the historical figure Luke Collingwood. It is known that Luke Collingwood was originally a doctor aboard his previous slave ship and had never commanded a slave ship. Another example is highlighted in the name of James Kelsal that D'Aguiar retains his original name with slight amendment of removing the second "l". Similarly, D'Aguiar refers to other historical names as Cook who stands for James Cook, a British explorer and captain in the British navy, and eventually Lord Mansfield, the judge in the trial section. While the novel's fictional narrative follows Mintah's stories and memories, thematically, the novel responds to a real legal document and an existing case in history. Due to its reliance on historical facts, D'Aguiar's novel, then, is both to be regarded as "hinging on, as well as expanding from, what is known as the archive of the Black Atlantic" (Walters 101). One can wonder to what extent *Feeding the Ghosts* epitomizes a fictional account to reconcile the respect for historical fact with the need to come to terms with slavery's lasting emotional impact. In other words, this interconnectedness between the historical discourse and the fictional text leads to challenge the contemporary reader to revisit the past from the scope of the present. I would like to address the prologue with further details for a better understanding of the context of the novel.

*Feeding the Ghosts* starts with "the prologue" in which D'Aguiar recounts the context of the *Zong* massacre, yet in a poetic language, depicting the sea as both an archival site and a historical scene of the crime:

THE SEA IS HISTORY, sea water boils in its own current salt gives  
the sea the texture of fabric, something thick and close knitted, not  
unlike the fine dust of a barn seen floating in a shaft of light. Sea  
receives a body as if that body has come to rest on a cushion, one  
that gives way to the body's weight and folds around it like an  
envelope. (D'Aguiar 3)

The writer's epigraph to Derek Walcott's figurative image of the sea evokes a similar sentence he previously cited in the first few pages before his prologue: "Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs? / Where is your tribal memory? Sirs, /in that grey vault. / The sea. The sea /has locked them up. The sea is history". The "SEA IS HISTORY" is deliberately capitalized to inscribe an engagement with both the sea and history. As

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<sup>71</sup> The main records of the case are the "Documents relating to the Ship *Zong*," REC/19, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London and "Answers of William Gregson (January 1784) and James Kelsall (November 1783)," E112/1258/173, NA.

mentioned earlier, the sea signifies a storehouse of lost memories, lost bodies, lost lives, traumas and deaths, while the latter suggests the tomb and graveyard for the bodies of the dead. In line with this question of the bodies of the dead, the international project “Thanatic Ethics: The Circulation of Bodies in Migratory Spaces”<sup>72</sup> challenges this question of the circulation and repatriation of the bodies of the dead. The project also raises questions about the ethics of burial in the context of migration and diaspora. The controversy lies in the bodies of dead migrants who most often encounter death on their terrifying journey for a better life. In this respect, the term ‘thanatic’ is derived from “Thanatos” which stands for the personification of death in the Greek mythology. Drawing on this idea of death, in his article “Necropolitics” (2003) Achille Mbembe states that “the ultimate expression of sovereignty resides, to a large degree, in the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die” (Mbembe 11). Mbembe argues that to exercise sovereignty is to exercise control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power. In the context of the novel, this sovereignty and power can be seen in the captain’s control and order of throwing the enslaved Africans overboard while choosing to keep the remaining healthy ones onboard. Mbembe draws on Michel Foucault’s “biopower” which is best illustrated in his study in *The History of Sexuality (The Will to Knowledge 1976)*. Michel Foucault establishes the concept of “biopower”; a technology of power for modern nation in which he explains how “a power that exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavors to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations” (Foucault 137). The transition from the traditional “power of life and death” held by sovereigns, which Foucault says was actually limited to the power of death, i.e. the right of a sovereign to deprive subjects of their life, to a fundamental shift in emphasis so that the “power of life and death” became the power of life, also known as “biopower”, is the first part of Foucault’s explanation of biopower. The shift from right of death to control over life denotes the development of biopower. Achille Mbembe delves into Foucault’s concept “biopower” and focuses on the concept of “Necropolitics” in his article of the same name (2003).

Along with the sea as a graveyard to all these bodies, the sea is situated as a symbol of slavery, and a common theme considered by scholars, writers and artists to remember and commemorate this history today. Fred D’Aguiar starts with this conjuring of the sea and history due to its pervading aspects in the novel. While the sea is often associated with history and slavery, D’Aguiar figuratively alters the sea as an image of a ship through a metaphorical

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<sup>72</sup> <https://www.thanaticethics.com/>.

shift. Most notably, the slave ship materializes all the horrors of the Atlantic slavery and the Middle Passage in its restrained space, where all the atrocities took place, and thereby, seem to have flowed together in the same place. Certainly, due to the awful living conditions and the outbreak of disease, the enslaved Africans have very little hope of survival, let alone of returning home. It is obvious that their voyage is a one-way journey especially when it becomes hard to resist dreadful conditions that D'Aguiar brings into his pages to portray how the enslaved Africans were "tossed together with no space to move for days, confined in the overcrowded space of the slave ship, now turned into a jail" (D'Aguiar 19). The writer further depicts these conditions in the following lines:

The air had thickened with sweat from bodies that had not been allowed to wash for days but which had sweated in stale, airless confinement where the temperatures alone would cause a body to break into a dripping sweat without the slightest activity on its part. Add to the accident of vomit from the sick, urine from those chained for such inordinately long spells that even the most accommodating bladders would rebel...All seemed one miserable, tangled mass of humanity. A sea of eyes, flesh welded into one body of complaints, on occasion separating into distinct entities of mankind, but mostly indistinguishable one from another as anything but a sound, a movement, a plea inscribed on some face momentarily by a lamp, before melting back into the thick dark. (D'Aguiar 19)

This passage describes the terrifying conditions that enslaved Africans endured onboard the slave ship. This terror is a common portrayal in both fiction and other sites of memory archival like museums on slavery. The voices of enslaved Africans appear to be dramatically crying out and suffering from disease, illness, physical and psychological harm endured during the Middle Passage. This still remain across time and space. In the context of our study, D'Aguiar's *Feeding the Ghosts* recalls these images and scenes of atrocity from history as well as oral and slave narratives to further engage his reader with the past and recollect these histories in the present.

The reader is constantly reminded of the historical context of the novel, more significantly through the writer's powerful techniques of merging the archival discourse with the fictional account. Despite the apparent distinctive accounts, the reader at times is left unable to distinguish between both accounts. In doing so, the Black British writer seeks to challenge his contemporary reader to think of fiction as part of reality. Actually, being a Black writer one can wonder that his intention might be also to raise awareness about the



necessity to consider these traumatic scenes, perhaps more recurrent today, although modernized by a contemporary social and cultural understanding of Black identity. To further digest these intentions, I suggest starting with D’Aguiar’s prologue, which is derived from the legal case document, in which the drowned enslaved Africans were only referred to by numbers associated with the slave trade:

Over three days 131 such bodies, no, 132, are flung at this sea. Each lands with a sound that the sea absorbs and silences. Each opens a wound in this sea that heals over each body without the evidence of a scar. Two hundred and sixty-four arms and 264 legs punch and kick against a tide that insists all who land on it, all who break its smooth surface, must succumb to its swells, trembles, pushes and pulls.”  
(D’Aguiar 4)

D’Aguiar suggests in his short—yet dense—excerpt the calculating loss of the enslaved Africans through referring to facts and numbers taken from the legal case. It seems worthy noting that the *Zong* case (*Gregson v. Gilbert*) was first brought to the awareness of the larger British public through the newspaper reports that the ship’s owners were suing the underwriters for the insurance value of those 123 murdered enslaved Africans. As a consequence, “Captain Luke Collingwood brutally converted an uninsurable loss into general average loss, a sacrifice of parts of a cargo for the benefit of the whole” (Armstrong 173)<sup>73</sup>. This explicit intertextuality reveals the writer’s intention to merge the archival language with fiction. And yet, this apparent conjuring might be interpreted as a trope to weaken the reader’s resistance to confronting the history of slavery. The numbers provided may also be construed as the text’s archive and the imaginary account of these facts might even constitute a new archival material. This seemingly fictional correlation between statistics, the sea, and the ship turns to be a reality and connects with the present especially when we continue to observe similar horrifying conditions in the journey of the “illegal immigrants” from their countries to European countries they believe would give them a better future.

In terms of opening with the historical context, D’Aguiar subverts the real intention behind throwing enslaved Africans overboard the slave ship *Zong*, a reality that the legal archive misconceived and falsified claiming that the order of throwing was due to “insufficiency of water”. This unjustified intention is explicitly analyzed through the writer’s excerpt:

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<sup>73</sup> I have already included this paragraph in Chapter one as part of “Remembering the slave ship *Zong*”, but for the sake of clarity here, I believe it might be of relevance in D’Aguiar’s prologue section.

The captain was the maddest of all. His ledger was his greatest treasure. He held it as if it was filled with gold or precious stones that might spill with the slightest jolt or tilt. He consulted it as though it dictated to him the precise means by which the ship should be run. All in the name of profit. The crew regarded him as the progenitor of all their discontent. (D'Aguiar 128)

D'Aguiar explains how the only reason behind the captain's order is to profit from the insurance warranty of loss. In the same vein, James Walvin criticizes the outcome of this case, questioning how no one learnt about the case until they heard of the commercial avarice of William Gregson's syndicate who demanded payment from the insurers, and had not sought legal redress to secure it (Walvin 213). The conditions around the case raise doubts around the shortcomings of law in the eighteenth century and its complicity with the slave trade. The law gives entire legitimacy to the captain in taking control over his "cargo" (D'Aguiar 16). In other words, D'Aguiar makes it clear in his novel: "any necessary action can be taken by the captain concerning livestock if the said aims at the preservation of said stock" (D'Aguiar 166). The writer highlights how the majority of the crew "did not mind carrying out the order" of their captain approved by the British law (D'Aguiar 16). Taking the legal context out of its frame and giving it new fictional context and setting allows for the emergence of a new, fictional account, that the following part will further illustrate. By exploring D'Aguiar's ekphrastic response within the framework of Turner's painting of this murder, I will focus on the fictional character of Mintah and the memories preserved in her journal.

### 3.3.2 Witnessing the Past in Mintah's Return: Counter-Memory and the Archive

Mintah represents a key figure in D'Aguiar's novel through her shared memories and rebellious acts to free her community. As depicted by D'Aguiar, Mintah's diary is a "book-penned by a ghost" (D'Aguiar 169) that sheds light on the truth and contradicts the version provided by the captain and his crew. Conversely, Mintah's "journal of testimony", written by an enslaved African who is unable (and forbidden) to have any writing and reading skills, cannot, consequently, be considered as a source of truth in law. On the other hand, the captain's journal, often requested in the slave trade as an 'authentic source' of documentation is measured as a historical document. Paradoxically enough, this latter is most often taken as an accessible, and consistent 'archive' as compared by Mintah's book that is rejected and

disregarded due to its ‘visible’ inaccuracy, inconsistency, and discrepancy. The document is thereby illegitimized as ‘truthful’ and fails to serve as a testimony of what really happened onboard. The rejection of personal written evidence produced by enslaved African women, and the silenced voices in the archive, are here as the ‘ghost’ of Mintah. D’Aguiar’s image of a ghost serves as a reminder of the injustice of the archive’s objectivity. In light of the insufficiency of documentation, particularly of documentation that is unbiased and without prejudice, enslaved Africans can fulfil an identity proof and ancestral function. Yet this rejection can also be an invitation to supplement the archive through the creative imagination, or to create new archives altogether.

In *Feeding the Ghosts*, Mintah struggles with self-identity as each time she introduces herself differently:

I am Fetu. I am called Mintah. I was captured by slavers after the Dutch destroyed the Danish mission. (D’Aguiar 1997, 30)

I am Mintah. I was thrown into the sea and the god of wood held out his hand to me and I took it and climbed out of the sea. (D’Aguiar 1997, 134)

I AM MINTAH. They threw me off the Zong and into the sea. I should be food for fish now. Or bones on the seabed, my bones adding to a road of bones. But grain merged from wood, plaited into a rope and offered itself to me, and I gripped it and kept my hold on that grain. I climbed up the side of that ship. In my tired state I am sure I can’t dream, that dreaming would take too much, and I’ve got nothing left in my body. I am sure my head is empty in this sleep: some airless room, silent and still with the furniture in it covered over with sheets, even the pictures on the wall under covers, or no furniture at all, bare walls, and not a living soul in sight. (D’Aguiar 183)

These identifications above, visibly dissimilar in content, denote Mintah’s figurative identity progress throughout the fictional account. She introduces herself as Fetu, which means “god of the night”, but metaphorically might allude to the term “Fetus”, a young human or animal before it is born, especially a human more than eight weeks after fertilization”, as defined by the *English Oxford Dictionary*. Nevertheless, Mintah’s terminology involves two symbolic connotations; an African name of a “Protector”, and also “the lion conqueror” which might justify D’Aguiar’s choice behind choosing Mintah to be a witness and a female protagonist in his story. She might be a protector of her ancestors, striving to preserve their memories from amnesia. This idea can be clearly noticed in the following scene when Mintah encounters another woman dragged by force to be thrown into the sea:

when Mintah looked at a woman whose eyes met hers and “blamed her for nothing. Yet for Mintah they seemed to want her to do something, without knowing what, however little. The woman was dragged to the side and lifted up, but she clasped her chained wrists around the neck of a crewman and they had to lower her to the deck again and wrestle her arms free of him. Your name! what is your name? Mintah shouted in three languages she knew and raised herself up on her knees. Why? How will it save me? I will remember you! Others will remember you! (D’Aguiar 126-127)

In writing MINTAH in capital letters, D’Aguiar creates a rebellious, powerful, and resistant woman ‘identified’, whom the archive left silenced and unnamed since most of the historical documents identify the enslaved Africans by numbers. Mintah embodies the voice of a mother, a daughter, a friend, simply a woman who decides to respond back to the silenced archive against this violent upheaval towards enslaved Africans. The reader is invited to consider these transformations and manifestations as a rebirth of a new fictional archive in which the voices of women are heard. Mintah thereby signifies a resistance against injustice and an inadequate legal discourse; against historical amnesia of slavery, together creating what Ian Baucom called “the imaginary resentment of the dead (Baucom 242). Moreover, Mintah’s return from water engenders a revival and rebirth for the remaining enslaved Africans onboard. They often depict her as a “god who walks among [them]” and a powerful woman who will “free this ship and guide it back to Africa” (D’Aguiar 93). Ultimately, the unfulfilled hope of returning home from this one-way journey seems refigured in Mintah. Indeed, this “goddess” as designated by the writer will help them return home, cherish their roots and “break in on their cramped world and snatch them from it” (D’Aguiar 95).

This powerful association Mintah, as a woman, creates with her community overboard echoes a personal connection with the writer himself during his first encounter with the archival document at the Liverpool Maritime Museum Slave gallery. In an interview with Maria Frias, D’Aguiar explains further his connection to women and particularly Mintah in the following lines:

Mintah is a natural progression from my earlier writing about women. I owe it to myself that years for articulation in my fiction. I was interested in the question “if the black man is silenced in history, what is the nature if the censure is the black women? Mintah takes me out of my skin, my sex, into her likely experience. I should say I read Linda Brent, Phyllis Wheatley, Sojourner Truth and others to get a feel for the time, tone and place that black women faced. I have always been interested in the in-betweenness of a slave ship on the Atlantic for the slaves who have left home and are bound for a strange place. At sea they are able to think about what they have left

and where they are heading. Water becomes a library for them. They are in a ship. They have to read the current of the sea and match it with their memory, their will to remember, their will to live, the shock of their bodies in bondage. (D'Aguiar and Frias 422)

Mintah does not only represent an imaginary character D'Aguiar creates to make the past visible again, but an emblem of life, birth, and resistance to the historical amnesia. Similarly, Mintah is reincarnated as a witness to remember women's experience of physical and sexual violence. During the slave trade journey, women were exhausted and sexually abused "to spend few minutes with these men for bread and cheese", or "other similar inducements: rum, biscuits, a slice of lemon or lime, bits of beef, even a trinket or two (D'Aguiar 74). The ship is then a constricted space mostly correlated with "moans, pleas, shrieks and screams", as when the sick enslaved Africans are thrown overboard, and even more so when the victims of the captain's folly are children:

Mothers shouted to children [...] to struggle and scream. Men banged their chains on the decks and shouted in Yoruba, Ewe, Ibo, Fanti, Ashanti, Mandingo, Fetu, Foulah, at the crew to leave the children and take them instead. Mothers pulled out their hair, fell into dead faints, wished for death to take them now, now, now since life could never mean a thing after this. And cried with dry eyes and hardly a breath left in them. (D'Aguiar 39)

These lines subtly intensify the narrative tone through the excessive use of the vibrant motions and actions underlined in the use of verbs as "shouted", "banged", "pulled out", "cried". The atmosphere seems opaque with the scenes of violence, brutality, and ferocity acted over women, men and children, regardless of their diversity and origins. The scene depicts rape which also belongs to the historical reality of women's abuse onboard the slave ship. These voices shout in different languages such as "Yoruba", "Ewe", "Ibo", "Fanti" as if the writer seeks to indicate how in spite of their different origins, they still share the same fate. It might be useful to remember the same scene of violence that Mintah has experienced, sharing with her community similar acts and moments of physical abuse and violence:

The men pulled Mintah on to her stomach and kneeled on her arms and held splayed ankles. Kelsall kicked the whip that he had dropped at his feet further away and grabbed his club. He began to beat Mintah on her shoulders. She screamed. He shifted his attention to her back then down to her bottom, then her legs, working his way up one side of her body and down to her bottom, then her legs, working his way up one side of her body and down the other. She screamed and shouted his name, begging him to spare her. And when Kelsal hit her left kidney

for the second time as he methodically beat his way up her body, she saw water spinning on the deck, with the grain in the wood rearranged from straight lines into a vortex with a dark point at its centre that expanded into concentric circles until it grew into the entire deck, filling her head with soundlessness and blackness. (D'Aguiar 33)

Mintah does not escape the sexual abuse and violence. However, the narrator explores another scene which frequently occurred on the slave ships, namely the “compulsory dance commanded by slavers” (qtd. in Muller 50). This dance with its spiritual roots is considered as a sacred ritual for African women. After having received the order to dance out of the reason that she needs “some exercise, some discipline” (D'Aguiar 30), Mintah forcedly obeys the captain's order, but at the same time she embodies resistance as “she decided to dance the death of fertility dance” (D'Aguiar 31). This dance tradition can be traced back to slave ships since the enslaved Africans were forced to dance for exercise but at the same time their dancing steps might be interpreted as a moment of remembering their past. In his article “Legacies of Slavery: dance”<sup>74</sup>, Alan Rice argues how African resistance to slavery was interpreted as part of their heritage. In this respect, Rice illustrates by including other dances such as “the limbo in the Caribbean” (Rice np) which describes the limited space in the slaving ships and the African ability to escape it. Additionally, “the cakewalk” is a dance that mocked the plantation owners and explains how dance is culturally understood to be African resistance to slavery.

Despite her vulnerable condition, Mintah decides to embrace her African heritage through dancing “the death of fertility dance” (D'Aguiar 31). As the name of this dance suggests, the usage of oxymoron in the terms “death” and “fertility” echoes undesired conditions of fertility out of rape and sexual abuse. On the other hand, the term “fertility” might be also perceived to bring a “rebirth” of a rebellious, resistant and powerful woman who does not fear anymore violence or abuse, rather a savior and protector of her ancestors' memories. This idea of rebirth is evident in the following passage in the way D'Aguiar shifts between “fertility” and “eventual rebirth”:

Fertility's temporary death and eventual rebirth. No doubt they would see it as her willingness to obey their every whim, but she *needed* to dance this particular dance. Had gone through its details in her head over the last thirty-six hours, most of which she'd spent chained below decks lying on her right side

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<sup>74</sup> The article is published online on *Revealing Histories: Remembering Slavery*. A partnership Project from eight museums in greater Manchester. <http://revealinghistories.org.uk/legacies-stereotypes-racism-and-the-civil-rights-movement/articles/legacies-of-slavery-dance.html>. 20 August 2022.

without lying on someone else, and seeing in her mind's eye her body dancing this very dance in a village square with dust raised by her feet and the dust-stockinged feet of other young women and sand grains clinging to the sweat on their bodies and their long, flickering shadows cast by the fires stretching into the dark and the drums resounding on the thick walls of the night. Now here was her chance. To transfer the pain of the whip around her legs to that of her womb. To placate the fertility god. To touch imaginary soil with the balls of her foot, bow her head, contract her shoulders and throw her open palms to the heavens in half-steps that would complete a circle of her own following the direction of the moon, a circle with the circle made by these alien men. (D'Aguiar 31)

It is remarkable to consider how language can reflect the dynamism of a text that resonates with a certain 'hybridity' that in and of itself directs us to a dual or simultaneous statements. On the one hand, we are led to a form of historical accuracy, verifiable through the archive. On the other hand, we are led to a possible questioning of the nature and status of the archive through the field of fiction. The first chapter of the novel involves this "mise en scene" of violence onboard of the slave ship whereas the rest of the novel prominently features Mintah's voice as a witness. This narrative structure invites the reader to re-examine the bias towards re-writing history which is constitutive of the traditional notion of the archive. One might reflect upon the fictional story as an imaginary reconstruction of the context left blank by the archive, in particular all the enslaved Africans' strategies of survival and resistance that escaped the master's knowledge and understanding. Another device to "decenter the archive", as Michel Feith coins it, and deliberately "bring to light alternative processes of historical memory" (Feith 163).

In *Feeding the Ghosts*, particular attention is given to what we could call, using Marxist terminology, the "conditions of production" that we can relate in our study to the reproduction of the archive in the fictional text. The fictional text involves a pastiche of an archival material that creates a reality effect while at the same time exposing the textual infrastructure of the historical novel, conjugating the archive on the 'as-if' mode. Therefore, by analyzing the literary archive, we may read different stories of the Middle Passage and the slave trade commercial details and secrets that reinforce the metaphorical connection between the original text and the fictional reproduced one. The two versions, then, share central concerns of the reproduction of the archive in which one can have access to the structure of the dominant oppressive white voice and the Black creative fictional voice. These two contradictory voices, are visibly structured in the trial hearing in part two of the novel located in chapter nine and ten in *Feeding the Ghosts*. The following part intends to show how the

narrator has imagined the court trial and invented an entire “mise en scene” out of the historical event.

### 3.3.3 “Mise en Scene” of the Archive: Staging the Archive in Fiction (The trial of the *Zong*)

In his study, *The Zong: A Massacre, the Law and the End of Slavery* (2011) James Walvin indicates how the legal hearing about the *Zong* endorses to be “a major revelation, exposing the sufferings endured by millions of Africans on the slave ships” (Walvin 211). D’Aguiar creates a stage for his characters to act out the tragic outcome of the court trial in the novel by imagining what might have happened during the trial. In the context of this ‘tragic memory’ of the slave ship *Zong*, one can bring into the study what Aristotle held in *Poetics* about tragedy in theatrical performance. Tragedy could have therapeutic value: whether what he meant was a kind of cognitive (mental) therapy or as a form of psychological therapy is a question that has vexed scholars to this day. Aristotle’s insights on performance as a therapy does not fit D’Aguiar’s intentions behind this fictional performing of the hearing. Rather, the Black British writer underscores the deficiency of the legal discourse and empower the voice of the enslaved Africans who were victimized by the British law. In order to stage this performance, D’Aguiar gathers all the historical figures involved in this injustice, controls their interactions and gestures to the reader who plays both the role of the audience and the judge in this case. Normally the judge plays a key role in the criminal justice system, presiding over the trial process to ensure fairness and that the jury has arrived at a decision in the correct manner. Before the trial, the judge will read the relevant papers to familiarize himself or herself with the details of the case. Such paperwork will include the indictment setting out the charges on which the defendant is to be tried, exhibits (evidence) and witness statements. However, these standards are totally deconstructed and transformed in the fictional character of Lord Mansfield in the novel. I suggest sharing few examples from the text to further highlight how D’Aguiar transforms the archive.

At the beginning of the trial, Lord Mansfield, the judge for this court, classifies the trial as a “hearing about the calculation of the *Zong*’s claim” instead of a “criminal trial” (D’Aguiar 139). However, Mr Wilkes, the counsel for the insurers, acknowledges its



“inconsistencies” (D’Aguiar 139). The judge shows the slave ship captain is deemed innocent by raising rhetorical questions: “Which law did the captain break? None according to English regulations. What is being disrupted here? He publicly gives his consent about the captain’s strategy behind “the preservation of his holdings” (D’Aguiar 171). The captain simply uses his role to control his commerce and meet with the commercial rules and guidelines provided already by law. In the trial court section, there is much teasing with words when treating Lord Mansfield which can be seen in his fragmented discourse, gestures and thoughts. In spite of his powerful position, D’Aguiar criticizes his attitude through irony and parody. For example, in the following lines, D’Aguiar describes Lord Mansfield who “was puzzled by the size of the claim” (D’Aguiar 138) and preoccupied with straightening his wig:

THE CURIOUS MEMBERS of the public, interested parties, representatives of the adversarial sides and the sheriff of the court, scraped, shuffled and murmured on to their feet as the clerk of the court announced on to their feet as the clerk of the court announced the entrance of Lord Chief Justice Mansfield. Lord Mansfield straightened his wig and approached his pivotal position anchored high up at the back of the courtroom overlooking everyone [...] An unexceptional crowd for what should be a conventional hearing: a party of avaricious investors pitted against a parsimonious insurer [...] Lord Mansfield was sure he’d be out of the court in time to dine at The King’s Head, a cured pheasant, his favorite [...] Lord Mansfield hoped and prayed that the fellow was predisposed towards the former on this day of days with its promise of pheasant. He wanted his palate gently stirred and whetted by the morning’s deliberations rather than having his stomach’s tumultuous acids shaken and flushed to his throat. [...] But the details of the case were distasteful to him. (D’Aguiar 138)

In these lines, D’Aguiar uses irony and satire in describing Lord Mansfield’s manifestation and thoughts, typically for humorous and emphatic effects. Clearly, these devices are used in light of criticizing how the British Law did not take seriously the *Zong* case in the eighteenth century. Furthermore, in the trial court chapter, D’Aguiar takes the role of an omniscient narrator, controlling his characters’ thoughts, wonders, anxieties and their insufficient and incoherent discourse. During the hearing, Kelsal defends the captain, saying that he is “a good sailor. And if the captain is to be believed [he] was the best first mate he had ever had. His orders were absolutely necessary” (D’Aguiar 145). Ironically, every detail revealed by the captain and his crew appear satisfactory to Lord Mansfield who “seemed to nod in recognition of the truth”. (D’Aguiar 147). Imagining the court trail can be also interpreted as an ekphrastic response not only to the visual archive but also to the legal document. The text’s hybridity reveals how there is no single version of the archive.

The writer extensively borrows other images and scenes described in slave narratives about the horror the enslaved Africans have endured during the slave ship. However, its montage and assembling into a narrative allude to the production of a new text. A good example of this use of montage lies in part one of the novel in which D'Aguiar narrates in details the captain's decision to throw the enslaved Africans overboard. In this regard, Wendy Walters describes this detailed narration as a "microscopic identification with the terror experienced by the Africans on board, the cold calculations of the captain's decisions, the crew's exhaustion, disease, weather, smells, wood grain, water" (Walters 109). This detailed part is followed by the trail as if the writer wants to give the reader what happened and make him/her the only judge on this historical injustice in the archive. The reader takes an active position and becomes an engaged agent in knowing and grasping the gaps left in the archive. Similarly, this technique awakens the reader's awareness behind the materiality of the archive, which is open to interpretation and re-contextualization. Accordingly, this creation leads to another understating of literature as a space for "otherness", "invention", "alterity" and "performance" (borrowing Derek Attridge's terms). These latter considerations clearly lead to a sort of emotional encounter and connect with the archive most significantly when one stops thinking of the archive as an institution, but rather as historical individuals featured in these enslaved Africans. Thereby, the subject of history takes on an ethical shape rather than a mere literary creation.

The connection between the archive and the individual is explicitly evident in D'Aguiar's technical narrative style where he mixes and derives his images and textual devices from the archive connecting all parts together, i.e, the legal discourse with the individual trauma of his characters. Such connection pays tribute to this new dynamic performative<sup>75</sup> literary reproduction of the historical archive and the trauma of slavery extended to engage with the present issues of racism against the Black community. This connection reminds us of Manuel De Landa's consideration of the archive as conjured with individuals. In his article "The Archive Before and After Foucault" (2003) Manuel De Landa, a cross-disciplinary contemporary philosopher, explains further on this idea in the following lines:

What was innovative about the new archives was precisely that they objectified individuals not as members of a pre-existing category, but in all their uniqueness and singularity.

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<sup>75</sup> The performative approach of the archive in the trial court will be further analyzed in Chapter Five, focusing on the other angles and techniques used by the writer that can give the archive a theatrical nature.

Far from being archivable in terms of their shared properties, human beings became linked to all the unique series of events which made them who they are as historical individuals, a history which could now take the form of a life while the individual became a case. (De Landa 11)

De Landa underlines the innovative status of the archive in terms of its connection with the individual. This new archival position engenders a situation in which human bodies, events and archives interact, and therefore create this individual identity. In the same vein, in their study *Storytelling and Ethics: Literature, Visual Arts and the Power of Narrative* (2017), Hannah Meretoja and Colin Davis draw attention to ethical issues involved in different strategies employed in literature and art to narrate experiences that resist telling and imagining, such as traumatic historical events, including war and political conflicts. The study also explores the multiple ways in which the ethics of storytelling relates to the contemporary arts as they work with, draw on, and contribute to historical imagination. As provided in its description, Hannah Meretoja and Colin Davis's study foregrounds the connection between remembering and imagining and explores the ambiguous role of narrative in the configuration of selves, communities, and the relation to the non-human. The fictional text becomes a space in which contemporary writers connect the past and the present and shed light on current issues such as racism. In this regard, in an interview with Maria Frias entitled "Building Bridges Back to the Past" (2002), D'Aguiar establishes the link between slavery and racism. He describes his fictional novel as a "double narrative", highly conjured with his own personal experience. When asked to what extent has slavery personally dehumanized him, the Black British writer explicitly states:

My black ancestry and Caribbean experience align me with a history of slavery. My skin has drawn a lot of static from whites who hate blacks, both in my teenage years growing up in London and since my arrival in the U.S. in 1992 to teach. Stories from the past about the auction block are automatically my stories. I feel on behalf of those suffered these things. Racism is not over by any means. There are examples of it every day in the media. People die every day at the hands of racists. I deplore these things. I feel them. I write about race to keep the idea of one race as superior to another strange and unacceptable. (D'Aguiar 424)

In contrast to the controversial debate around considering slavery to be only restricted in the past, the writer brings a personal perspective to his own writing since he strongly believes that "slavery has a direct bearing on how the races fail to get along today" (D'Aguiar 125). A personal perception he made clear in his essay "The Last Essay about Slavery", in which he

argues that the present remains unable to avoid slavery because of the constant outrageous conflicts between whites and Blacks mainly in the US. According to him, racism is not over by any means since people experience everyday racial attacks and violence. D'Aguiar clearly explains that his writing about race rejects the idea of "one race as superior to another strange and unacceptable" (D'Aguiar 424). In assessing his rejection of racism today, D'Aguiar considers that "fiction is a force in society, along with poetry, because people are changed by art, they are sensitized by it, their sleeping consciences are awakened by art". Art, D'Aguiar adds: "can be pleasing but it also makes you think and feel. It is a moral intellectual and emotional force" (D'Aguiar 425). It is vital to acknowledge why these gaps exist. It is largely due to the structural racism that exists within the archive.

The legal case provides evidence for the injustice and silence of the archive and it is therefore the mission of the writer, poet and artist to write at the limit of the unspeakable and the unknown, bring the marginalized silenced voices into light. In "Venus in Two Acts", Hartman argues how "the archive is inseparable from the play of power that murdered Venus and her shipmate and exonerated the captain" (Hartman 7). What Hartman seeks to demonstrate is how the archive is not immune to the same white domination faced by Venus. In fact, the two go hand in hand, for the oppressors are the ones documenting history. Venus is only one of many victims who lost a voice in the archive, but we can also use her as an example of how to uncover the stories hidden within the archives. We can and must closely examine the documented history of the white man to uncover the whispers of the stories of the oppressed.

Furthermore, the Black British writer manages to reproduce a written testimony through Mintah's journal to expose the material and ideological conditions of production of an archive to an even more radical extent. This consideration D'Aguiar pays to the production and uses of the archive, both in his fictional texts and in his plays, is a postmodern trope that Linda Hutcheon refers to as "historiographic metafiction", a term she further defines in her following lines:

Historiographic metafiction works to situate itself within historical discourse without surrendering its autonomy as fiction; and it is a kind of seriously ironic parody that effects both aims: the intertexts of history and fiction take on parallel (though not equal) status in the parodic reworking of the textual past of both the "world" and literature. The textual incorporation of these intertextual past(s) as a constitutive structural element of postmodernist fiction functions as a

formal mark of historicity—both literary and “worldly.” [...] Today, there is a return to the idea of a common discursive “property” in the embedding of both literary and historical texts in fiction, but it is a return made problematic by overtly metafictional assertions of both history and literature as human constructs, indeed, as human illusions—necessary, but none the less illusory for all that. The intertextual parody of historiographic metafiction enacts, in a way, the views of certain contemporary historiographers [...]: it offers a sense of the presence of the past, but this is a past that can only be known from its texts, its traces—be they literary or historical. (Hutcheon 4)

The postmodern reworking of textual records within the archive seems relevant in D’Aguiar’s narrative mixing of the real with the fictional. This pastiche entails a combination between the past and the present. This may lead to a construction of a certain coherence out of this fragment to fill the gaps the archive left untold. The term “postmodern” here indicates this movement that eschews meaning to give room to other aspects as self-reflexivity, fragmentation, metafiction and intertextuality. Special attention should be paid to D’Aguiar’s final lines in which he clearly induces this idea; his visible thematic engagement with the concern of slavery and the politics of recording the past urge the contemporary reader to question Black identity, the past and the injustice held in the legal system:

WE WERE ALL dead. The ship was full of ghosts. All the cruelties we sustained were maintained by us. Made over hundreds of years, our behavior could never cease to exist. We needed each other. Our contrast. Opposing views of the sea. Our different fix on the stars. The sea was more than willing to accommodate us. Accustomed to rehearsal, to repeats and returns, it did not care about the abomination happening in its name [...] I am in your community, in a cottage or apartment or cardboard box, tucked away in a quiet corner, ruminating over these very things. *The Zong* is on the high seas. Men, women and children are thrown overboard by the captain and his crew. One of them is me. One of them is you. One of them is doing the throwing, the other is being thrown. I am not sure who is who, you or I [...] Where there is only the record of the sea. Those spirits are fled into the wood. The ghosts feed on the story of themselves. The past is laid to rest when it is told. (D’Aguiar 229)

The ending of this journey suggests sharing historical and personal traumas that can never be rewritten in a linear narrative since this past continues to haunt the present. In other words, the story of this ship full of ghosts has to be seen more in the uncompromising terms of trauma since these memories continue to reverberate through the present, and no doubt the future.

D'Aguiar becomes part of his Black community; "I am your community" to share their collective memories and underscore the propaganda about the past held in the legal discourse.

The literary text subverts the latter and produces a postmodern ekphrastic text. Accordingly, this adaptation of 'historical records' functions as a 'complex recycling' through which the text conveys another version the image fails to expose. It generates a polyphonic intertextual discourse which in turn adapts with the contemporary reader and viewer who might be one of the enslaved thrown overboard, as D'Aguiar states in his epilogue: "I am not sure who is who, you or I" (D'Aguiar 229). In doing so, the reader is no longer distant from these contemporary 'palimpsests', rather invited to decipher meaning and raise questions about history, memory and the past. Thus, D'Aguiar writes as a postmodernist which influences his reworking of the archive to make it fit with the present and enable the ghosts of the past to haunt our memories. The sentence above "the past is laid to rest when it is told" reminds us of what Aimé Césaire has called in *Présence Africaine*, "the fertilizing power of the word, the greater power of the art" (Césaire 127). Put it differently, the politics of power may be generated through words and art in such a way that both the writer and the artist have to speak about their communities framing an innovative discourse fitting with time and space to confront the defiance of historical, social, and political injustice. Today, we often associate Black writers and artists with certain powerful responsibilities to reconfigure, persuade, 'tell' and 'show' the limits of historical, social, and political systems when dealing with slavery and racism. Therefore, artists and writers have exceptional power to arouse certain provocative memories of atrocities and transform them into a more constructive discourse. In *Propaganda and Persuasion* (2015), Arth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell refer to this interconnection imbedded in art and power to elucidate how the ancient Greeks believed the creativity artists possessed came to them from "a muse, a personification of knowledge and the arts that inspired them to write, sculpt, and compose" (Jowett and O'Donnell 27). In the context of our study, this resonates with the archive as a source of knowledge representing a potent and regenerative source and also a power that is open to alternatives.

By studying David Dabydeen and Fred D'Aguiar's works, this chapter has explored their ekphrastic responses: Dabydeen gives voice to the marginalized Black figures in *Turner* and *A Harlot's Progress* providing new alternative accounts. The ekphrastic responses to the eighteenth-century visual art provoke a sense of shared community, new beginning, and an alternative notion of modernity. While Mungo tries to restore his ancestors' tale and learn to live with their ghosts and voices, Mintah shares her wounds as a Black woman striving for

survival. Their complex and postmodern reworkings of the visual archive transpose eighteenth century images into critical words and figures of twentieth century. Upon reading and interacting with their works, we might notice how their techniques of recycling engender a new discourse of power to “brush the archive against the grain”<sup>76</sup>. They have incorporated different elements from the archive, drawn parallels, deconstructed figures, and imagined what might have happened. The *Zong* case has been differently transformed into paintings, poems and fictional accounts, rewriting the archive and reconstructing the discourse of power from the lens of the present. The archive then becomes “dialogic, polyphonic and transgeneric” (Misrahi-Barak 41). It becomes a source of ‘recycling’ and ‘adaptation’ which offers a stage to see the past and memory from a postmodern glance.

The following chapter focuses on NourbeSe Philip’s poem *Zong!* and Lubaina Himid’s artworks *Revenge* and *A Fashionable Marriage*. In *Zong!* Philip decides to lock herself into the text of the Gregson v. Gilbert legal case to confront the impossibility of telling the story and thereby invents her own fragmented poem in which she piles words on top of each other, allowing them to obscure each other. Himid’s *Revenge* revisualizes the Zong ship while making the voice of a feminist Black artist heard. As a female Black artist, Lubaina Himid continues to make the intersection between the past and the present visible in her art to enable effective memorialization and appraisal for contemporary Black artists. Her installation, *A Fashionable Marriage* arranges another pastiche of Hogarth’s painting through her satirical attack on critics, artists, and politicians to underline the corruption of the British political system. This new configuration of the archive probes this idea of complexity and dynamics. Philip and Himid carefully scrutinize the archival fragments reconfiguring other discourses, which deem more resourceful and provocative.

Reconfiguring the *Zong* is of course not new; what is innovative emanates in the making of the new narrative, poetic and visual reconfiguration of the document using certain textual and aural devices that both employ—inventive, imaginative, and thought-provoking. The following chapter seeks to demonstrate the structural, textual, and visual reinvention to deconstruct the legal archive. The tragic memory of the *Zong* is thereby transformed into paradigms of reconfigurations to commemorate the past and challenge our understanding of history.

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<sup>76</sup> I borrowed this sentence from Walter Benjamin’s original phrase which is “to brush history against the grain”. Benjamin Walters “Theses on the Philosophy of History”, in *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt, Schocken Books, New York, 1968, p. 257.

## Chapter Four

# Haunting the Archive: Somewhere in Between Text and Art in M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!* (2008) and Lubaina Himid's Artworks

I enter a different land, a land of language\_I allow the language to lead  
me somewhere — don't know where, but I trust.  
Water of want  
Everything is here I tell myself-birth, death, life- murder, the law, a  
microcosm- a universe (Philip 191)

Living in the wake of slavery is living in the wake of memories of the slave ship *Zong*, a murder that continues to attract scholars, writers, poets, and artists today. All try to address the text from different lenses and approaches. In referencing the broad range of scholarship on the *Zong* incident (see Chapter One), this chapter investigates the legitimacy of the legal discourse as juxtaposed against poetic and artistic contemporary responses. I place special emphasis on the works of Marlene NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!* (2008) and Lubaina Himid's installation *Revenge* (1992). This chapter, in contrast to the imaginative responses to the event explored in Chapter Three, adds weight to the overriding concerns of literature and law, literature and archive, language and visual art.

I will provide a reflection on the poetic and visual means to gain further insight into the accuracy and reliability of the archive. My analysis is divided into two major sections; the first sections being “Breaking the Discourse Canons in Marlene NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!*: Waving Between the Eye and the Word” which covers a close analysis of *Zong!* in terms of its visual, structural, and lexical deconstruction of the legal case, bringing into dialogue different intertextual sources. While the second section, “Filling the Gaps and Visualizing Slavery in Lubaina Himid's Artworks” conveys how art involves a provocative representation of the slave ship *Zong*. I do so by reflecting on the artist's diasporic African engagement with history. This African-born artist is looking “inside the invisible”<sup>77</sup> and standing for the marginalized and silenced histories in the present. A different satiric and provocative response

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<sup>77</sup>Celeste-Marie Bernier et al, *Inside the Invisible: Memorialising Slavery and Freedom in the Life and Works of Lubaina Himid*, Liverpool University Press, 2019.



to Hogarth's *A Fashionable Marriage* will be further analyzed in the last section of this chapter in which Himid entirely subverts order and deconstructs the male white body to contrast Black modern art.

## 4.1 Breaking the Discourse Canons in M.NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!*: Waving Between the Eye and the Word

### 4.1.1 A Visual Reinvention

The visual reinvention of NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!*, as the title of this section suggests, echoes the radical sense of discontinuity, fragmentation, and non-linearity that the poem reveals. This innovative visual structure almost reminds us of calligraphic writing, for the modernist insight in its form both in terms the use of a dislocation of language and its visual impact. In this context, the French poet Guillaume Apollinaire can be considered as one of the most important literary figures of the early twentieth century. Known for his *Calligrammes: Poems of Peace and War* (1913-1916)<sup>78</sup>. In his study *Apollinaire in the Great War 1914-1918* (2004), David Hunter explains how the context of Apollinaire's poetry "allows him to develop an apocalyptic vision of the war in which creatures from the depths of the oceans to the heights of the heavens are stirred and even the dead in their graves are afraid, the poet becomes a seer, able to span both time and space, for seeing and nurturing within himself the new world that the war will create" (Hunter 28). Taking into account the definition of a "calligram", a word or piece of text in which the design and layout of the letters create a visual image related to the meaning of the words themselves, Apollinaire's poems arrange words to create different images. He describes *Calligrammes* as a "war book (livre de guerre) and argued that it would therefore touch people" (Apollinaire, qtd in Hunter 170). In his study, perhaps because of its modernity, Hunter mentions that historians have largely ignored this collection as a document. This is true in spite of the tremendous amount that can be

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<sup>78</sup> Guillaume Apollinaire. *Calligrammes: Poems of Pace and War*. Translated by Anne Hyde Greet. California Press University, 1980. The original French title is *Calligrammes. Poèmes de la Paix et de la guerre* (1913-1916) published in 1918. These poems were known for its radical dislocation of poetic structure and visual fragmentation. I wanted to refer to Apollinaire to underline the idea of the word being dispatched on the page to challenge the reader to find meanings.

learned about the soldiers' lives: their slang and superstitions, the conditions in which they fought and the horrors they faced (Hunter 170). The composition of the poems was inspired by events that took place during World War One including his injury in the head in 1916. Apollinaire's Calligrams poems of war are similar to Philip's poem not only visually but also thematically; each of these poems foreground the horror, violence, and trauma of war. Despite the horrific contexts of each poem, the interaction of style and structure clarify the ability of their poetry to deconstruct traditional formatting and encourage a visual scanning before they are read. This originality emerges when the poem stimulates the eye to follow the words and imagines the meanings they entail.

Winfried Menninghaus and Sebastian Wallot's study "What the eyes reveal about (reading) poetry" (2011), set out to investigate the extent to which eye movements might reveal distinct effects of fluency and disfluency as well as "hedonic responses that are associated with longer rather than shorter self-motivated exposure, in line with the hypothesis of savoring" (Menninghaus and Wallot 1). The results show that rhyme and meter have several fluency-enhancing effects on reading times for the more global aspects of the poems, but they also have increased disfluency effects on gaze durations for some of the poems' more local aspects. The poem challenges the reader to distinguish the image behind its line. In other words, a first gaze into the entire selection of poems urges the reader to ask questions and try to find context clues in reading the story "that cannot be told but must be told" (Philip 194).

Philip is a poet, writer, and lawyer originally from Trinidad who is best known for experimenting with literary form and for his commitment to social justice. While her writing reflects an in-depth understanding of the canon, Philip's career undoubtedly helped to free her from the constraints of tradition and to nurture her social analysis and critical acuity. Her poem *Zong!* written in 2008, intimates images of bodily remembering and processes of healing and renewal through language. It tells "the story that cannot be told yet must be told" (Philip 194). She describes her poem as follows: "chant! shout! And ululation! *Zong!* is moan! Mutter! How! And shriek! *Zong!* is "pure utterance." *Zong!* is song!... *Zong!* is the Song of the untold story; it cannot be told yet must be told, but only through its un-telling" (Philip 207). Breaking and trespassing the physical boundaries and limits of the frame and the page, the visual fragmentation and alternating repetition of words in the poems of *Zong!* depict the struggle to articulate a personal language. This personal language proves to be capable of communicating complex, often traumatic, experiences.

Composed in equal parts of song, moan, shout, oath, curse, and chant, *Zong!* excavates the legal text itself. Memory, history, and law are merged and transformed into a poetry of the fragment. In her official website, Philip underlines that through the innovative use of fugal and counterpointed repetition, *Zong!* becomes an anti-narrative lament that stretches the boundaries of the poetic form, haunting the spaces of forgetting and mourning the forgotten. The multilingual quality of this text is remarkable given the fact that Philip bounds her choice of words, to the short legal case *Gregson v. Gilbert*. Though this British legal document purports to represent the case, Philip’s poetic text, through its destructed linguistic style, confronts the insufficiency of the discourses of law, economics, and insurance in capturing the narrative of *Zong!*.

In *Zong!* visually, the words appear as a series of letters bobbing up and down on the page like so many waves in a sea of monosyllabic utterances. However, listening to the poem evokes the freaky sounds of the voices of those who were lost at sea. The experience of hearing *Zong!*#1, when compared to seeing it on the page, is to hear the silences in the legal case filled with ghostly sounds from the past: first the sounds of thirst and then of drowning. When vocalized, the first page of the poem underlines the following expression: “water was sour water good water one day of want” which creates a linguistic stutter that becomes an urgent request and a moan. Language falls apart as the spaces between letters open up, breaking the words and indeed language itself to expose the empty spaces as spaces of sensations. Therefore, the reader is already experiencing a sense of uncertainty and loss, for the story told in this poem cannot be conveyed through a visual and linguistic order. Instead, the poem replicates the slave ship murder, and the visual pattern helps the reader to imagine what happened:

www    w  
       ter      our            wa  
 ter  r gg    g      g        go  
 o        oo            go        d  
 wa a                    ter  
 oh  
 Won            ddd

As the title of this chapter indicates, Philip's text deconstructs the boundaries of poetry to shape a new form, and within the boundaries established by words and their meanings, she states, "there are silences; within each silence in the poem, which is revealed only when the text is fragmented and mutilated, mirroring the fragmentation and mutilation that slavery perpetrated on Africans, their customs and ways of life" (Philip 195). Let us first expand briefly on the term of "boundary" with regards to the textual analysis of the poem. In his study, *Models and Mirrors towards an Anthropology of Public events* (1990), Don Handelman interprets the term boundary in two ways: as a "discontinuity and as a paradox [...] It is common to regard the boundary as a discontinuity that divides and separates, just as it links and orders the phenomena that it compartmentalizes" (Handelman 245). According to Handelman, "boundaries enable the existence of discrete phenomena. The State of discontinuity necessarily brings continuity to mind" (Handelman 246). Between boundaries, or through boundaries that are more permeable, Handelman claims, the relationships among phenomena are continuous. That is, phenomena are brought into conjunction through analogy and metaphor that mute difference and accentuate similarity.

The sense of the boundary is that of the "in-between" or the "middle" of what is separated and combined. In phenomenological terms, the treatment of the poem as a "homogeneous unity" can overcome its internal paradoxicality of boundary (Handelman 247). To this end, one can say that *Zong!*'s structure and overall form visually erase boundaries between disciplines and create new paradoxical structures which combine attributes of archives, law and art. Visualizing the poem attracts our attention to its lack of punctuation, as if the poet suggests an open-ended text imitating the journey of the enslaved Africans who were unable to breathe and rest. The structure and form of the poem will be further examined in the following analysis of its creative and dynamic nature. I seek to contrast these elements with the legal archive that which Philip makes reference in her poem's final pages.

#### 4.1.2 A Structural Reinvention

The word poetic form refers to a poem's physical structure; the way in which lines appear and how they sound. Elements like the poem's type, stanza structure, line lengths,

rhyme scheme, and rhythm define its poetic form. This is unique to poetry from narrative text. Commonly, content and form make meaning, but less so in *Zong!*. To accept the premise of deconstructing the archive is to inquire about the relationship between form and meaning, precisely, how this form of spreading words all over pages can promote a certain understanding of history. The most creative aspect of *Zong!* can be found in its overall form and structure, including the single poem as a collection of poems itemized in distinctive parts; os (bone), sal (salt), ventus (wind), ratio (reason), Ferrum<sup>79</sup> (iron) and Eborā (ivory). The choice behind using Latin, Philip explains, serves “to emphasise the connection with law, which is steeped in Latin expressions, and, also to reference the fact that Latin was the father tongue in Europe” (Philip 209).

I will start by referring to the entire structure of *Zong!*. While a 182-page poem opens the volume, a series of epilogues follow it. First appearing is a Glossary of words involving different languages such as Arabic, Fon, French, Latin, Greek, Spanish, Italian, Hebrew, Shona, Twi, Yoruba, West African Patois. etc. The merging of languages affirms the universality of the enslaved African journey as if Philip seeks to make her work read by everyone regardless of their languages. Then comes a “Manifest,” a document that provides comprehensive details of a ship and its cargo and other contents, passengers, and crew for the use of customs officers as defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. This list covers African groups and languages, Animals, Body Parts, Crew. Those “designations illustrate the indeterminate status of ideas about property and self-ownership at the very historical moment when the institution of slavery consolidated their contemporary meanings” (Anker 123).

A long essay “Notanda,” follows “Glossary” and “Manifest”, in which the Canadian writer of Caribbean descent writes her thoughts, insights, and decisions in the making of her poem. She pairs this with explications on the aesthetic and poetic strategies and tools she uses in the selection of poems. She ends her poems with the Gregson v. Gilbert legal case as if she is trying to open a dialogue between her poems and the archive in the same space. Philip seeks not only to “lock” herself into this “particular and peculiar discursive landscape” of this legal report but also to “mutilate the text as the fabric of African life and the lives of these men, women and children were mutilated” (Philip 193).

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<sup>79</sup> In her article “*Zong!*’s “Should We?”: Questioning the Ethical Representation of Trauma”, Veronica J. Austin explains: “Ferrum, as a synonym of “iron” in English and might be also taken in Latin for “sword”, offers the reader a “game of word search,” in which he/she must string together words across lines and spaces and thereby locate tangential resonances of meaning. Iron might also allude to the “iron collar” and chains and shackles used by slave traders to attach enslaved captives to one another, p. 66.

*Zong!*'s first part "Os," as its Latin name implies, refers to "bones" as the last earthly traces of the dead, and seem to last forever. "Os" includes another poem entitled "Dicta" (Philip 46), suggests the plural noun of "Dictum", a term that alludes to a short statement that expresses a general truth or principle. Dictum is displayed in seven pages with no number identification, called "*Zong!*" (Philip 49). The term "bone" also connects to the indestructible life, mortality, transitory and the earth. Taking into considering the term signification, "bones" are mostly used as a symbol for death. Similarly, bones can represent an underlying truth, for instance, the fact that beneath all the different skin colors, ethnic variations, etc., the bones remain the same and last forever.

*Zong!*'s first page invokes the imagery of drowning in water through the visual spacing and wording. The repetitive use of the letters "w" and "a" spaced out across the page attempt to write out the word "water," and is typed in a way that signifies sinking to the bottom of the ocean, where language is lost (Philip 1). In reading the Notanda prior to *Zong!* knowing its history, the reader recognizes and understands the comparison between the drowning of the enslaved African and the "sinking" of the words that produces a particular sound of dying voices trying to cry out and seeking help. The poet mentions how she "white[s] out and blacks out words" (Philip 192). In doing so, she sought to shape a link between "white and black certain words or phrases in order to create this dual narration" (Philip 193). Therefore, *Zong!*#1 sets the tone for Philip's taking apart of an archival record by demonstrating its silences as spaces of affect. The poem forces apart the letters in words belonging to the statement that there was not enough good water for the number of extra days at sea. "This was an action on a policy of insurance," claims Gregson v. Gilbert in his report, "to recover the value of certain enslaved African thrown overboard for want of water" (Philip 210). The counterargument was that "there were three butts of good water and two and a half of sour water, on board" (Philip 210). In the poem, water appears as an overriding theme since, not only is the sea the watery grave of people thrown overboard, but also a shortage of fresh water is the alleged justification for Collingwood's orders:

W                    a                    wa                    t  
  
er                    wa                    s



defend the dead

Weight of circumstance

ground

to usual &

etc

where the ratio of just

in less than

is necessary

to murder

the subject in property

the save in underwriter

where etc tunes justice

and the *ratio* of murder

is

the usual in occurred

---

Akilah Falope Ouma Weke Jubad

the just in ration

the suffer in loss

defend the dead

the weight

in

circumstance



ached in necessary

the ration in just

age the act in the *ave* to justice

---

Micere Ndale Omowunmi Ramla Ajani

(Philip 25-26)

*Zong!* is a response to “defend the dead,” or to the enslaved Africans whose bones were hidden within the legal archive. Here, in an attempt at seeking justice or accusing the archive for its silence, the poem creates a space of representation that exposes the unreliability of the archive. In doing so, the poet makes a case for the necessity of reframing the new archival representation through her work. It is doubtless that *Zong!* presents a collection of deconstructed words. It can also be argued that this poststructuralist approach to language, coupled with the culturally historical importance of its original social context, is what makes a text as seemingly directionless as *Zong!* both meaningful and remarkable. Once we understand the lens through which it is offered to us, we discover its potential meaning.

Philip urges the reader to return to the past and mine for the truth through the archive. Her impulse towards reimagining and rewriting the past is further echoed in contemporary Caribbean literature. Philip deconstructs the text, looking at words from other angles in order to recapture them in a different light; all these practices are being undertaken all over the English-speaking world so that a new story can emerge which speaks more urgently to the needs of the present. Within this framework, silences in official archives are not only voids to be filled with meaning but also spaces of a close relationship with the past. In cutting up the text of a document that designates enslaved Africans as cargo to be disposed of at will, Philip’s poems open spaces between words and even the letters of words to evince that silence is not meaningless, even if it is one without language. To enable this simultaneously creative and critical reading of the poem, she draws attention to silence as sounds between words and temporal pauses that enable meaning as shown in the poem’s first

page. The first section juxtaposes bones against law as if the poet, despite her legal background, is accusing the law for the death of the enslaved Africans.

Unlike the first long poem “Os” where the poet identifies each page with numbers from *Zong#1* till *Zong#26*, surprisingly, the rest of the poems emerge without any numbers or identification as if the poet tries to make her language ‘universal’ reflecting on universal theme like ‘death’. In “Sal”, the second long poem, Philip illustrates further the idea of death. “Sal” (the salt) is condensed with the diction of death. The language of death is prevalent throughout “death/ *le mort le/ mort le p tit mort/ died es /murder/the dead/ the died*” (Philip 62-64). It is not surprising that slavery embedded trauma and death. However, what is particular in the poem lies in the way the poet transforms death into a universal aspect chiefly through involving more than one language in this part. Additionally, she combines death with religion giving a spiritual aspect to this tragedy as if she calls for a prayer to God to save the dead in all languages:

lord

of loss visions      over and      over

*o*

*ba* sobs      from there to      here bring them

no provisions      from is

to wa      s swo

the seas

with she

negroes ma

n negroes muder      my lord

my liege lord

my *deus*

my us

my we      my fate

(Philip 61)

The language of death is visibly combined with a religious register through terms like “Ifa” (divination), “deus” (god), “my lord”, “my god”, “my fate”. She continues her prayer addressing God to “save [their] bones”, “save [their] souls”, “you were by my side (Philip 65). Furthermore, the poet creatively plays with the legal document and deliberately alters, distorts, and reimagines the original source to bring justice to enslaved Africans and simultaneously speak out on her lived “discomfort.” In an interview with Patricia Standers “Defending the Dead, Confronting the Archive: A Conversation with NourbeSe Philip”, Philip explains:

You cannot be comfortable reading the books that comprise *Zong!* The content of the work is about death and death is always discomfoting, and in the face of that discomfort we mourn. Not only does the content discomfort, the form is discomfoting as well.. When I think about *Zong!* nothing is very clear in the work. The images are fleeting; it’s almost as if you can’t pin them down, as if they’re ghosts...The text, that is, the reported case, is like a gravestone, and in shattering that gravestone the voices are freed. (Philip 69)

The poet’s explicit intent to deconstruct the form and adapt another discourse reminds us of Linda Hutcheon’s definition of adaptations as “palimpsestuous” and “inherently double-or multilaminated works” that do not value “proximity or fidelity to the adapted text,” but rather foreground “(re-)interpretation and (re-)creation” (Hutcheon 172). In a peculiar combination of the archival source and personal reinterpretation, the poet creates a form that can fit with the slave massacre as a form of “mourning” and “defending” or conducting “revenge” by “performing” text. Each page is written in an unilinear and fragmented way, intentionally devoid of a certain fluidity. *Zong!*’s visual and structural form convey a sense of variation to the classical pattern which can be reflected through intertextuality to create a complex interplay between the poem and other sources.

#### 4.1.3 Intertextuality and Footnotes

In *Zong!* Philip develops her poem by making references and adding citations at its beginning, citations namely from poetry and religion, in a kind of layering of meaning in her text. She makes visible her references of which she considers to be canonically influential. For instance, in the poem “Ventus,” Philip quotes Thomas More’s line “The Poet is the

detective and the detective a poet” (Philip 78). To contextualize this quote, she reminds herself of her duty and burden that she seeks to accomplish as a poet, that of “transforming” the African from “a thing by the law into “human,” in her words. She does so “through oath and through moan, through mutter, chant and babble, through babble and curse, through chortle and ululation to not tell the story” (Philip 196). Likewise, in “Ratio” she includes another quote of Paul C elan: “no one bears witness for the witness” (Philip 100). These lines are the last lines of a poem by C elan, a Jewish poet, who bore witness to his personal tragedy of the Holocaust through poetry, writing of “the impossibility of testimony when the witness is burnt to smoldering, mute ash” (Pierce 1). Poetry, therefore, has the potential to act as witness and as a tool to bear witness to the past. The same approach of making reference to other poets can be found in D’Aguiar’s *Feeding the Ghosts* who makes references to Derek Walcott’s most known phrase “the sea is history”.

Focusing on the witness/testimony question, as the *Zong!* cover suggests, the story is “told to the author by Sataey Adamu Boateng,” the voice of the ancestors reveals the submerged stories of all who were on board the *Zong*. In “Ferrum,” she precedes her poem by a verse from the bible: “there was a noise and behold a shaking... and the bones came together, bone to his bone... the sinews and flesh came upon them...and skin covered them above...and the breath came into them... and they lived, and stood upon their feet.” (Philip 126). In the same page, she refers to St. Augustine’s quote in English and Latin; “Praesens de praereritis” meaning “the past is ever present.” Equally important, Philip’s dynamic use of the archive’s legal discourse, that tells of children, women and men thrown over the slave ship and identified as “slaves” and “negroes” thereby stripped of names, is reimagined by her creation of naming. Through naming, the poet chooses to “personify them.” These footprints appear at the bottom of each page of the “Os” section, emerging in a significantly smaller font and seemingly drowning beneath the linear demarcation of the footnote section. This intentional selection of names can be interpreted as a way to pay tribute to the unidentified enslaved Africans who were absent in the legal archive. Giving their names back to the dead in her essay “Notanda”, Philip maintains her technique of naming as a responsibility to honor the dead:

November 25,03

Caledon, Ontario

I cannot say when I first conceive the idea but once it has taken hold, I know that I must honor it. “Defend the Dead.” The Africans on board the *Zong* must be named. They will be

ghostly footnotes floating below the text- “under water” ... a place of consequence.” (Philip 200)

Idea at heart of the footnotes in general is acknowledgment- someone else was here before, - in *Zong!* footnote equals the footprint.

Footprints of the African on board the *Zong*. (Philip 200)

Even if the logbook of the *Zong* had survived (it went missing even before the hearings), the only identification of enslaved Africans on board the *Zong* would have been in the form of “Negro man,” “negroe woman,” or more frequently, “ditto man,” “ditto woman” (Philip 194). Philip’s offering of distinctive identity through naming cannot, however, be supported by the language of the court case summary. In fact, this decision to offer names requires Philip to violate her poetic constraint. Unlike her other alterations of the source text, these names cannot be said to be a product of her “grand boggle game” (Philip 200). They are not formed out of the words of the court case summary, and, hence, they instead represent a complete break with the rules of her text.

In the same context, as previously mentioned, “Notanda” (189-207), the last part of the poem where Philip explains her intentions around writing the poem, stands out as an example of Philip’s unique writing approach. For instance, in *She Tries her Tongue, her silence Softly Breaks* (1989), the poet includes an essay at the end of her poem collection sharing her insights on language and colonization. In *Zong!*, the title “Notanda” is considered as a paratext written by the author herself, before the legal case document and the archive that she also used (which appears to be a sort of annex for the reader). She cites various passages from her poem and the archive itself, including her comments. In this way, the text becomes a secondary source within a primary source. As we hold on to the many references and addendums in the poem like “the “glossary, “manifest,” notanda,” “the footnotes” along with the legal case, we can distinguish a difference between *Zong!*’s overall structure and the two-page legal case. Philip’s work thereby serves as a deconstruction of the canons of Western language. Philip’s deconstruction of language norms will be further analyzed in the next section.

#### 4.1.4 Textual Reinvention: A Deconstruction of the Archival Discourse

The term “canon” refers to “a generally accepted rule, standard, or principle by which something is judged. Applying this term to texts or discourses, we notice that regardless of the

field difference, each text must respect those “canons” in the sense that the reader expects a certain regular form and rhetorical lexical use once reading a literary poem, which is very different from a legal text. Those textual canons and linguistic usages create an expectation for clearer communication.<sup>80</sup> In short, the idea of canons in English could be applied to the poetic form of “the sonnet,” which is an extremely regulated form.<sup>81</sup> We can refer to the same aspect in the legal field and laws where textual rules and norms must contribute to providing a certain clarity as any “defect of form”<sup>82</sup> can have a dramatic consequence. The canons of any text are studied within a linguistic approach identified as “text linguistics.”<sup>83</sup> De Beaugrande Robert Alain and Wolfgang Dressler’s *Introduction to Text Linguistics* (1981) have elaborated on the idea and proposed the seven standards of textuality which include: cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality, and intertextuality. A text, whether written or spoken, is defined as a communicative occurrence in the text linguistics approach of de Beaugrande and Dressler (1988), and it must meet seven standards of textuality. The text is not considered to be communicative or to have fulfilled its function if any of these standards are not met.

By bringing back these textual canons to the surface, I aim at using some of them in the analysis to distinguish between literary texts and legal texts. Among these standards I tend to focus on questions of ‘intentionality’, ‘informativity’, ‘situationality’, and ‘acceptability’ of the texts. As commonly perceived, literary texts are characterized by their fictional, creative, and subjective nature while legal texts appear as more argumentative (intentionality), based on reality and objective issues. Philip questions the inherent opposition between literary texts and judicial texts. Scholars Elizabeth S. Anker and Bernadette Meyler, consider this form in their article “Globalizing Law and Literature,” in which they firmly discuss the notion of truth. They contest that there is greater truth in literature than law:

Literature is enlisted as a vehicle for exposing and decrying law’s many wrongs, and failures, causing law to be regarded in an overridingly ominous, suspicious light. Law is accordingly pronounced to be constitutively fraudulent and corrupt-often beyond salvaging. Whereas literature, in contrast, is celebrated for counteracting law’s liabilities and instead purveying

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<sup>80</sup> See Paul Grice, “Logic and Conversation”, *Syntax and Semantics*, University of California, 1975, pp 41-59.

<sup>81</sup> See Thomas William Hodgson Crosland’s *The English Sonnet*, the description of the rule of sonnet is qualified by Crosland where rules for writers were defined in detail in 1900. Whereas, starting from 1900 these guidelines are criticized and analyzed by literary movements requesting a certain freedom in the poetic forms, Thomas William Hodgson Crosland, *The English Sonnet*, University Microfilms, 1992.

<sup>82</sup> According to the *Law Dictionary*, “a defect of form” refers to an imperfection in the style, manner, arrangement, or non-essential parts of a legal instrument, plea, indictment, etc., as distinguished from a “defect of substance.”

<sup>83</sup> See Robert-Alain De Beaugrande and Wolfgang Dressler, *Introduction to Text Linguistics*, Longman, 1988.

justice and ethics. This common way of explaining the interdisciplinarity nexus, however, opposes literature to law in unilateral and imbalanced terms, privileging the former while supplying a caricatured, reductive, inaccurate portrait of the latter. Whereas law is often theorized as clearly at the heart of every society, protecting rights, imposing duties, and establishing a framework for the conduct of almost all social, political, and economic activity”<sup>84</sup>. It is also common to say that Law as an institution is also associated to morality, equality, right to life, security etc. This “definable” and “delimitable” legal beacon can be far from being considered illegal, unequal, source of trauma and injustice. Otherwise, it would be taken for a fraudulent source. (Anker and Meyler 14)

Anker and Meyler explain how the legal text is not clear, hence, not informative, non-situational, unable to solve the situation, unacceptable (returning to the notion of “morality” discussed in the above quotation) providing a suspicion towards its legitimacy contrary to the literary text that finds solutions, informs, have an acceptability, a clarifying quality, and its intentionality re-contextualizes legal texts. Such paradoxical and astonishing points of view in legal texts and literature is at the core of M. NourbeSe Philip’s body of work, who interrogates the concept of law, as a poet rather than as a lawyer. She challenges the discrepancy of this discourse as she believes it is a source of “mystery- the mystery of evil (*Mysterium iniquitatis*) (Philip 190). Philip’s position to the legal case, here, is remarkable and unique, for she assumes a dual position, that of a lawyer and a poet.

The poet’s intention lies in subverting this legal text as an explicit confrontation with the law proposing a new truth and a legal status “to defend the dead” (Philip 25), not only as a lawyer but also as a poet seeking justice for the enslaved Africans thrown overboard<sup>85</sup> :

My intent is to use the text of the legal decision as a word store; to lock myself into this particular and peculiar discursive landscape in the belief that the story of these African men, women, and children thrown overboard in an attempt to collect insurance monies, the story that can only be told by not telling, is locked in this text. In the many silences within the silence of the text, I would lock myself in this text in the same way men, women, and children were locked in the holds of the slave ship *Zong*. (Philip 191)

We need to consider that the sceptic and critical reaction toward the legal sources and the “ominous” truth that the archive may represent can be explained by the fact that the tragic episode of these 130 enslaved Africans murdered in the act of throwing people overboard of

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<sup>84</sup> See Raymond. Wacks: *Law: a short Introduction* (2015): In his abstract, “Law: A Very Short Introduction”, Raymond Wacks introduces the major branches of the law, describing what lawyers do and how courts operate, and considers the philosophy of law and its pursuit of justice, freedom, and equality. This second edition considers the pressures of globalization and digitalization on the law and the nature of the law in our culture of threatened security and surveillance.

<sup>85</sup> As a lawyer, she had access to the source that she exploits for her novel. “I have brought two legal texts with me to Vermont, one on contracts, the other on insurance law, a branch of contract law. The boredom that comes with reading case after case is familiar and, strangely, refreshing, a diversion from going somewhere I do not wish to go... But am hunting for something- anything - to give me some bearing, since I am, metaphorically speaking, at sea, having cut myself from the confront and predictability of my own language-my own meaning. *Zong!*, p. 190.

the *Zong* ship, is known as an insurance fraud rather than murder. This murder was committed to claim insurance for the loss of cargo presented by the captain and documented as an accident. The legal prospect deals with this insurance fraud and nothing else. Considerable emphasis has already been given to the commercial calculation that explain the murders: yet the captain's mind, according to Simon Schama, had become "a very abacus of gain and loss" itself. The captain chose people to be thrown overboard, thinking that insurance could be claimed for those murdered (Schama 395). The whole legal and commercial culture of the eighteenth century is condemned by the murder of enslaved Africans who are openly justified in court, and held to be lawful by the Lord Chief Justice.<sup>86</sup>

Upon discovering the legal case as it appears "so modest, so fragile, so "meagre" (Philip 194), Philip writes: "I decide against it-important to keep the limitation," I write, reminding myself that the case is the tombstone, the one public marker of the murder of those Africans on board the *Zong*, locating it in a specific time and place. It is a public moment, a textual monument marking their murder and their existence, their small histories that ended so tragically" (Philip 194). Philip reemploys the legal text as a sort of "public marker" to indicate the hidden, untold truth and history. However, what is remarkable is the poet's ability to reflect the legal text's standards of "situation" (locating it in a specific time and place), perhaps visibly lacking in intentionality and informativity. To this end, according to text linguistics, legal texts cannot be conceived as "a real text," and thus the archive appears here as a meaningless marker. As she herself states in Notanda, the archive proves to be inaccurate and meagre as a discourse, that's why as a poet, she decides to give meaning and intentionality to it through subverting and disrupting all textual, visual and thematic orders:

I fight the desire to impose meaning on the words—it is so instinctive, this need to impose meaning: this is the generating impulse of, and towards, language, isn't it- to make and, therefore, to communicate, meaning? How did they—the Africans on board the *Zong*—make meaning of what was happening to them? What meaning did they make of it and how did they make it mean? This story that must be told; that can only be told by not telling. (Philip 199)

Paradoxically, however, the poet attempts to bring certain standards of "informativity" (meaning) and simultaneously insists that "this story that must be told, can only be told by not telling" which questions another genre as the novel<sup>87</sup>: Philip further clarifies, "I begin reading

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<sup>86</sup> Simon Schama, *Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves, and the American Revolution*, 2006, p. 160-161.

<sup>87</sup> The history of *Zong* is narrated by different writers and poets as for instance Fred D'Aguiar's *Feeding the Ghosts* (1997), Ian Baucom's *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History*.



a novel about it, but I am uncomfortable: A novel requires too much telling, I write, and this story must be told by not telling—there is a mystery here—the mystery of evil (mysterium iniquitatis to quote Ivan Illich)” (Philip 190). In her debate about form she takes the textual standard of “informativity,” and opposes three different canonical forms; the legal archive, narration, and a literary form, somehow going beyond the first two.

The poet adopts a creative response to law through words; language, but in such a fragmented, complex manner reflects the complexity of the case. In doing so, she explores the origins of “risk-based contract” and insurance law in the eighteenth-century transatlantic slave trade. In his book, *Specters of the Atlantic Finance Capital, Slavery, And the Philosophy of History* (2005), Ian Baucom approaches this decision as “a gap in the archive”, since to read archive necessitates to: “read it as worth reading, worth uncovering, worthwhile, because the utterly singular history it assembles can be seen to find its general equivalenting a reassembled history of the modern is to risk repeating in abstract form and in the form of abstraction” (Baucom 4). As demonstrated in Chapter One, the archive needs to be read against the grain since certain practices of omission and erasure risk to be reproduced. Such reproduction also risks resulting in more injustices and inaccuracies. Reflections on the injustice embedded in the archival process is best illustrated by theorists Carolyn Hamilton, Gayatri Spivak, and Ann Laura Stoler. In the context of the poem, the slave massacre becomes a “sort of haunting spirit” in a broad array of literary, sociological, historical, and philosophical texts devoted to an exploration of what Paul Gilroy has called “the Black Atlantic.” Baucom argues that this event and its representations are central to the Atlantic slave trade, the political and cultural archives of the black Atlantic, but also to the history of “modern capitalism, ethics, and time consciousness” (Baucom 31).

Philip’s response draws primarily on the archive to speak about the “silenced,” “locking herself” into this legal document transforming the silence of history into active voices of the enslaved Africans thrown overboard in her pages that speak to the truth of what is “intentionally” being silenced<sup>88</sup>. In *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (2015), Haitian historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot distinguishes between two different types of

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Many critics, writers and academics propose different forms of narratives associated with of the *Zong* history citing for instance James Walvin’s *The Zong: A Massacre, the Law and the End of Slavery*, 2011.

<sup>88</sup> In the first part of his book *Specters of the Atlantic Finance Capital, Slavery, And the Philosophy of History* (2005), labelled “Now Being: Slavery, Speculation, and the Measure of Our Time”, Baucom mentions that it is hard to remember that, as a legal matter, the *Zong* case was not a murder case. Captain Collingwood’s actions were not on trial.

silences; on the one hand, there are the “silences that are inherent to history because any single event enters history with some of its constituting parts missing. Something is always left out whilst something else is recorded” (Trouillot 27). However, as Trouillot underlines, there is another type of active silencing caused by an “uneven power in the production of sources, archives, and narratives” which is the case in the Western historiographical dismissal of the Haitian Revolution, an example discussed by Trouillot in his study. Philip, therefore, tries to activate this silence and transform it into a visual powerful piece of art.

Despite its deconstruction of the archival discourse, the *Zong!* paradoxically includes the legal case itself that the poet decides to go “against” (Philip 194). This legal case report takes the last page of her poems and opens the discussion around the refiguring of the archive. Here, we are mindful of Michel Foucault’s definition of the archive as “not simply an institution, but rather the law of what can be said, the system of statements, or rules of practice, that give shape to what can and cannot be said” (Foucault 80). This interconnectedness of the archive, power, and history is best illustrated in Achille Mbembe’s “The Power of Archive and its Limits”:

Following the idea of writing history merely involves manipulating the archive, following tracks, putting back together scraps and debris (scattered pieces of rubbish or remains) and reassembling remains, is to be implicated in a ritual which results in the resuscitation of life, in bringing the dead back to life by reintegrating them in the cycle of time, in such a way that they find, in a text in an artefact or in a monument, a place to inhabit it, from where they may continue to express themselves”. (Mbembe 25)

Refiguring the archive refers to the processes of questioning the privileged place of archives in historical practice, opening them to critical inspection and articulating their contexts. The exploration of historical erasure and silencing takes place from a creative artistic standpoint. The visual art and literature that I discuss in this chapter shows the side of history that is not recorded in written texts and visual documents. This marginality of documents in different post-colonial public spheres is often more respectfully represented in literature and art.

Philip’s intention to respond to the archive stems, as previously stated, from her perception that the archive—the legal text—is “meagre,” “fragile,” and “lack[ing] justice.” (Philip 25). Conversely, her intentions appear quite contradictory since according to her the legal text “parallels a certain kind of entity—a whole, a completeness which like African life is rent and torn. This time I do the tearing—but always there is this movement towards trying to ‘make sense’ make it ‘readable’, ‘understandable” (Philip 192). It is perplexing to identify the reader as torn between an intention to deconstruct the entire text because of its fragility

and lack of sense or at the same time to consider the archive as an “entity.” Accordingly, one must question the status of the archive, whether the archive appears as a source of knowledge that should be completed by literature and poetry or as a legal document that lacks something only poetry can make sense of? Can we say that the archive and literature complement each other in this way? This constant appeal and urging to make sense out of the legal case that did not achieve any sense of coherence and justice must be, in Philip’s words, “resisted” (Philip 193). The order in which individual records accumulate in a file tells us something about the matter being documented and the way it is being handled. *Zong!* deconstructs such documentation establishing a new alternative.

To serve our comparison of the literary text and the archive, I believe selecting a few illustrations would better serve our understanding of the shift from an archival discourse to a poetic one. In her opening poem, “Os”, listed earlier, Philip relies chiefly on the legal document words. For instance, the term “dead” appears just once in the archive: “thirty” enslaved Africans were lying dead when the vessel arrived in Jamaica” (Gregson v. Gilbert 211). “Dead,” in this case an adjective, describes a state of being. The victims of the *Zong* become the noun in “defend the dead” and the adjective “dead” must be substantivized. In her article “*Zong!*’s “Should we?”: Questioning the Ethical Representation of Trauma” (2011) explains how this linguistic shift “creates a personhood for the victims of the massacre that did not exist in the source text’s use of “dead” (Austin 69).

In the discourse of law, the act of defending difficult cases, Peter J. Biging and Michael S. Ross argue, “requires an attorney to think creatively and sometimes to engage in aggressive legal tactics and litigation strategies that implicate ethic rules” (Biging and Ross 2). In the context of the poem, Philip, acts as a lawyer who describes the legal case summary as “bootleg” evidence (Biging and Ross) i.e., an illegal and unreliable claim that necessitates to be responded to using complex and subversive strategies. Beyond what the poem’s content expresses, another layer of significance is apparent as one notes that the words in this poem come almost exclusively from the ‘contra side’ of the court case. To put it differently, this contra-side refers to the side that argues against a new trial and in favor of the owners receiving their compensation. For example, “the order in/destroyed” comes from “the slaves were destroyed in order to throw the loss on the underwriters” (Gregson v. Gilbert case, Philip 211), as does “the loss in underwriter,” while “the sustenance in want” comes from “the negroes died for want of sustenance” (Gregson v. Gilbert 211). Therefore, mixing the

individual intentions and practices of a lawyer allow the poet to fulfill her intentions of “defending the dead”.

Conversely, upon analyzing the poem, there is a prominent transformation of the archive. Some words appear in the poem as non-existent in one contra side paragraph, stating for example, the following terms; “provisions,” “weight,” and “me” are used in the source text only as part of other words. The phrases “provisions” and “weight” appear to respectively support a new trial and use passages closely preceding and following the contra side paragraph. Additionally, there are three other amendments within the terms; “creatures”, “underwriters”, and “negroes”, which Philip employs in the singular rather than the plural.

Beyond the apparent content, these resemblances to and differences from the archive provide a context for deeper understanding of this poem. Additionally, her incorporation of terms like “weight” and “provisions” into phrases used by the opposing side suggest, in part, that there can be little distinction made between each side; precisely, these individuals were “slaves” and what they are enslaved to remain a part of the rhetoric of the trial as a whole, and perhaps Lord Mansfield’s ruling itself. Philip’s switch from plural to singular in a single source reflects the text’s inability to distinguish individuals as separate from their groups. This demonstrates that the trial fails to question the morality of slavery itself or to request the truth behind Captain Collingwood’s actions; as even within these perspectives, everyone on the *Zong* remains “captives to” the ideology of their time and place.

In the “Notanda,” Philip evokes the “disorder, illogic and irrationality of the *Zong*” which is the story whose “untelling” appears in its “fragmentation and mutilation of the text, forcing the eye to track across the page to wrest meaning from words gone astray” (Philip 198). Through her poem, she converts the archival silence into narrative, giving a form to a story that “cannot be told” (Philip 189). By adapting a textual strategy and deconstructing the norms of the language, she gives voice to the silenced truth and silenced archives. This violation of the legal text produces a particular tension between law and poetry, which “both share an inexorable concern with language, the right use of the right words, phrases, or even marks of punctuation” (Philip 191).

In a murdering of the text, Philip challenges the language of law, as her poem is derivative of records of the incident, which NourbeSe Philip first came across during her legal studies. The story of the *Zong* struck Philip at the time and inspired her to literally take the

poem apart and piece it back together. This set of poems, comprised of the torn apart and reconstructed words of the historical legal document, imitates the dehumanization and destruction of the Black lives lost aboard the *Zong*. As such, Philip attempts to leave a fictional legacy, but a legacy nevertheless, that speaks to the pain and darkness that those enslaved Africans underwent at the hands of a slave ship crew. This effort to give existence by breaking up and re-creating language and narration in both the voices of the slave owner and the enslaved, can be conceived as an engaging performance as it takes “the original text and creates disunity within it in order to create a multiplicity of meanings” (Barry 56).

In his study, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (2009), Peter Barry explains how: “the deconstructionist practices what has been called textual harassment or oppositional reading, with the aim of unmasking internal contradictions or inconsistencies in the text, aiming at showing the disunity which underlies its apparent unity” (Barry 56). This deconstruction is articulated in *Zong!* since Philip tries to deconstruct the legal text in a way that might reflect a sort of “disunity” and fragmentation of the original text itself. In this regard, Barry’s study points out that a text “reveals the repressed unconscious of the word,” therefore, “revealing the unconscious of the text” through means of deconstructing language” (Barry 54). Philip is best known for her experimentation with poetic structure and oral presentation, as well as with language. *Zong!* echoes her long poem *She Tries her Tongue Her silence softly breaks* (1989), which is composed of section pieces evolving around the central interest of language and discourse; “Introductory Essay” precedes the poem as a sort of prologue, “The Absence of Writing or How I Almost Became a Spy”, followed by such poems as “And Over Every Land and Sea”, “Cyclamen Girl”, “African Majesty: From Grassland and Forest..”, “(The Barbara and Murray Frum Collection)”, “Meditations on the Declensions of Beauty..., by the Girl with the Flying Cheek-bones”, “Discourse on the Logic of language”, “Universal Grammar”, “The Question of Language is the Answer to Power”, “Testimony Stoops to Mother Tongue” and “She Tries Her Tongue; Her Silence Softly Breaks”.

The poem by the Canadian writer of Caribbean descent, “Discourse on the Logic of Language”, explores the speaker’s relationship to English, as well the history of enslaved Africans’ relationship to language. The poet cannot seem to choose whether English is her “mother tongue” or “a foreign anguish;” while she would seem to accept the inevitability of the former (as the language she and her ancestors were forced to adopt), her devotions seem

to lie with the latter version. The following image derives from her poem, clearly demonstrates the way Philip plays with the space, language, and the visual form of the poem:

English  
is my mother tongue  
a mother tongue is not  
not a foreign lan lan lang  
language  
l/anguish

(Philip 30)

The language of the poem literally associates English to oppression as well as to African American history. In her article entitled “Dream of the Mother Language: Myth and History in She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks”, Naomi Guttman describes Philip’s poem as: “hybrid in form—a border text which is neither essay nor poem, juxtaposes texts from other sources, not always telling the reader the origin of a quotation, sometimes imitating the discourse of the oppressor in fictitious quotations from fictitious books “to jar the reader into recognizing the bitter ironies of the colonial situation”(Guttman 54).

Many of the poems directly confront the dilemma she shows in a bitter pun- “language l/anguish anguish—a foreign anguish.” Philip’s poetry encompasses an “all-inclusive verbal awareness.”<sup>89</sup> In her poem “Universal Grammar”, Philip shows how one should interact with words and language:

MANY FACTORS AFFECT AND DETERMINE THE ORDER OF  
WORDS IN A SPOKEN SENTENCE/ THE STATE OF MIND OF  
THE SPEAKER. THE GENDER OF THE SPEAKER. HIS OR HER  
INTENTION. THE CONTEXT OF THE SPEECH. THE IMPRESSION  
THE SPEAKER WISHES TO MAKE  
THE BALANCE OF POWER BETWEEN SPEAKER AND LISTENER  
AND, NOT LEAST OF ALL, THE CONSTRAINTS OF UNIVERSAL,  
GRAMMAR. (Philip 37)

The following analysis shares in the debate on Philip’s use of language underlying “the lexical deconstruction” that characterizes *Zong!* and compared with the legal discourse detailed in the last two pages of her poem. Despite the inclusion of the archive at the end of her poem in contrast with her own discourse, one notices that the archive is necessary in recreating and reproducing both truth and vision, or to rewrite and recover lost histories thus unlocking all that the archive failed to resist.

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<sup>89</sup> In her official website Mark Ford shares his review on Philip poem in the Guardian in June 1995.



e rose hi

p tea at the man

hem ayd

ame aide

oo thin. B. y far. We fa ame

(Philip 157)

In this poem “Ferrum,” the poet indulges herself into the discourse of language to convey the horror of slavery choosing a language that she herself describes as: “grunt and groan, of moan and stutter- this language of pure sound fragmented and broken history, this language of the limp and the wound. Of the fragment. And, in its fragmentation and brokenness, the fragment becomes mine. Becomes me” (Philip 205).

Philip often proves her ongoing engagement and role of embracing her African Caribbean origins and identity as a woman. Like many other postcolonial writers, she believes that the poet has an important political position who needs to be fully conscious of her responsibilities to be a witness to the truth in one’s writing, which is often a difficult undertaking. In her article “The Anguished Drama of Return in M. NourbeSe Philip’s “Discourse on the Logic of Language”, Coomi S. Vevaina, argues how Philip “urges writers to transform negation into affirmation and reaction into initial statement by seeing themselves “a centre not other” and reconstruct their identities piece by piece in their own images” (Vevaina 111). It is worth noting that a text has the potential to give way to a variety of meanings and interpretations, made possible here by Philip’s poetry. As mentioned earlier, in the “Notanda”, a section located at the end of *Zong!* that explains her reasoning behind the structure of her poems, Philip explains how she metaphorically mutilates the text “as the fabric of African life” was mutilated:

I murder the text, literally cut it into pieces, castrating verbs, suffocating, adjectives, murdering nouns, throwing articles, prepositions, conjunctions, overboard, jettisoning adverbs: I separate subject from verb, verb from object—create semantic mayhem, until my hands bloodied, from much killing and cutting, reach into the stinking, eviscerated innards, and like some seer, sangoma, or prophet who, having scarified an animal for signs and portents of a new life, or simply life, reads the untold story that tells itself by not telling. (Philip 193-194)

The explicit shattering of the text produces an altogether different text that exposes what cannot be told. Consequently, *Zong!* urges us to raise questions and build up this hidden



connection between what the structure of the text performs in relation to the story of the *Zong* ship. The way in which the enslaved Africans are referred to in Gregson v. Gilbert report, “negroes” who died for “want of sustenance,” dehumanizes them as lost cargo that could be replaced by money. The claimed loss, in line with this mode of thinking, “was primarily caused by the perils of the seas” (Philip 211). To give voice to those enslaved Africans, Philip collects the words of the original document to show the Africans’ inability to speak. The poet articulates that “the disorder, illogic and irrationality of the *Zong!* poems can no more tell the story than the legal report of Gregson v. Gilbert masquerading as order, logic, and rationality. In their very disorder and illogic is the not-telling of the story that must be told” (Philip 197).

Interestingly, the poet assumes her inability to work with the appropriate grammatical structures of verbs, nouns, adjectives, for through putting fragmented verbs and nouns, she expands the notion of deconstruction and reinterpretation of the whole story providing an alternative to the language of law either literally or metaphorically. According to her, “the muscle of a poem is in the verbs—found that when [she] was working on one /with no verbs— couldn’t do anything with it, muscles give shape, hold it up, some poems just seem to offer themselves up” (Philip 169). Her major concern resonates in shaping a new reality, changing the archive, and using the power of the language as tool of revenge. Considering the perplexing language and structure of the poem, Philip herself articulates that she cannot read it to the audience, so instead she decided to perform it.

By reading the text aloud we can clearly appreciate the polyphonic nature of the poem, which requires a chorus of voices, and how performance enriches the implications of the poetic text. It might be relevant to add that this identifies Philip’s poetry with her Caribbean culture. When asked about her own reading of *Zong!* in non-linear fashion with over twenty readers improvising the poem’s multiple meanings in discordant unison, she explains:

there are two kinds of performances I have been engaged in with *Zong!*. One is the type of collective reading you were a part of and which you mention in your question. In the other type of performance, I work with musicians in an improvisatory context. We chose small sections of the text and improvise on those. The work lends itself beautifully to this process. However, while I don’t think that there is necessarily an opposition between the jazz improv process and the multiple echoes of a “duppy performance,” or that you’re suggesting it, the “multiple contact zones” approach you speak of is what interests and haunts me. For instance, I am very keen to introduce the sounds of techno, scratching and turntabling into the text. (Philip qtd in Watkins 2)

The structure of the poem resembles, in her opinion, a jazz performance, an image that recalls the musical quality of African American literature. In line with her poem “Ferrum”, the reader encounters clear readable utterances that later turn out to be incomprehensible different languages as words are merged, literally and visually throughout the page creating a fragmented English discourse merged with African words, echoing the sound of patois:

Bs oh ye ye lantic oh oh ye ye oh  
omi omi omi oh  
we be aro oun ebora  
omi Ebora we be aro oun ebora omi oh  
ma abu oh. Ise ini ise ine  
sho sho s bwa. O mi abo w aba  
omi mi mo o la o fa (Philip 146)

*Omi Ebora* is defined in the poet’s glossary as water within which spirits can reside, “ommi mimo” signifies “holy or life-giving water.” These words listed above are derived from the Yoruba language, which is spoken in West Africa by the ethnic Yoruba people as part of their heritage. The poet tries to capture the essence of injustice and takes liberties to choose her own languages and forms. In the same vein, in *Writing in Our Time: Canada’s Radical Poetries in English* (1957-2003), Pauline Butling expands on the notion of “re poetics” and writes what follows: “Re posits lateral, spiral, and /or reverse movements rather than the single line and forward thrust of avant-gardism [...] A re poetics involves rewriting cultural scripts and reconfiguring literary / social formations. The goal is to *change*, not conserve, past and present constructions” (Butling 21). It should be noted that in contemporary Canadian poetry this process of “changing” is often playful, fluid, and rhizomatic, similarly Butling stresses, “disrupted notions of meaning and authorship” (Butling 68). The term rhizomatic is not a coincidence here, as Philip draws links between the legal source and theories by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, especially those pertaining to the unfolding of meaning. When dealing with the poem, the poet foregrounds the relation between the play of form and sense (but also nonsense) in the shifting meanings that are produced with each word.

This text belongs to a group of poems which attempt to imagine history and at the same time playfully discuss the language it uses. I would argue that Philip subtly shifts the emphasis from what happened overboard the “zorgue ship” and how the power of language

and words can give justice to the dead. Despite her statement that “the legal text parallels a certain kind of entity—a whole, a completeness which like African life is rent and torn.” (Philip 192). It is no coincidence that the archive marks the end of the collection, leaving the reader at a loss concerning the adequacy and authenticity, the significance of language, and how the poem may respond to the enslaved African voices that she often hears: women’s voices “surfacing in the text” (Philip 201).

Philip’s poetic memorial avoids filling the silence with the voices of enslaved African people because the silence simultaneously wants us to remember what is missing (Sharpe 11). Accordingly, those voices are well presented in Joscelyn Gardner’s (2014) *Omi Eborá*, a multimedia video and sound installation featured in *After the Flood*, an exhibition curated by Holly Bynoe and Tessa Whitehead for “Transforming Spaces”, an annual art tour in Nassau, Bahamas. In 2014, Gardner describes the piece as “an immersive environment”.<sup>90</sup> In line with “Sound as Archive”, Gardner’s installation will be further explored in Chapter Five in terms of its dynamic and creative use of the archive. Joscelyn Gardner, a Canadian visual artist of Caribbean descent, joins Philip in her engagement with the archive and further emphasizes the transformative archival process. Through Gardner’s installation, one can distinguish this archival process to be performed and digitized.

In a completely dark room, Gardner’s installation presents a wide-angle view of the high seas shot from above, with a spinning effect added post-production. The sea goes from calm to stormy and back to calm with a changing pattern of light and shade. In her article, “A Caribbean Hauntology: The Sensorial Art of Joscelyn Gardner and M. NourbeSe Philip”, Guillermina De Ferrari suggests that, in *Omi Eborá*, in the dark room, we hear:

The vocalization of agony, but fail to see any bodies. Disembodied voices call on the spectator, demanding to be heard and, as their urgency increases, perhaps pleading to be saved. Perhaps nothing spells humanity like the sound of a human voice. We are trained to respond to people’s voices, whether in the form of screams, moans, or fully articulated sentences. The floating letters, which suggest speech, are complex yet thinly veiled substitutes for human bodies with language and consciousness- that is, for subjects. When the letters surface and disappear in the water, the words seem to be drowning like bodies. The dark room and the vivid projection enhance the sense of proximity, making the spectator feel that she is indeed at the edge of the water or on the deck of the slave ship. The absence of the bodies whose voices she hears

interpellated her. They are invisible but they are there, they are drowning, and she is letting it happen. (De Ferrari 279)

Given its difficult structure, Philip explains that she is not able to read the poem, rather perform it as stated in the beginning of this analysis. Each year she organizes durational readings where she engages herself along with the audience for more than fourteen hours, to read and perform the *Zong!*. This performance practice will be further analyzed in the final chapter of this text as part of the section “Sound as Archive”. These annual durational readings are presented as a form of interaction between the poet and the audience and performed either in a dark room or in the ocean. During COVID-19 pandemic Philip has continued to perform her online<sup>91</sup> global interaction of the annual durational reading of *Zong!*. One of these readings entitled “**ZONG! REVRRB/ORAshuns**”, performed on December 10, 2021. It was 24 hour, public livestream taking place on Zoom to allow the worldwide audience to participate in, or offer statements, readings and performances related to *Zong!*.

During these readings, the poet focuses on the movement of the body that moans and whines following the rhythm of drums. The body alludes to the bodies lost as she wants to celebrate their afterlife instead of mourning their death, through her words, feelings, and emotions of belonging. According to her, reading *Zong!* becomes a personal and collective breathing, to continue to breathe upon silence, to exist. Speaking about this notion of “breathing,” during her last reading held in December 2020, Philip adds, “my poetry and breath provide a way in and a way out”. Each space being a “grasp of possibilities,” a grasp in a gasp of time. Even words need to breathe and gain life through remembering slavery every day to be able to celebrate this breathing. The difficulty of “breathing” might be aligned with the structure of *Zong!*, for Philip believes that “*some-all the poems need a great deal of space around them—as if there is too much cramping around them, as if they need to breathe*”(Philip194).

To hear the poet orally perform the text often reveals a preservation of the fragmentation. Even the letters are being transformed and molded following her own pattern: “the y,” for instance, would not necessarily be “they,” but equally could be the “why” which may be perceived as a question about the reason behind the *Zong* murder. For readers, the narrative revealed through linear reading is difficult enough, infused as it is with multiple

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<sup>91</sup> <https://zong.world/zongglobal2021/>.

points of view and narrative directions<sup>92</sup>. As a result, Philip's text sets up a contradictory necessity: readers are positioned at once to have to do more work, thereby potentially to assert more power over the text and the historical event it represents and to have that position of power denied. The duality of the visual and aural is aligned with the nature of the provocative, destructive, challenging, and innovative nature of the poem.

Studying the ways in which literature engages with the archive exposes the fact that the languages of law, insurance, documents, journals, and art are as "open to interpretative pressure as the creative text itself" (Walters 4). This re-examination enables us to posit and imagine a past that exceeds material documentation. *Zong!* explores the power of poetry to challenge conventions of Western law and the English language itself that justified mass murder in the infamous insurance trial following the massacre. The provocative nature of the text itself works an attempt to grasp what is absent or secondary in the legal document.

As letters and spaces become more and more meaningful to the poem, the legal text becomes something more dynamic and creative. The point to be made here is that the archive is recreated and the visual presentation of the truth is no longer bound to a linear grammatical form nor typography. This fragmented text, then, is entirely transformed and recreated. There is no doubt that Philip has managed to disturb the status of the archive through the multiplicity of her discourses in the poem all of which compel critics to employ as many different critical tools as possible. Philip's poetry demands that a single technique can provide neither a complete nor deep understanding of the poem. Viewing archival materials through the lens of poetry generates "new narratives that challenge our previous understandings of historical events, and allow us to see the possibility of resistant identities and tactics, outside the state's constructs" (Walters 6). The poet simultaneously breaks free from the archive as she creates an intimate and effectual approach towards language. Although the poem's words are the results of breaking up and violating the legal text, it enables a breaking of the conventions that limit and hinder the communication of memory and human experience. The conventions of the legal discourse maybe be seen as a barrier in this context. Perhaps the poetic text in breaking the conventions of the archival text, makes it, not so much a "bridge," but, rather, a more permeable membrane allowing the text to communicate memory and experience more fully across its more open structure.

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<sup>92</sup> Audio clips of *Zong!* are available at PennSound: <http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Philip.php>.

In the first section of this chapter, I tried to demonstrate the ways in which poetry revisits the archival text, reworking the image of truth in the archive and producing a visual fragmented text to re-member the past. The poem, therefore, walks a fine line between complexity and fragmentation, for it relies on an understanding of the past as present. Embedded in a visual archive, it suggests another interpretation of archives and opens the conversation around the authenticity of the legal text through its provocative nature and visual presentation. Philip opposes the archive and proposes a new reference, engaging the reader to envision a range of possible interpretations explorations of the archives in contemporary literature and art. The following analysis will focus on another reconfiguration of the archive through visual art. Lubaina Himid's installations *Revenge* and *A Fashionable Marriage* represent a modern vision of eighteenth-century art, yet dense of satiric and provocative criticism towards white politics establishing meanwhile a Black engaging art.

## 4.2 Filling the Gaps and Visualizing Slavery in Lubaina Himid's Artworks

The *Zong* murder considers another aspect not only in poetry but in art which is the exploration of silences in the archive. The poem does so as an engagement with the contemporary experience of art and history. This part deals with the archive and visual art through visualizing the *Zong* murder in contemporary art, unsettling again the past and exploiting the limits of the archive in the Zanzibar-born Black British artist Lubaina Himid's exhibition *Revenge* (1992) displayed in Rochdale Art Gallery and South Bank Centre in London 1992, Tate Britain 2012 exhibited five paintings with accompanying prose poems at the Rochdale Art Gallery, Lancashire, England. Himid balances the violence and negativity of these tableaux with the *Memorial to Zong*, which calls for self-determination, empowerment, and revenge through symbolic shredding of the maps and navigational charts of white imperialist patriarchal history by women of color. The artistic power of Lubaina Himid's creativity resides in her ability to take on board the massive issues of history and translate them into a language which gives voice to the silenced Blacks. In positioning us at the center of the circle she challenges history and the way it was told.

In *Memorial to Zong* (1992), Himid commemorates the *Zong* murder through an artwork underlined by a visual reference to water and pays tribute to the victims. As she herself states,

after “the mourning comes revenge.” In this section, the exploration of historical erasure and silencing takes place from a creative artistic standpoint. This mixture of visual art and literature focuses on the side of history which is not recorded in written texts and visual documents or which remains marginalized in different post-colonial public sphere(s). Lubaina Himid’s *Revenge* (1992) creates a dialogue between the text and the image, it is at once about the words and images. The artist’s on-going concern with “how to tell the story of the slave trade without depicting bleeding, dying Africans, to highlight those huge questions about belonging, those huge questions about the diaspora population” (Himid 129) is ever present. Of particular significance is her statement, “Going through my mind all the time are those journeys that Africans made in the hold of ships, that horrific introduction to this monster called the sea” (Himid 130).

The piece is clearly symbolic and would seem to attempt a transition from the past to the present with a hopeful gesture towards the future. While the first part of this chapter examines the dynamic status of poetry, this second part contributes to a recent revisiting and reframing of Black artists and the emerging dialogues and discourses, with a particular focus on history. Himid’s *Memorial to Zong* is a visual approach to the Zong murder and alludes to the artist’s creativity in dealing with the archive, trying to memorializing the past. By taking on board Lubaina Himid’s artworks, I propose a shift in approach to, and method of, British art history in terms of the archive process. Focusing on the exhibition alongside the legal case I aim to open new possibilities of engagement with *Revenge* and its artworks, as performative sites enacting discourse in a common and interconnected British art history.

#### 4.2.1 Archival Resistance: *Revenge*

“I want to change the order of things and take back the art which has been stolen” ...

(Lubaina Himid 1987)<sup>93</sup>

Lubaina Himid, Sonia Boyce, Maud Sutler, Veronica Ryan, Houria Niati and Claudette Johnson, to name but a few, represent a generation of Black artists who challenged their collective invisibility in the art world and engaged with the social, cultural, political, and

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<sup>93</sup> Lubaina Himid “We Will Be”, Edited by Rosemary Betterton, *Looking on: Images of Femininity in the Visual Arts and Media* Pandora, 1987, p. 263.

aesthetic concerns of the time. In the early 1980s, three exhibitions in London were curated by Lubaina Himid: *Five Black Women at the Africa Centre* (1983), *Black Women Time Now* at Battersea Arts Centre (1983- 4), and *The Thin Black Line* at the Institute for Contemporary Arts (1985). All marked the arrival of a radical generation of young Black and Asian women artists to the British art scene. Drawing on multiple artistic languages and media, their art sought to reposition the Black female presence from the margins to the center of the debate about representations of the heritage and art making. Lubaina Himid has collected, in her study *Thin Black Line(s)*, other female visual artists' testimonies and insights on their contemporary arts. These artists, Veronica Ryan and Marlene Smith, share their need to create art as a space to convey political aspects to emerge on the surface:

In my studio, I have collection of natural objects. The collection started when I became aware of the fact that more and more the sculptures resembled kinds of land and sea structures. These objects I have decided have their origins in a primal past. More specifically, they are partly reminiscent of the very unlikely way these objects grow. Their relationship to the ground or bulging out of a tree trunk continually arrests my imagination. They are ridiculous and wonderful at the same time. I am trying to establish a sense of place both historically, culturally, and psychologically. The word heritage conveys a rich sense of tradition and security. But there is a sense in which I use sculptural language to make and explore boundaries in a contemporary context. The sculpture could be described as having a direct parallel with the diverse ways in which human behavior communicates, or remains alienated. (Himid, qtd in Ryan 23)

In line with the question of art, Marlene Smith states:

I am trying to establish a sense of place both historically, culturally, and psychologically. The word heritage conveys a rich sense of tradition and security. But there is a sense in which I use sculptural language to make and explore boundaries in a contemporary context. The sculpture could be described as having a direct parallel with the diverse ways in which human behavior communicates, or remains alienated.” (Smith 23)

As a Black woman artist, Smith shares that her work revolves around and evolves out of the Black community experience. Her responsibility lies in her engagement to address Black issues in Britain which is also reflected in the work of Lubaina Himid. Himid's installation *Revenge* displays the archive and offers new insights on how to think about the archive in visual modern art. In his essay “The Archival Impulse” (2004), Hall Foster describes how archival artists seek to make “historical formation, often lost or displayed, physically present” and at the same time “connect what cannot be connected” (Foster 10). The artist's task of revisiting the past and using the archive as a memory often occurs in contemporary artworks where artists rely on the archive as a subject matter and transform it into a living archive.



Writing about Lubaina Himid's exhibition *Revenge*, in her study "Revenge: Lubaina Himid and the Making of New Narratives for New Histories" (1999), Griselda Pollock offers a detailed analysis of some paintings in *Revenge* and considers their political imperative in relation to her position as a white feminist art historian to distinguish 'the canon' of art history through considerations of race and gender. Pollock argues that Himid's art challenges a tendency "to erase history, by attending to a new form of history painting that politically reanimates the genre from within as an address to the colonial violence against Africa" (Pollock 172). Using the modernist medium of painting as her main tool, Himid wrestles it away from its traditional function as an instrument for white western canon formation and re-employs it in a dialogical relation to its origins. In "Revenge", Himid refers to the African bodies lost in the Middle Passage that she needs to make them visible through her art. In an interview with Alan Rice (2003), she explains how "the idea of memorialising really came from trying to visibilise the invisible" (Himid, qtd in Rice 22).

In *Memorial to Zong*, the duality of water as a vision of loss and salvation is evoked through the single brown hand that emerges from a deep blue ocean. The hand holds up its five fingers, as a sign of drowning. This visual representation of the painting differentiates it from the original Turner's painting, which designates the visual archive to function, as Dorothy Row puts, in a "more fluid, dynamic, dialogical, and non-linear poetics of relation" (Row 300). The combination of dark colors used by Himid invokes certain emotions of sorrow and anger. In art, the blue color is often associated with the feeling of melancholy and nostalgia. In other words, due to the traumatic context of the painting, the artist merges both colors to convey the melancholic status of the past and the slave *Zong* massacre. In *Color in Turner: Poetry and Truth* (1969), John Cage has outlined the English and European background to Turner's color interests, which has been very generally neglected by art historians and by historians of science. The use of color in painting is of some importance for understanding why Turner would never use conventional color symbols. Turner defines "color in material substance, indeed with a quality of diversely affecting the eye according to the matter wherein it is found" (Cage 109).

In his study *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America 1780-1865*, Marcus Wood depicts Joseph Mallord William Turner's "Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying—Typhon Coming On" (1840), as a painting that "dwells on the representation of the disembodied leg in the left foreground, still shackled by its ball and chain while being eaten by seagulls and different varieties of fish" (Wood 70).

Marcus Wood associates the disembodied leg presented in Turner's paintings to a female falling enslaved African and he considers it in the context of the act of falling as a "figuration of traumatic memory" (Wood 70). In this way, Wood acknowledges that the leg has "disproportionate narrative power and as such it became the discomfiting occasion for laughter when the work was exhibited" (Wood 70). As a contemporary response to Turner's painting, Lubaina Himid releases a single drowning hand from its chains, detaching one of the standard hegemonic tropes of European art historical representation that depicts Black people as either enslaved Africans or as servants. In contrast to Turner, Himid does not give more attention to colors as much as to the subject of her art. Himid's portrayed hand is central and clear in *Memorial to Zong*, it is not overwhelmed by the forces of sublime nature and within the vocabulary of her iconography in *Revenge*, it signifies dialectically a form of resistance. *Memorial to Zong* operates dialectically in a connection between past, present, and future, and also functions as both "an act of visible closure in the process of mourning for deceased ancestors and as a distinct call to action" (Rice 74).

Considering Turner's painting as an archival source, the artist's interpretation of the massacre displays a modern visual representation to address other contemporary matters in terms of British visual Art. Consequently, how does contemporary visual art respond to the archive and to history in the present? Himid's intention behind recycling the archive might be to demonstrate what can be done from the transference of representation and the use of the archive from the past into the present, from painting into poetry, painting into play. This interconnectedness between multiple genres, herein, serves to depict the atrocity of slavery and operates as ideal evidence on how the archive itself cannot resist to one source. Rather, it can be argued that this reliance on other sources and disciplines is aligned with this dynamic process of the archive. In this debate on the archive, it seems worth noting that the visual archive evokes emotions that can be aligned with anger and sorrow. To illustrate this, despite the focus on the leg in the foregrounding of Turner's *Slave Ship*, this combination of colors highlighted in red and yellow may stimulate different emotions. It is commonly known that red stimulates passion and energy but at the same time can convey danger and caution. Yellow color similarly conveys contradicted symbols; it can reflect both happiness and life but also deception and cowardice. As such, the complexity of the archive stimulates its different dimensions rejecting notions of singularity.

*Memorial to Zong* situates the atrocities of slavery as they were experienced in specific geographical regions within a broader global pattern of violence and conflict. The approach of

contrasting Black art and eighteenth-century art suggests that historical trauma can never be reconfigured in the same way. The story of these enslaved Africans has to be seen more in the uncompromising terms of present trauma. Himid's *Revenge* similarly operates as a creative response to the horror of the past through allowing art to act differently. In the same exhibition, the artist transcends the scene into a different figure of the sea allowing the scene to be exposed in an explicit rhythmic and newness imagery:

Water cascading falling spouting sparkling frothing whooshing tricking  
spurting foaming running pouring falling pooling puddling raining filling  
overflowing. A fountain a monument a memorial to people for water. For  
water to people wasted in water, wasted for water. A Memorial to Zong.  
Singing buried treasure. After the mourning comes revenge. (Himid 13)

As mentioned earlier, Turner's representation inaugurates "the act of mourning" borrowing Marcus Wood's terms, if nothing else. To this end, Himid believes that Blacks must actively engage in the present in order to achieve the closure that is implied by this act, which is the reason behind her statement of "mourning" and the need for revenge. In Himid's art, Black women seek revenge by remaining present and creative in a fluid and dynamic manner through presence, process, and dialogue: "the occasion of this piece of history, nestling as it does amongst the British displays, is not the end of something and it isn't the beginning either, but maybe you could mark it as the middle of the middle of a strategy for the future—at last" (Himid 25).

Lubaina Himid represents her work as part of visual art and as an anti-racist political engagement to depict Black artists' resistance in Britain. In this analysis, I draw a connection between the visual and written texts and their respective roles within the larger work of mourning, in which I argue, Himid's artistic representations discussed in this second part carry out through their interface with the reader. This interdisciplinary framework she established connects the past and the present through the twin lenses of artistic interpretation and the collective memory of trauma and suffering. How does art function to illustrate deeply what is "inside the invisible" and how do African diasporic artists visualize Transatlantic Slavery? Art bears the burden of representation of the transatlantic slave trade. Himid explores the way in which memory intersects with the present drawing on the eighteenth and nineteenth century painting and "create self-reflexive, two-dimensional, sculptural and digital time-based collage works that bring history forward and ensures its relevance to our experience of race, class and gender as conditioned by popular culture" (Bernier et al.7).

During an interview I conducted with Lubaina Himid in 2019, she made a comment about her own work. She explains how she relies on other contemporary artists like Eddie Chambers and Donald Rodney to deal with slavery. These artists would depict the enslaved person on the ship, in chains, and irons. Instead, she wants to open a space where the viewer and audience can bring their own trauma into the painting or installation and animate the trauma. She asserts:

I am not interested in depicting the suffering because, as an audience member myself, I am then debilitated by confrontations with that. What can I do with that? Also, as European white audiences, are then repelled and also not able to dialogue. However, without those men, Kiff Pipa, Eddie Chambers, Donald Rodney doing that in the first stage, I am not sure I would have had a space to do it. I am utterly grateful for their visual leap because they leapt into that arena and made a space for me not to have to approach it that way if I didn't want to. So, that's the kind of distinction I am always making work which is presupposing that there is a possibility for dialogue. And I think some of those people dealing with the subjects still fill the need to show what it was like, and I have no argument with that. However, it is simply not what I can do, and that's the sort of distinction I think between the two. (Himid 2019)

Lubaina Himid acknowledges that her work has always evoked responses that include viewers' feelings: both their own strong desires and a protective tenderness toward the sculptures and the paintings, exploring certain feelings of pain, horror, and trauma. Her approach in terms of representing trauma in contemporary arts has taken a completely different approach. In other words, analyzing Himid's art brings us to wonder how the contents, contexts, subject matters, and materials address trauma. It is equally interesting to observe the distinct representation of historical trauma in contemporary artists' depictions contrasted with representations of trauma by artists of the eighteenth century, such as Théodore Géricault.

Théodore Gericault was an influential French painter and lithographer, whose best-known painting is *The Raft of the Medusa* (1818-1819) which depicted the aftermath of a contemporary French shipwreck, "Medusa", in which the captain had left the crew and passengers to die, depicting the scene and figures in a very detailed life-size figures as entirely juxtaposed against trauma scenes displayed in contemporary art. While Gericault's painting shows explicitly what happened to the viewer, Himid has chosen to represent trauma through one hand drawn on the sea referring to the slave massacre over the Zong ship. In the same regard, Dumith Kulasekara, a visual artist, explores the themes of traumas, body,

psychoanalytical reading of art, gender, memories, and their influences and reflections on visual arts practice through his own art. In his article, “Representation of Trauma in Contemporary Arts” (2017), he explores a comprehensive understanding of the human body and psyche as a subject and content of the works produced in contemporary visual arts. His study represents a collection of contemporary pieces of art as Antony Gormely’s *Bodies at Rest* (2000), George Segal’s “The Holocaust”, (1984), Anish Kapoor’s *Silicone and Pigment* (2013), to state but a few. All these artistic works share the representation of the traumatic body either through the entire body or one “organ” as a leg or hand. A similar strategy has been adopted by Lubaina Himid’s focus on the hand which also intensifies the traumatic aspect of slavery through visualizing only one “organ” of the body. Himid’s art also articulates with these cited works raising violence, trauma, social and political turmoil. In the following section, I will reflect on the traumatic past memories that Himid’s works tries to visualize in an act of commemorating slavery and engaging with modern audiences.

#### 4.2.2 Filling the Gaps and Visualizing Trauma in Lubaina Himid’s *Revenge* (1992)

The refiguration of traumatic memory in art can be a way of restoring continuity to disrupted cultures by revisiting the past so as to help build connections between the self and the other. The communal identity individuals inherit comes in the form of narratives about the past, glories or defeats, happy events, or painful experiences. In this respect, these contemporary artworks represent a field to which communities relate and appropriate as determinants of identity. Sometimes the nature of these painful events and traumatic memories has possibilities to connect the past and the present. The connection that Lubaina Himid tries to establish lies in this interchange between herself, her ancestors, and the viewer. In her study *Writing Wounds, the Inscription of Trauma in Post 1968 French Women’s Life Writings* (2004), Kathryn Robson’s argues that it is only when the seemingly unspeakable traumatic experience can be transformed into a narrative that the traumatic event can be put in the past and the survivor can begin to recreate shattered trauma. This status is not only applicable in narratives, but also art can be transformed to unveil the silenced trauma as a form of healing. Art has provided an ongoing dialogue between these traumatic memories and the way the artist should frame them in the present and continue to provide a lively exchange

with the audience. As an artist, among others, Lubaina Himid describes the pattern of suffering from the slave massacre engaging the viewer to think differently and interact with the past.

A close glance at Lubaina Himid's *Memorial to Zong* conveys the presence of the hand as the only element clearly visible in the scene. This correlation between the body and the psyche reverberates by depicting the drowned hand as the only visible part of the body. The entire body, however, is absent in the installation which makes the hand the only visible element serving as a metaphor for the traumatized enslaved Africans' testimonies. The hand carries witness, what Caruth describes as "transmuting pain and guilt into responsibility, and carrying through that responsibility has enormous therapeutic value. It's both profoundly valuable to society and therapeutic for the individual survivor" (Caruth 138). In this respect, in their article "Art and Trauma" (1995), Dori Laub and Daniel Podell describe this approach of representing trauma in art as "essential to historical records and social awareness, often function as screen memories—consciously or unconsciously working to cover up and resist confrontation with the more inner aspects of the horror of the very atrocities documented" (Laub and Podell 996).

Himid chooses to render the body absent, as if she is referring to the idea that the entire truth is again silenced. Thus, the installation, by virtue of the artist's aesthetic methods which is marked by its omission, cannot be assimilated in its totality. This is reminiscent of traumatic memory that cannot be fully integrated, as demonstrated by Caruth in her study *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), when she states that "What was ultimately missing in trauma, not in the courage of the witness, not in the depth of their emotional responses but in the human cognitive capacity to perceive and to assimilate the totality of what was really happening at the time" (Caruth 69). The unspeakable condition of trauma represented in Lubaina Himid is also portrayed through her series of 6 canvas paintings named *Le Rodeur*, made around 2016, 2017, 2018. These canvas paintings are inspired by the tragic journey of a French ship under the same name. The ship's crew and all enslaved West Africans go blind. Consequently, similar to the *Zong!* murder, the enslaved Africans were thrown overboard because of their illness to claim insurance values. In line with this exhibition, Himid explains her intention behind such artwork:

This series of "Le Rodeur" paintings show people in dramatic situations, but in a state of the unknown; they don't know where they are, they don't know who they are, they don't know why they are there and they don't

know who else is there. A state of an absolute anxiety and trauma; for instance, if the two of us were suddenly blind, we wouldn't know where we were, we wouldn't know who else was in the room and we wouldn't even know in some sense whether anyone else was aware of us in the room. (Himid 2019)

Himid's art is conceived as a dialogue between the untold stories, silenced truth, and horror of the past as a certain form of creation and dynamic position towards the archive. When asked about her art as a response to the white agenda, the artist rejected the idea of "whiteness" as her main concern. Using the archive in order to resist and speak about the African diasporic presence in the present. To justify such a position toward the concept of "whiteness," Himid herself has said it best:

we are telling each other our stories, you can listen to those stories, but in the listening to them we all then have to take actions, because we all took part in the first place, but now we are calling the agenda, we are telling our stories, so the museum has to re-look at their archives, their holdings, the histories they are telling and help in the filling of those gaps, but it is not an opposition, it has to be a dialogue, and it is slow of course, and it is organic. But opposition produces a short-term aim, and then you are two steps forward and eight steps backward and I need for us to be steadily moving forward, so it is a dialogue and really is. (Himid 2019)

The attention Himid paid to the slave massacre is reflected on how she constructs her art and presents her diasporic African engagement with history as an African-born artist trying to uncover marginalized and silenced histories. Such engagement is vital in contemporary art which is the main aim of the contemporary female artists I have previously stated in Chapter One. Himid's art becomes a metaphor for engaging the untold stories and reproduce them through visual art to create what Alan Rice identifies in his study *Creating Memorials Building Identities* (2012) as "call and response between performer and audience" (Rice 117). The image or the painting of the past is, then, "not simply conveyed and sustained by ritual performances; it is also brought to life in the present and relived through direct embodiment and gestural repetition" (Rice 117).<sup>94</sup> However, Himid does not subjectively engage with the past, she takes a rather different position. In short, she underscores the inadequacy of memory when dealing with Blacks. Seeking with this idea of memory, in *Inside the Invisible: Memorialising Slavery and Freedom in the Life and Works of Lubaina Himid*, Celeste-Marie Bernier et al argue how Himid's Memorial is "an act of imagination" that seeks to work against the amnesia about the Black presence (Bernier et al). Himid admits her approach lies in this endeavor to "generate, in the making, a sense of being overwhelmed by the enormity of

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<sup>94</sup> Alan Rice refers here to R. Young's Study *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory and Practice*.

it all, and the impossibility of it all. I needed to punish myself, in a way, if I was going to understand how you survive beyond enslavement, even if your body doesn't survive beyond enslavement" (Himid qtd in Bernier et al). As a Black artist in Britain, Himid seeks to make her art visible. Even though her art foregrounds a form of memorialization and memorial of slavery in the present, she is mainly criticizing "how in post slavery societies racism continues to downgrade the African Atlantic arts", so that the work of Himid and her compatriots are literally "invisibilised" (Bernier et al).

In her study, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art* (2005), Jill Bennet argues that visual art presents trauma as a political rather than a subjective phenomenon. This idea of inhabitation or dwelling within the traumatic memory of slavery can be also embodied through the image. The visual has a very different relationship to affective experience, especially to experience that cannot be spoken as it is felt such as trauma experiences. In an Interview with Alan Rice (2003), Himid explains how the enslaved Africans represent "the body of the water now... they are still there and they are still contributing now, that the whole thing is a kind of cycle backwards and forwards. It's a kind of continuum" (Himid qtd in Rice 25). On the other hand, Himid considers all artistic attempts to do justice to the unimaginable tragedies and traumas of the transatlantic slave trade and the Middle Passage in either visual or textual form will fail as she clearly states in an interview with Sabine Broek and Alice Schmid "A Post-Slavery Reading of Cotton" (2015): "If you really want to make work about this subject there is no point in making purposefully ugly work—whatever that means—because the subject is already ugly"(Himid 192). In line with this visual aspect, the artist sometimes modifies her painting to make it more resourceful since she creates a "monument to waste"<sup>95</sup> by representing a jug on a plinth which she accompanies with textual fragments in which she calculates the financial profits from dead and dying enslaved people: "132 overboard at £30 each equals 1781"<sup>96</sup>. It seems important to mention that this 'recycling' practice fits with the ongoing process of transformation and metamorphosis.

Himid's intentions remain faithful to remembering the past that gives force to her use of recycling the remains of the past to engage with current matters and beyond. In line with remembering and forgetting, in his article, "Forgetting to Remember, Remembering to

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<sup>95</sup> Celeste-Marie Bernier et al, *Inside the Invisible: Memorialising Slavery and Freedom in the Life and Works of Lubaina Himid*, p.139.

<sup>96</sup> Lubaina Himid, *Sketchbooks*, n.d., n.p.



Forget: Late Modern Heritage Practices, Sustainability and the Crisis of Accumulation of the Past,” Rodney Harrison argues that:

Remembering is an active process of cultivating and pruning, and not one of complete archiving and total recall, which would overwhelm and cause us to be unable to make confident decisions about which memories are valuable and which are not...the same is true with heritage; that as a result of its increasingly broad definition, and the exponential growth of listed objects, places and practices of heritage in the contemporary world, we hazard becoming overwhelmed by memory and in the process of rendering heritage ineffective and worthless. (Harrison 582)

This draws us away from the idea that memory is passive or implied in the conservation of traces of the past on the present. Rather, as a practice of heritage, memory persists as something that we must actively and mindfully produce in conversation with the traces of the past and their specters. In other words, it means thinking actively about heritage and its role in contemporary society, and foregrounding the ways in which heritage is constantly produced and reproduced in the present. It is only through an active engagement with the present that we can produce the collective memories that will bind us to the future (Harrison 582). The idea of thinking in relation to heritage, Harrison argues, not only means making better connections between heritage and other environmental, social, economic, and political issues, but also thinking consciously and equitably about the pasts we produce in the present for the future.

This first part sought to study Philip’s controversial and provocative poem and revisualize Turner’s slave ship through Lubaina Himid’s Black art. Himid’s *Revenge* and *Memorial to Zong* evoke a modern, unconventional understanding of the status of the archive today. This dynamic status raises certain questions about the African diasporic identity and the way the past is constructed in the present. In the *Revenge* installation, the British-Tanzanian artist evokes nostalgia with her color choices. In the same exhibition, she paints the scene of the massacre itself, showing the drowning hands of Black people in the sea. Combined with the poetry, this chapter argues that this art is not simply visual representation, but political engagement, seeking to take a path for revenge, where Black women avenge those lost by simply still being alive and still being creative in spite of everything that happened. The second section of this chapter will reflect on art as a visual language of trauma envisioning the experiences of conflict and loss. This disregard for boundaries between the archive, the poetic text, and visual art allows further understanding of the past to be gleaned despite the silencing. It is also worth noting that these works make space for complex and abstract thinking about image in the eighteenth century and the legal discourse. Himid

attempts to show another reconfiguration of the archive through her response to Hogarth's *A Fashionable Marriage* in which she invents a dialogue between figures from the past and the present in a provocative approach. Her political engagement will be further analyzed in the next part of this chapter.

#### 4.2.3 Lubaina Himid Subverts Order in *A Fashionable Marriage* (1986)

One of the defining features of the modern era has been the increasing significance of the archive as a means of accumulating historical knowledge and its promise of remembrance through storing and resurfacing. Shaped as much by state organizations and institutions as by individuals and groups, the archive, as distinct from a collection or library, "constitutes a repository or ordered system of documents and records, both verbal and visual" (Merewether 10). In the premise of Derrida's "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression" (1995), that there can be no archive without "consignation in an external place which assures the possibility of memorization, of repetition, of reproduction" (Derrida 11-12), art today functions as a modern 'shelter' to the past that artists take when engaging discourses that evoke the present.

In this section, I explore further how Black artists, notably Lubaina Himid, try to destabilize the 'power of the archive' and establish new individual and collective reconfigurations of the archive. By so doing, these representations might be perceived as a powerful means to reject unethical political practices and legacies of racism. In this context, drawing on Hogarth's critique of eighteenth century society in *Marriage A-la-Mode* (1743-45), Himid's installation seems to be an indictment of British society, including the art world, in the 1980s, incorporating the figures of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. When this work was produced, Himid was at the center of the British Black Arts Movement the wider developments of which were examined in "The Place Is Here", which asked urgent questions about Black identity and cultural representation against racial tension and divisive politics.

In line with David Dabydeen's 'ekphrastic response' to William Hogarth's *A Harlot's Progress*, Lubaina Himid, reconfigures her art scenes from Hogarth's *Marriage A-La-Mode* (1743-1745), producing a large scale multi-figured installation. In her artwork Himid contextualizes the eighteenth-century British Art in a contemporary political and cultural

context. While exploring Hogarth's work in a challenging shape and placing art and history at the core of her interests, Himid involves political figures to shift power from the past to the present. Thereby, her artistic shift engenders a reconfiguration of the political aspects of art from the past into the present. To say it differently, the artist moves beyond a personal understanding of her own experience as a marginalized Black artist to represent her Black community. The way in which Himid plays with the visual archive resonates with her female activist beliefs to criticize contemporary issues of Black identity and resistance, underscores the racial intent and establishes a constructive dialogue between then and now.

In the section that follows I will explore Hogarth's enduring legacy through the lens of Turner-prize winner Lubaina Himid's *A Fashionable Marriage* (1987) and bring focus to the major modern appropriations her work has taken towards Black art. As stated in Chapter One, Himid was an active member of the Black Arts Movement in Britain among other artists such as John Akomfrah, Zarina Bhimji, Rotimi Fani Kayode, and Gavin Jantes. This movement, created in the 1980s, brought together Black, African and Caribbean artists who radically challenged the way race and representation manifested in the British society, especially in the media. It is now common to distinguish Lubaina Himid's art, locally and widely exhibited in galleries, due to its focus on themes of cultural history and Black identities.

Himid's installation under study evokes a re-staging of "The Toilette", the fourth of six scenes that comprise Hogarth's *Marriage-A-la-Mode*. It seems however important to mention that Hogarth's title is originally derived from Dryden's *Dramatick Works* in 1735, and Hogarth took up the barter of money and title<sup>97</sup>. The artist cuts Hogarth's painted figures away from the canvas to create a plastic tableau vivant of the London scene in the 1980s. She negotiates an engagement with Hogarth as a fellow artist, a satirist and a proponent of a myth of Britishness and the art histories that accrue to it. It might be unusual for modern audiences to consider how eighteenth-century art functions as a mirror for 'political propaganda', but modern appropriation uses this expression as a lens through which to question and analyze how British society was shaped by Hogarth, and juxtaposed by Himid, bringing contemporary Black British issues to the fore. In *Propaganda and Persuasion* (2014), Garth Jowett and Victoria O' Donnell defines 'propaganda' as a term associated with "control and regarded as a deliberate attempt to alter or maintain a balance of power that is advantageous to the

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<sup>97</sup> In her study *Hogarth: A Life and a World* (1997), Jenny Uglo mentions how *Marriage A-la-Mode* sounds like a comedy of manners: indeed, it was the title of a Dryden play, revived by Cibber, which appeared in Tonson's collected edition of Dryden's *Dramatick works* in 1735, with a front piece by Gerard Vandergucht (Uglo 374).

propagandist” (Jowett and Donnell 4). This definition meets with Himid’s purpose to criticize the British political power and dominance during the 1980s and maintain a balance between all powers and races in Britain. For a better understanding of the British-Tanzanian’s artist adaptation of Hogarth’s artwork, it seems relevant to give a general overview on the series of paintings and its reconfiguration beforehand.

“The Toilette” scene depicts Lady Squanderfield who is surrounded by foreign musicians, African servants, an entourage constructed by Hogarth as a sign of wealth. We find her in a conversation with lawyer Silvertongue who gave her an invitation to a masquerade. The scene depicts different aspects: a masquerade portraying the lover’s entertainment, the young African boy playing with a figure of Actaeon, a summoned spectre of the auction house when it was used as a site for the trade in both enslaved people and cultural commodities. In Himid’s Art, “The Toilette” becomes ironically *A Fashionable Marriage*, something new, yet provocative. The painted figures are cut away from the canvas and transformed into three-dimensional multimedia cut-outs creating a conversation between all the figures. Though all of the figures are accounted for, only some of the furnishings are restaged. For instance, one might note that a sofa in Hogarth’s painting has been transformed into a screen in Himid’s artwork conveying a modern digital form of the visual.

Likewise, the old Master paintings behind the lovers, allusions to Correggio’s “Lot and his daughters” and “Jupiter and Lo” on one side, and “Michelangelo’s “The Rape of Ganymede” on the other, are replaced with others in the style of late Picasso. For Himid, this gesture highlights the perceptions that link the historical and modernist canons of art together. In my analysis of Himid’s interpretation to the archive I would like to highlight two major aspects: The female Black presence and the white male representation in her artwork. Visually, Himid centers her female Black Artist in the middle of the installation in contrast to its silenced appearance in the original painting. She thereby displaces the male white figure underscoring Hogarth’s social context of sexual representation thereby rejecting the image of white male western dominance.

#### 4.2.4 The Black Artist’s Voice in Lubaina Himid’s *A Fashionable Marriage*

As previously said, Lubaina Himid transforms the historical figures displayed in Hogarth and replaces them with contemporary icons and characters. For instance, in the art

world on the left of the installation, the musicians in Hogarth's art have become a critic, a dealer and a funding body, figures that hold the keys to artistic success, and more broadly, the Western canon. At the edge of the scene are the contemporary artists: the white feminist artist, whose body is built from a set of drawers covering clear references to the work of Judy Chicago, Helen Chadwick, Susan Hiller and Mary Kelly, and a set of fashionable painters from the Glasgow school of art. Placed slightly behind the feminist artist, on the boundary of the art world and the real world, Himid spots the Black woman artist who takes the place of an African servant offering hot chocolate and biscuits to Lady Squanderfield's back-up in Hogarth's *Marriage A-la-Mode*, entirely transformed into a taller, more steadily built figure juxtaposed against the tiny portrait of the white artist. This deconstructive positioning of the Black artist woman might be interpreted as pertinent evidence for Himid's visual engagement as a female Black artist empowering her voice to be clearly and visibly heard in contemporary modern art. It is equally important to note that Himid's installations incorporate and refigure the Black woman as part of the dialogue.

Visually represented, in *A Fashionable Marriage*, the Black woman artist is placed as the central character, in contrast to her annihilated invisible appearance in Hogarth's painting. This exposes African men serving hot chocolate in a cup. Most significantly, I argue that Himid pointedly employed the two Black figures as a form of moral critique, interrogating Britain's past colonial projects and the institution of slavery. In the same vein, I would like to bring into the discussion another pertinent representation of the Black woman who is displayed in another wooden cut-out installation that she named *We Will Be* (1983). Himid depicts this artwork as "a determined, solemn, simply dressed African woman" (Rice et al., 76) whom she associates with the historical figure of Phillis Wheatley, known as the first African enslaved woman, to publish a book of poems. Coming from the perspective of a Black African woman and activist, Himid is often concerned with incorporating African figures into her visual art. This duality also conveys a powerful representation of Black women in history. In what follows, I will focus on the feminist approach of Himid as making reference to similar appropriations of source materials.

In the *Analysis of beauty, with the rejected passages from the manuscript drafts and autobiographical notes* edited by Joseph Bruke (1955), Hogarth asserts "I have endeavored to treat my subjects as a dramatic writer; my picture is my stage, and men and women my players" (Hogarth 209). More significantly, Himid's art moves beyond Hogarth's aesthetic, dramatic, pictorial, and playful nature to show how her installations function as "history

paintings, portraits, political treaties, stand ins, adverts and effigies” (Himid 9) placing greater emphasis on the contemporary Black British experience.

In her essay “How ‘The Political World crashes in on my personal everyday’: Lubaina Himid’s conversations and voices: Towards an Essay about Cotton” (2014), Griselda Pollock describes Himid’s language of art as a language of “connections, interventions, repositions, and patterns: negotiations of pasts and presents”. Her work, Pollock adds, “balances the mournful recognition of the annihilating force of racism in its everyday-but-relentless work of effacement and non-recognition, and the indomitable but tender evocations of the presence and agency of Black women” (Pollock 19). The artist powerfully creates “conversations inside a single work, conversations between the figures in her installations, conversations between paintings and places, conversations between the artist and other paintings” (Pollock 22).

The new series offered by Himid configures a modern shape of ‘reworking’ the archive, locating it firmly within the mid-1980s political context. Her interest lies in transforming and reshaping the archive to fit with the political power and corruption, in other words, she makes it alive and vivid rather than a passive representation of the past. In October 2019, during her installation *Naming the Money* in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Bordeaux, when asked about her reliance on William Hogarth’s art as a main reference in her artwork, Himid replied:

Well, Hogarth has done Black people and Britain a great favor. Although almost every image he presents of the black figure is derogatory and disgusting in many ways, he did us a favor of giving us evidence of our belonging in Britain for many hundreds of years. In those discussions where the right wing will talk about our presence in those countries as something that happened from the 1960’s, this accidental inclusion, his obsession with degrading everybody including the French (whom he is critical and very satiric about). We were here, so the British must have been over there, and the pictorial evidence, along with the clever but vicious nature of his works, allows me to do the same thing. While referring to somebody who is quintessentially British, I was able to inhabit British art history by using that work. (Himid 2019)

The artist’s reflection above explains how Hogarth’s visual representation of Blacks in his art provides a backstage for Blacks to exist in the British society in spite of the “degrading” figures he often implemented. Thus, she finds herself involved in the same way, but in a different context. As stated earlier, Himid believes her installation is a critique of the British society, involving the art world, in the 1980s, with Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan as

the countess and her lover alongside a critic and a dealer. When this work was made, Himid was at the center of the British Black Arts Movement—the wider developments of which were examined in “The Place Is Here”—which asked urgent questions about Black identity and cultural representation against a backdrop of racial tension and divisive politics. Himid’s *A Fashionable Marriage* focuses mostly on scene 4 which performs a set packed with cultural, social, economic and political details. Put it differently, the artist’s novelty not only engenders a satiric representation of British figures but also a new reproduction of Black art in which she makes visible the Black performance. For instance, the figures of servants who, as described in her 1986 Exhibition Brochure, “serve refreshments, decorate the room with their presence and witness the scene” can illustrate such visibility. The term “white scene” might allude to “whiteness”, which turned to be excluded from the artist’s vision, she herself made it clear when I asked about her insights in this regard:

this use of the word “white” is a kind of problematic, because I am not that interested in whiteness, I am interested in having conversations with black audiences, how do we see ourselves, what do we look like in the museum, how is our story being told, when we go can we see our families, can we see our sisters, if you go to an art gallery, can you see your sister, so that’s my primary thinking, of course an extension of that is the art, especially in 1980’s was no Rather than think about how to react to whiteness, I am trying to take the conversations about the everyday life of people in the African diaspora forward rather than respond to a white agenda. Of course, I am responding to a white agenda but not in opposition to it, I am trying to bring them in into filling the gap, that’s the point about this show here, it is not oppositional, we are telling each other our stories, you can listen to those stories, but in the listening to them we all then have to take actions, because we all took part in the first place, but now we are calling the agenda, we are telling our stories, so the museum has to re-look at their archives, their holdings, the histories they are telling and help in the filling of those gaps, but it is not an opposition, it has to be a dialogue, and it is slow of course, and it is organic, but opposition produces a short term aim , and then you are two steps forward and 8 steps backward, and I need for us to be steadily moving forward, so it is a dialogue and really is. (Himid 2019)

Himid shifts her interest from discussions about ‘Black-White’ conflicts to her position as a mediator between her art and her Black audience, engaging them to fill the gaps embedded in history. In the lines above, Himid explains the way her art seems more engaged with her Black community inciting them “to be steadily moving forward” against all racist rejections. Moreover, in a review of Himid’s installation labelled “At Tate Modern, Lubaina Himid Sets Us on a Theatrical Odyssey” (2021), Charlotte Janson argues how *A Fashionable Marriage*

was born out of frustration not only with the political order of the day, but also with the art world and her place within it. Her experimental ideas were hardly ever acknowledged in the political order, which is still a “full-time struggle”. According to Janson, given the indifferent response of the British press to her exhibition, Himid’s experimental artmaking is still widely misunderstood and British culture today under Boris Johnson’s conservative party resembles Thatcher’s.

The artist’s intention behind using the archive shares almost the same political intention with Hogarth, which is the similarity between the British art world and the political world of Britain at the time. For example, in the 1980s, British art stood out as something far more liberal than right-wing agendas of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. Himid looks at the representation of this black image and comments on this issue:

what is interesting in that in those two scenarios playing out, how the British art world worked in the 1980’s and how the political scenario played itself out of the 1980’s is that Black people was central to both of those scenarios, they played a different role in those scenarios but we are not going away from either of those sets of things that were happening, and everybody globally was going to have to deal with that. (Himid 2019)

This commitment to the Black image is of interest not only to Himid but also to other Black and white artists. During our 2019 interview, Himid argues how these artists “become more visible and able to speak to the political agendas of Black activists at that time”. Consequently, artists and Black activists were having theoretical and hypothetical conversations. Interestingly, Himid’s political engagement reflects a rebellious performative strategy and functions as an act of resistance to the marginalization of black voices. Relatedly, the process of claiming voice creates new silences and invisible accounts of lives all within a tentative reconfiguration of identity. Drawing on this dilemma, Vanessa Guignery argues in *Voices and Silence in the Contemporary Novel in English* (2009), “by articulating their suffering, by speaking out and speaking back, the unsung and unheard fight to come to terms with the traumas they have experienced and to reconstitute a sense of self, identity, memory and history” (Guignery 6). Indeed, the artist unravels the unspoken Black image but most importantly her intention behind using the archive stems from a political rationality that excludes and rejects textual and visual silences.

Himid’s installation arranges another pastiche of Hogarth’s painting through her satirical attack on critics, artists, politicians to underline the corruption of the British political



system. Reading the entire installation from the left generates a complete provocative configuration: Hogarth's male singer has become a vocal art critic identified by covers from Art Monthly, the flautist is painted with dollar and euro signs displaying the new global art market which has taken over from the British art market. The arts funder is literally sitting on the fence, unable to distinguish between art education or partnership funding. The two men with red lips embracing each other allude to white homosexuality in art. The fainted woman in white is replaced by a white construction displaying plates with vulvas in reference to radical feminist Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* (1974-79). Also, the Black male servant in Hogarth's painting serving hot chocolate has been replaced with a powerful confident Black woman, visibly central compared to the rest, who invaded the space and minimized all white figures. This central figure emerges in a colorful blue dress, alludes to water and the sea which can be interpreted as a visual allusion to the Middle Passage and the Atlantic slave trade.

Himid's engagement with the archive also reveals her own engagement as a female artist responding, not to whiteness but to a white agenda. On her official website, she clarifies how the most important reason behind choosing Hogarth is "to take a swipe at the seething intrigue of contemporary life in which he used the Black person to expose the shady morals of the white main protagonists"<sup>98</sup>. Likewise, in *Inside the Invisible* (2019) Himid explains how she intentionally aimed at being "rude about as many people at once as was possible in one artwork" since "the original painting mocked and laughed at everyone caught at in the perfume and vomit of eighteenth-century London; the powerful, the pompous, the pretentious and the sycophantic" (Bernier et al 50). My work, the artist adds, "lampooned famous feminist artists, art critics and journalists, mid-career male artists and indecisive funders and then compared their local antics with the world destroying strategies of Margaret Thatcher and her lover Ronald Reagan" (Rice 50). The historical, symbolic and political associations with this piece of art bring more understanding to Himid's foregrounding of her own position as someone representing the present and future possibility. From this groundwork it is no surprise that Himid continues to reference this debate in her actual artworks.

Like Dabydeen's polyphonic strategy, Himid's technical method of juxtaposition of stories and experience of paintings and patterns evokes multiplicity and rejects histories that have excluded these Black voices. In what follows, the emphasis will be put on another

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<sup>98</sup> <https://lubainahimid.uk/portfolio/a-fashionable-marriage/>.

evidence of this transforming provocative archive in the works of Himid, notably reflecting a feminist position. In Himid's *A Fashionable Marriage*, the male white body has been portrayed in a radical posture that could be understood as a feminist position.

#### 4.2.5 The Deconstruction of the Male White Body

In his study *Against Race Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (2000), Paul Gilroy argues how the history of scientific writing about the concept of 'race' has involved a long sequence of discourses on physical morphology. Gilroy explains how "bones, skulls, hair, lips, noses, eyes, feet, genitals, and other somatic markers of race", have a special place in "the discursive regimes that produced the truth of race and repeatedly discovered it lodged in and on the body" (Gilroy 35). Another relevant study addressing the question of the body in art, in her study *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science* (2004), Londa Schiebinger's demonstrates how the study of bodily components and zones first helped to focus on what she calls "the racialising gaze", connecting race with gender to better understand this interconnection between discourses of race, nation, and species (Schiebinger 24).

Drawing on these insights on the question of the male body, Himid makes her position as an artist visible through the structure of her figures that chiefly deconstruct Hogarth's painting. Such deconstruction can be foregrounded in putting sexuality into play. In other words, the scene exposes the male genitals in the picture and makes it longer. In *A Fashionable Marriage*, she has chosen a male nude that responds to Thatcher while arranging her hair. By doing so, she establishes another rebellious violation of the archival source and sheds light on the male dominance through exposing sexual connotations. In other words, the scene juxtaposing the male genitals proposes a dialogue with the contemporary viewer and raises the question of the 'white male body' on the Black art platform. The displacement of both sexual violence and corruption depicted in Hogarth's art can be portrayed in the figure of a white man holding his long genital. It seems important to note that this figure can be found in other works like *Its All in Your Head, Man* (1982), *David* (1982), *Dog man* (1982) which seem "on a continuum with the erasures and eradications of any trace of Black artistry within a white western art world" (Rice 64). According to Himid, iconographic classical sculptures

such as *David* are “sites not of creative imagining but of imaginative destruction when it comes to African diasporic histories, memories and narratives” (Rice 64).

Himid admits that her work is “satirical, and sometimes vicious, uplifting and funny, depending upon your health, your wealth, your color or your gender” (Himid 263-264). She further sheds light on her revolutionary purpose undergirding her art practice by insisting that she “want[s] to change the order of things and take back the art which has been stolen” (Himid 263-264). Clearly, the artist seeks to vindicate her art from limitation and deconstruct some order. Here, this concept of ‘order’ reminds us of Derrida’s insights on the concept of archive as a “place from which order is given” (Derrida 9). Through her art, Himid seeks to deconstruct and ‘change’ the imposed power of a social order and construct her own social order as an act of resistance against “passive detachment” borrowing Alan Rice’s expression (Rice et al., 66).

The Black British artist’s work is not only about how art can generate questions about the past, history, and ‘personify’ the archive, but a challenge to conventionally accepted order, giving a new shape and pattern to the eighteenth-century archive. The artist plays with colors, figures, icons roaming back and forth in time that engender as mentioned a new pattern, which is not only to be understood as “a design, set of instructions or shape to cut around that you use in order to make something”, but also as an “example to copy”<sup>99</sup>. The artist’s creative and dynamic interpretation of history might be understood as a way to give voice to Black art in Britain.

A central figure in Britain’s Black Arts movement of the 1980s as both artist and curator, Himid addresses issues of race, gender and class, particularly in relation to the African diaspora. In the same vein, Himid’s installation *Between the Two my Heart is Balanced* (1991) shows another form of her engagement with the archive. Her painting echoes a work of the same name by French artist James Tissot from which she entirely excludes the male figure, and recasts the two black women who are shown tearing up maps and casting fragments into the sea—a rejection of the forms of knowledge and navigation tools that have traditionally been devised and controlled by white men.

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<sup>99</sup> These definitions correspond to the meanings of “pattern” given by the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

#### 4.2.6 The Visual Aesthetics of Black Modern Art and the Archival Recycling in Lubaina Himid's Artworks

Using different materials like journals, paintings, old pictures to create her art sheds light on the notion of 'recycling' which can also categorize Himid's art with another art movement called "recuperation", an art movement involving found objects and recycled materials in Francophone West Africa that began in the late 1970s when artists created assemblage sculptures and installations to deliver socio-political commentary (Catalogue Art series 336). This aspect of recycling might be perceived as a figure of resistance to amnesia and a representation of enslaved Africans reclaiming their identities. There is an artistic endeavor to document the past and to approach history differently, further concealing than revealing legacies of slavery.

The Black British artist's archival recycling suggests another dimension, since she creatively illustrates an approach in which the archive functions as a 'physical material'. The archive is displaced from its virtual visual shelter to a physical 'touchable material', especially with her artworks which are based on high quality wood. Furthermore, on the question of 'materializing the archive', the conception of a 'new material' to display the archive is powerful when understood as involving a political space or site where "the ruins of the past, the whipping posts, the rusty slave shackles, the tattered black dolls long-buried in storage facilities—could be disinterred and juxtaposed. Sometimes this disinterment took the form of a literal excavation" (Wilson 127).

Similarly, the shift from Hogarth's painted canvas and engravings to Himid's constructed cut-outs is central to this engagement with both the artworks and with Hogarth himself as an artist and engraver. Indeed, in much the same way Himid tries to "recycle" old materials such as journals, and construct a new identity to her figures and installations. Interestingly, Himid cites several historical precedents for the cut-out figures, including their use in Britain from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, when figures of soldiers, servants, and occasionally, saints were made as visual joke covers for fireplaces, advertisements and to guard doorways. Notably, she also alludes to the cut-outs produced by American artist Alex Katz who cuts the central figure from his painting and attaches them to plywood panels creating detached figures.

We can notice that this recycling technique enables Himid to bring diverse sources—historical and contemporary, fine art and craft—together and to bear on cut-outs that she identifies foremost as paintings. The British-Tanzanian artist’s interest emanates in opening up and playing on these in between-spaces and further explored through her use of collage in the construction of the cut-outs which come to shape a sort of ‘collage’. It is relevant to relate this to Caryl Phillips’s reliance on the technique of collage in his fiction. Likewise, Phillips borrowed many passages from John Newton’s letters written to his wife, which he cut and pasted without respect for chronology. The two letters written by Hamilton are dated 10 January 1753 (when he is at sea) and 25 April 1753 (when he is in West Africa), while Newton’s letters were written before his departure from Liverpool, after his arrival in Antigua, and when he was at sea heading toward Liverpool. As a consequence, the reader experiences a narrative text where there is a collage of passages from more than a dozen letters by Newton, whose sentences have been slightly altered and reorganized.

Relevant to the idea of recycling the archive in *Fashionable Marriage*, Margaret Thatcher, known as the “Iron Lady”, a Prime Minister in Britain from 1979 to 1990 is portrayed in Lubaina Himid’s in a dress featured with newspaper extracts detailing the outcome of her legacy, her policy and everyday management. Her dress is decorated with quotations that, though taken from print media, are spoken in Thatcher’s own voice such as one that reads: “My party is very anxious to maintain good relations with immigrants”. Alongside, the clippings are drawn and painted on bananas, that in the water color are inscribed with the names of some of her administration’s controversial elements: Soweto/Botha, Libya/Reagan, Belgrano, sanction Buster, unemployment. The painted bananas themselves carry multiple meanings from the comic trope of the slippery banana peel to the Banana Republic style of neo-colonialism preserved by her government during the 1980’s. Notably, it’s her image clipped from newspapers and magazines that is repeated across the figure’s costume in the twenty-first century reworking of the figure.

The use of different materials as an emblem of mourning is greatly expanded in Himid’s exhibition, where looking at the images requires asking questions and engaging the audience in a creative dialogue between different discourses. As such, there is room for art to adapt and appropriate the archive in the present. This idea of adaptation has been further explored by Julie Sanders in her study *Adaptation and Appropriation* (2005), in which she offers different connotations as variation, version, imitation, proximation [...] palimpsest, graft, rewriting, reworking, refashioning, revision, re-evaluation” (Sanders 5). These terms

might be relevant to describe Himid's powerfully crafted visual adaptation. From this adaptation arises a form of "adoption" which is clearly seen through the continuity of relying on the archive as a source and resource. Himid engages with Hogarth both as an artist appropriated by the canon's construction of a national narrative and also as an artist interested and invested in producing her own version of the nation.

It can be appreciated that Lubaina Himid's artworks offer alternative blueprints of artistry and activism. The artist asserts that her position as an artist is no doubt to have her work challenged, analyzed and talked about, which can only empower her and extend the dialogue (Beriner, et al 57). One may also understand the artist's techniques of reshaping the visual archive as a way to reanimate forgotten images and adapt some key figures in contemporary contexts.

This chapter attempts to progress further in the question of the archive. A special emphasis was placed on Philip's lexical and visual deconstruction of the legal document. The Canadian writer of Caribbean descent takes a radical approach to poetry in *Zong!*, deconstructing boundaries and generating a very creative piece. *Zong!* is constructed out of the words of the actual court documents, but presented in an extremely fragmented way, leaving many spaces, single letters and silences. The scene of drowning is conveyed through the repetition of 'water' and the dispatching of the letter "w" developing in various ways across the poem. This approach, the chapter has argued, illustrates the inaccuracy of the archive: words within the historical archive are transformed, to the degree they seem sometimes literally meaningless, in a practice that presents a different form of meaning. Other foreign languages are incorporated in the text, involving terms referring to death and God, in Latin, French and English. This interconnectedness between the rituals of death and religion can be perceived as an homage to and a prayer for the dead.

The deconstruction of discursive canons remains a key theme in this chapter, namely the decision to disregard the constraints of classical poetic forms such as the sonnet. In *Zong!*, it is concluded that the provocative nature of this text challenges the conventions of western law and at times the English language itself, showing a sense of immediacy not present in the original legal document. The second part of this chapter has reviewed Himid's artworks that serve as 'engaging memorials to the Zong'. In the *Revenge* installation, Himid evokes nostalgia with her colour choices. In the same exhibition, the artist paints the scene of the massacre itself, showing the drowning hands of Black people in the sea. The chapter argues

that this art is not simply visual representation, but political engagement, seeking to take a path for revenge, where Black women avenge those lost by simply still being alive and creative despite everything that happened.

My research concerns the archive as constantly shifting from its 'traditional' conception to a 'revolutionary, 'performing' and 'digital' process. This revolutionary shift suggests the transformation of the latter from the material into the digital. My research follows the contemporary modern considerations of reader, viewer, and audience. Taking this insight into further consideration, I would like to focus my final chapter on the dynamic performative and performing processes certain contemporary artists employ, making use of multimedia approaches with the aim to preserve and save Black heritage. I am interested in studying the interrelations between concepts of body and sound with the archive. Determining the precise use of the term 'performance' will be at the center of the last chapter, serving as a metaphor for the dynamic process of the archive. This dynamic process evokes the complexity and interdisciplinary archival processes that fit are evoked in theatrical and digital medias.

## Chapter Five

# The Performative Archive: A Shift from the Material to the Digital

The purpose of this chapter, as indicated by its title, is to consider the performative process of the archive in literature, art, and multimedia. Precisely, the idea of the archive as a static repository of history is further explored through an examination of its processes of digitizing and performance. By prioritizing the relationship between historical records and performance practices, this chapter seeks to distinguish a new prominent ‘evocative’ and ‘provocative’ process of the archive.

Separated into three main parts, the first part entitled “Archive as Theatre,” is composed of two sections: “Staging the Archive: Performing the Trail of the *Zong* in Fred D’Aguiar’s *Feeding the Ghosts*”. The first section offers a study of each text’s theatrical elements and techniques. In the second section, “The Archive and Emotion”, I seek to examine the interconnection between the archive, emotion, language and the contemporary reader as an active participant. This perspective enables us to emphasize the interconnections between the archive, fiction and imagination. To further clarify, the fictional discourse is considered in a theatrical setting, as a space of unique emotional effect on the mind and consciousness of the reader. An empathetic engagement with history promises an increased awareness of historical injustice.

In the second part, “The Body as Archive”, I examine the way in which the body can represent and perform the archive. I take special interest in the process of performing through the body or collective bodies. In its first section, “Materializing the Spirits of the Bodies of the Dead through Durational Readings of the *Zong!*”, I focus on the transformative process of the archive and how the Black female body can be figuratively seen as a creative entity where the past, present and future are connected. Additionally, the concepts of performance and performing, materializing and materiality are further explored through a dynamic



incorporation of the archive. This section thereby aims to foreground the contemporary artistic version of *Zong!* and further reveal the hidden histories of Black experience by centering women. I draw on the multi-media dance performances and readings of Philip, considering her unsettling body movements as provoking both physical and spiritual discomfort, launching us into both material and immaterial experience. I revisit the poem *Zong!* and relate it to Philip's work for their shared 'performing aspect'. Each analysis offers new ways to consider how to transform what we know of the. In the same way that the body of the dead spiritually interacts with the living body, a spiritual tie is made to the ancestors across time and space. The body is intimately connected to water and the sea which is the focal point of the following section.

In the second section, "Materiality of the Sea/Water", I examine the sea as a theatrical setting which allows the forgotten archive to become a performed or living one. The sea suggests a cathartic release of the self from traumatic historical experiences; the self thereby re-opening to the possibility of being reconciled. As a result, the sea becomes a place of refuge and a site of heritage recovery so as to subvert amnesia. In terms of Black identity, Philip's choice to perform in the ocean can be perceived as a dual form of 'belonging' to her African roots and 'be-longing' to reveal the hidden atrocity of the past. The repetition of the sea, as a place of refuge in the process of remembering, is often revisited in Philip's performances.

The third part of this chapter, titled "Sound as Archive", considers additional creative uses of the archive. It is divided into two sections: "Joscelyn Gardner's *Omi Eborá* (Yoruba for "Spirits of the Waters"), a multimedia installation that Gardner describes in her official website in the following terms: "submerged syllables and words float up from beneath the ocean's surface while hearing haunting voices, moaning, groaning, gasping, and whispering" (2014). *Omi Eborá* engages with Nourbese Philip's *Zong!* (2008), and offers a digital version of its known text from the legal archive. The second section of this chapter, "Black Voices in Lubaina Himid's *Naming the Money*", further demonstrates Himid's innovative and modern use of audio effects to humanize her wooden figures and give them a stage to tell their own stories. Himid tries to bring the wooden Black characters and the archive's static form to life with her voice by focusing on the sound. As such, the visual and the sound effects emblemize how the archive can be dynamically transformed to allow the emergence of a creative and challenging version of the African heritage.

## 5.1 Archive as Theatre

### 5.1.1 Staging the Archive: Performing the Trial of the *Zong* in Fred D'Aguiar's *Feeding the Ghosts*

In this section, I deconstruct the assumption of the archive as a static institution by focusing on its performativity, further revealing performance and the archive as intertwined entities. The 'performing' status of the archive refers to a vivid system with a stage where live performance takes place. I briefly borrow from performance studies to serve my analysis of the methods and theatrical elements in D'Aguiar's staging of the trial of the *Zong*. Gunhild For example, Borggreen and Rune Gade's study, *Performing Archives/Archives of Performance* (2013), contributes to ongoing critical discussions of archives and mediatized recordings of liveness, of the ephemeral and its reproduction, and of performance and its disappearance. The aforementioned study underlines the connection between archives and performance. Gade and Borggreen address certain aspects of the archive like preservation, mediatization, and transformation by engaging its processes of documentation and reproduction. In their introduction, titled "The Archive in Performance Studies", they argue that: "New ways of understanding archives, history, and memory emerge and address theories of enactment and intervention, while concepts of performance constantly proliferate and enable a critical focus on archival residue" (Gade and Borggreen 9-10).

This chapter focuses on the idea of performing the archive as a process of transforming traces from the archive into hybrid representations. This study challenges the archive from within through an interrogation of "archives of performances", including moving images, and performances. I consider how performance within the archive itself destabilizes the assumed ontology of the archive. I borrow from Gade and Borggreen's use of the "performing archives", to further evoke the moment or situation where the archive becomes self-examining or a "dynamic and self-reflective medium that intervenes in and challenges its own ontology (Gade and Borggreen 25-26). The consideration of "performing archives" can also be examined in the very process of human beings creating or handling archival material. Such a processes further allude to the formative role of archives in shaping history. Human

beings become participants in its performance, and the archive's structure gives form to our thoughts and ideas.

Pursuing questions of the performativity of the archive, Heike Roms's essay "Archiving Legacies: Who Cares for Performance Remains" argues how the archive compels us to reconsider "an extended artistic oeuvre and the manner in which its remains are cared for" (Roms 36). Her study interrogates whether the archive cares for "performance's legacy/ies" (Roms 36) or not. Roms' use of legacies insinuates "somebody's legacy", whom she later defines as the artists and scholars who are constantly in the process of archiving. Dwight Conquergood shares similar preoccupations in his essay, "Performing as a Moral Act: Ethical Dimension of the Ethnography of Performance" (2003), in which he examines the diversity and unity of cultural performance as a universal human resource for deepening and clarifying the meaningfulness of life (Conquergood 134). He demonstrates how the performance of a story can inspire a sense of otherness in the audience. To this end, Conquergood's study reveals performance as an opportunity to "orchestrate two voices, to bring together two sensibilities" (Conquergood 136). To add to Conquergood's consideration, Laura Luise Schultz writes in "The Archive is Here and Now: Reframing Political Event as Theatre", on the potential of political engagement through performance. By arguing that the lived and the mediated, performance and documentation, are not mutually exclusive but interdependent in a dialectic approach, Schultz challenges the rigid dimensions. Reenactments of artworks that appear to simultaneously perform and document the original event further show the interaction between performance and documentation. Such a relationship demands a meditation on the temporality and ephemerality of performed artworks. I draw on these reflections to serve my own interest in studying the evolving process of the archive. I seek to show how the archive is performing and maintains a performative nature in both literature and visual art.

To serve my analysis, I would like to clarify my different uses of 'performing', 'performance', and 'performativity'. I predominantly draw on the definitions of "performance" and "performativity" available in Ute Berns' text, *Handbook of Narratology* (2014). To further clarify, the term "performance" in my research makes direct reference to the act of performing a play, a concert, or some other form of entertainment, the way a person performs in a play or concert. I am also aware of the use of the term as "how well or badly you do something" (*OED*). To proceed, I use the term "performing" in two ways: to carry out, accomplish, or fulfill, as well as provide audience members with entertainment (*OED*). This

“performance” makes possible a kind of “performativity” here, in direct reference to Ute Berns’: “a method of bringing out or introducing activity,” further articulated as:

Performance can take place in the real world (as in a wedding ceremony or a court trial) or it can depict fictional events (as in a theatre performance). Verbal or visual scripts can prepare the performance in playtexts and stage directions, film scripts and choreographic sketches. These may also detail gestures, facial expressions and voice. In a wider sense, the term performativity can also be applied to non-corporeal presentations, e.g. in written narratives: performativity II. Here performativity refers to the imitation or illusion of a performance. In this case, readers reconstruct the performance dimension in their minds—the performance is imagined. (Berns 370)

The sentence, “the performance is imagined”, can be related to D’Aguiar’s imaginary framework of the trial of *Zong*, by taking his text into account as a fictional reproduction of Gregson Vs. Gilbert’s case. My interest lies in the way D’Aguiar adapts theatrical elements into his text to stage this case and tell the story differently. The idea of reproducing another version of the story brings to mind what Oscar G. Brockett has remarked in *The Theatre: An Introduction* (1979) that “theatre is thought to involve some degree of storytelling or impersonation” (Brockett 5). In order to gain a deeper understanding of D’Aguiar’s process of transforming the archive into a stage production, it seems appropriate to recall the fundamental aspects of theatre that Brockett has categorized, namely the following: the audience, characters and acting, diction, and exposition. In his novel, D’Aguiar tries to piece these parts together to make a “*mise en scene*” of the trial and render his characters, once historically documented figures, to act out history. In other words, he creates a performative and performing fictional text by re-humanizing the historical figures involved in the murder. The omniscient narrator, the audience, the court, language, the overall context of theatre, the box, the gallery, the public, and the physical description of the characters are among the theatrical techniques that were used.

In the novel, the trial begins with what is known as “the exposition”, which is a crucial part of theatre and involves laying out details about the past, the characters, the setting, and the present circumstance. A character who has returned after a long absence may also be introduced in a play’s opening scene. D’Aguiar alters this aspect within the novel by introducing the characters’ identities and the court as a whole. For instance, the following opening sentences are used to signal the beginning of the trial:

THE CURIOUS MEMBERS of the public, interested parties, representatives of the two adversarial sides and the sheriff of the court announced the entrance of Lord Chief Justice Mansfield. Lord Mansfield straightened his wig and approached his pivotal position anchored high up at the back of the courtroom overlooking everyone. Before he sat he flicked his gown from under him. It fell around his legs and his chair, giving him the appearance of floating above the proceedings. He nodded to the clerk, who passed on the signal to the crowd that might resume their seats. An unexceptional crowd for what should be a conventional hearing: a party of avaricious investors pitted against a parsimonious insurer. (D'Aguiar 137)

As previously mentioned, it seems obvious to note how the trial's court opening echoes a play's opening. It serves as a visual framework to better place the story in its context. The start of the trial is framed by a legal setting, the characters' attitudes, stillness and movement, the subtle agitation of the court, and certain profound articulations and emotional expressions. Relying on these elements, D'Aguiar is suggestive of the trial's innate "*mise en scene*" to provoke a sense of really occurred in his reader. Take, for instance, the formality, the structure, and the atmosphere of the courtroom which echo the moment a judge, Lord Mansfield in this case, "took his time to tap his gavel three times on his desk and call for quiet in court" (D'Aguiar 171). On the other hand, D'Aguiar exposes Lord Mansfield's personality granting the reader access into his thoughts, desires, actions, and interpretations in this case. The British-Guyanese writer, who himself assumes the role of the narrator, contextualizes these historical figures with irony. Despite the fact that he appears to hold a significant position as a judge, Chief Justice Mansfield is depicted as an uninterested and foolish individual who gives the impression of being completely oblivious to the tragic circumstances of his case. To this end, D'Aguiar succeeds to ridicule a British legal system and criticize the past treatment of the case. Lord Mansfield's takes D'Aguiar's position by denigrating the serious case at hand. The selected excerpts below serve to shed light on Lord Mansfield's character and attitude as Chief Justice:

Lord Mansfield felt those stomach acids bubble somewhat at the restlessness in the public gallery. He eased his gavel down on his desk and it had the desired effect of silencing the court. (D'Aguiar 155)

Lord Mansfield nodded his approval. He was hungry. Things were settled in his mind, and in his stomach the juices were in a state of readiness. (D'Aguiar 169)

Lord Mansfield thought this an excellent question. Characteristically blunt and cutting. Keep that up and I 'll be early for lunch. A pleasant pheasant. (D'Aguiar 148)

D'Aguiar emphasizes Lord Mansfield's body language to reveal his thoughts, and achieves this by making repetitive reference to Mansfield's "stomach". He further incorporates the process of staging a play by depicting the trial's entire staging framework. This story procedure includes uniting the archive with various dramatic components that he re-appropriates to produce a new discourse. To put it another way, in a theatrical performance, the actors are the central focus; often-demanding protagonists to show off so as to maintain their significance in the play or scene. This dependence is further articulated by Oscar G. Brockett's reflections on the character in theatre: "A character is revealed in several ways: through descriptions in stage directions, prefaces, or other explanatory material not part of the dialogue or action; through what the character says, through what others say about him, and what he does" (Brockett 38). Borrowing this approach, D'Aguiar represents the protagonist Lord Mansfield's primarily through his psychological and moral traits.

Furthermore, Lord Mansfield's initial thoughts on this "hearing" in 1783 are limited to an insurance case in which he "wondered why all men could not approach their holdings with the humanity and common sense which he deployed towards his considerable stock himself". (D'Aguiar 138). This is the only claim made about the case. In the context of the *Zong*'s record, it appears ironic that the underwriters were the ones who first started arguing that murder might have been involved in order to avoid the owner's claim. Such an approach evokes a critique of business as commodifying human lives. Similarly, the hearing in the fictional text begins with a "calculation" of the loss, which is clearly described in the following passage: "Mr Wilkes had completed his calculation of the *Zong*'s claim. The mathematics displeased him. For each head £39. At 131 heads that was a staggering £5,109! Mathematics notwithstanding, there was something not quite right about the circumstances of the claim. Inconsistencies abounded" (D'Aguiar 141).

Lord Chief Justice Mansfield soon discards this line as dragging on a "lengthy argument", perhaps to show that it could be launched at him (D'Aguiar 139). In the historical legal case, Lord Mansfield states "this is a very uncommon case, and deserves a reconsideration. There is great weight in the objection, that the evidence does not support the statement of the loss in the declaration".<sup>100</sup> Lord Mansfield, on the other hand, has agreed to make the insurers compensate for the loss of these enslaved Africans: "there was nothing in the new account that he'd seen to alter that fact of the law regarding the treatment of stock" (D'Aguiar 170).

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<sup>100</sup> *Zong!*, p. 211.

We come to see that Lord Chief Justice Mansfield's character resonates as the material from which plots themselves are derivative. To further clarify, incidents are primarily developed through the speech and actions of another dramatic persona. In the context of our analysis, it seems appropriate to examine the characters' interrelatedness, which Brockett has categorized into three levels; the physical, the social, and the psychological. D'Aguiar gives little consideration to the first two rather focuses on the third level that shows "a character's habitual responses, attitudes, desires, motivations, likes and dislikes-the inner workings of the mind, both emotional and intellectual, which precede action" (Brockett 37). Based on the narrator's descriptions and the trial of the Zong, the reader most importantly follows Lord Mansfield's character. In his portrayal, D'Aguiar provides the reader with additional information:

Mr Drummond gestured towards the captain and crew, bowed to Lord Mansfield and returned to his seat. Lord Mansfield fought to stop his head from nodding its assent. Yet assent was what he felt, and felt hugely: if he had invested in the cargo of that ship he too would have wanted some reasonable measure to be taken to safeguard his investment. The public gallery was quiet, not liking the message but finding themselves persuaded by the man. Simon tried to be inconspicuous among them. He sat forward and shook his head vigorously, blinked back frustrated tears and squeezed the book he was holding to his chest. (D'Aguiar 144)

There is considerable evidence to show that the trial transforms as a stage on which the reader plays as its the audience and the omniscient narrator plays with the historical figures. As pointed out earlier, the reader/audience is granted full access to Lord Mansfield's physical actions or mannerisms, as well as to his thoughts, through the use of inner focalization. The following passages illustrate this technique:

But the details of the case were distasteful to him. Thinking about what he had read in preparation for it threatened to stir those awful acids in his stomach and send them climbing to his throat. He was puzzled by the size of the claim, the sheer scale of the reparations, the terrible numbers involved, and wondered why all men, could not approach their holdings with the humanity and common sense which he deployed towards his considerable stock himself. They make you profit, he thought, so protect them from harm and enhance that profit. (D'Aguiar 138)

Lord Mansfield felt irritable; he could feel—from what had just said—a lengthy argument was about to be launched at him. (D'Aguiar 139)

Taking these extracts into consideration, D'Aguiar cautiously employs words to intimate a feeling of skepticism toward his character. This may be contradictory to the way the Lord of Justice ought to act in court when handling a case. Most of the time, a Lord of Justice is

expected to act with more firmness and respect because of his significant role and position in a court. However, this is not the case here.

It is important to also mention that the use of inner focalization and heterodiegetic narrative voice generates a provocative and creative approach so as to subvert the stasis of the archive. This subversive approach seems particularly worth reflecting upon. In line with Gérard Genette's narrative theory, there are two principal types of narrators and narratives, homodiegetic and heterodiegetic. This distinction is further explained in his study *Narrative Discourse*<sup>101</sup> (1980), which is based on the narrator's "relationship to the story" (Genette 245), or whether the narrator is present or absent from the storyline (intra-diegetic or extra-diegetic). Genette investigates the "different points of view from which [...] the action is looked at" by appropriating the term focalization (Genette 161). He raises several key questions to better understand the narrative "point of view": "*Who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective?* and the very different question *who is the narrator?* —or, more simply, the question *who sees?* And the question *who speaks?* (Genette 186). Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan redevelops Genette's focalization or point of view as "cognitive, emotive and ideological orientation" (Genette 71).

Gaining insight from these narrative theories, one understands D'Aguiar's voice as determined in the quoted excerpts, providing in depth insight into the character's emotions, thoughts, and confused moments. In doing so, he invites the audience to consider his own position and accept the telling version due to his in-depth knowledge about his characters. Interestingly, he promises to make the internal and external positions of his characters in the Zong trial more dynamic and distinct from what we already know about the trial. The reader is able to "hear" and "see" the truth, which the archive frequently concealed, thanks to this paradigm of perspective or point of view. D'Aguiar's perceptions and thoughts about these historical figures are presented to the reader in a critical and subversive way. This narrative and visual "reformulation", borrowing Genette's words, prompts us to consider the new perspectives D'Aguiar offers his contemporary reader on the archive.

Furthermore, in line with the question of incorporating theatrical elements into the scene, the audience, who influences theatre through its powerful psychological impact on performers, is the fourth fundamental aspect of theatre that we can relate to here. The theatre

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<sup>101</sup> Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse, An Essay in Method*, translated by Jay. E. Lewin, Jonathan Culler, Cornell University Press, Ithaca New York, 1983.



has a unique quality thanks to this intimate interaction. In the trial, both the reader and the public gallery can be identified as the audience here. The audience's power in theatre is mentioned in Aristotle's *Poetics*. Following Aristotle's insights which dominated much of dramatic theory, the contemporary audience is no longer passive but becomes more involved in the performance practice. In light of Ancient Greek dramatic criticism, one can say that the *Zong* murder is a tragic incident that the trial tries to deal with to arouse feelings of compassion and anger. The audience's expectations and reactions are visibly marked in the trial of the *Zong* as the following excerpts further demonstrate:

The spectators applauded and cheered. (D'Aguiar 171)

Mr Wilkes turned his head away from Lord Mansfield towards the public gallery. His grip on his gown tightened. He leaned forward as if to take the members of the public into his confidence. (D'Aguiar 142)

The public gallery was quiet, not liking the message but finding themselves persuaded by the man. (D'Aguiar 144)

In theatre, the audience affects the scene through its powerful psychological impact upon performers and this idea can be also applied to the trial scene through the use of the verbs and adjectives attributed to the audience. Such phrases as "quiet" and "not liking the message" (D'Aguiar 144) allude to the emotional status of the public during this trial. To put it slightly differently, the audience becomes more involved in the story, and not only receiving and perceiving the performance, through the process of catharsis.

In keeping with the elements of theatre, the trial court's middle passage becomes analogous to the middle passage of the play, which typically consists of a series of complications. A complication, as defined by Brockett, is any new element that alters the course of the action. It could result from new information being discovered or an unexpected opposition to a plan (Brockett 33). Relying on such insights, the appearance of Mintah's diary in the novel fits perfectly into the idea of complication for it forces tension within a complex atmosphere. The following passage is most revealing of this dynamic: "The sudden appearance of this slave woman's book borne by a simple boy had added complexity and spice to an otherwise bland menu of events. Mr. Drummond sat down as if pushed off his feet" (D'Aguiar 155). Mintah's book generates "complexity and spice" to a "bland menu" that can be interpreted as a new element that produces a climax similar to what is possible in a play. In other words, within the context of theatre, Mintah's book brings to the stage a new component to increase the suspense and complexity of the trial and convey a sense of accuracy as well. It is also present in the language used to represent the trial of *Zong*, most

present in the voice of the omniscient narrator, who has greater insight into the events of the story and the motivations of each character. Throughout the trial of the *Zong*, the reader can notice the ironic language deployed, that which serves to feature D'Aguiar's 'subjective' voice and narration: "everyone was well and truly smoked in his mind" (D'Aguiar 171), "the entire court murmured its assent, leaving the council for the insurers flustered [as] Lord Mansfield nodded his approval" and "He was hungry. Things were settled in his mind, and in his stomach the juices were in a state of readiness" (D'Aguiar 1997, 169). The narrator's involvement can be further traced below:

Had the captain done nothing The *Zong* would this moment still be on the high seas operated by ghosts with a stock of ghosts. He was certain of that. The sick stock in the hold were each day adding to their numbers as more slaves fell ill. Many of the slaves who were not afflicted begged the crew to do something to save them from the same fate... They had got lost at sea. Weeks had been added to the voyage. Food and water would soon be rationed. How were they to care for so many sick without a doctor and with a depleted crew? There were barely sufficient hands to operate the ship. Some days the wrong sails stayed up because there wasn't a man to bring them in. The rigging became a tangled mass of knots like a head of hair that had been left uncombed for a long time. (D'Aguiar 149)

Mr Drummond, the counsel for the investors, rose from his chair and despite his bulky frame stepped lithely round his desk to occupy the space just vacated by his counterpart, in front of Lord Mansfield's high seat. Mr Drummond, despite his accent, spoke poetry to Lord Mansfield's ears the moment he began to present his argument. (D'Aguiar 143)

Mr Wilkes kept his pointed face aimed at the public gallery in response to the many expressions of assent to his argument that came from it. Then he trained his gaze on Lord Mansfield and bowed his head to indicate that he was finished for the time being. Lord Mansfield shifted in his seat and scratched his left temple very slowly while staring impassively at Mr Wilkes. (D'Aguiar 143)

Mr Drummond gestured towards the captain and crew, bowed to Lord Mansfield and returned to his seat. Lord Mansfield fought to stop his head from nodding its assent. Yet assent what he felt, and felt hugely: if he had invested in the cargo of that ship he too would have wanted some reasonable measure to be taken to safeguard his investment. (D'Aguiar 144)

The reader is brought into a better understanding of the character's hidden intentions and thoughts thanks to these various passages, which display the narrator's differing interventions. It could be interpreted as a fictional strategy to stir the reader's emotions and bring attention to the injustice in this legal case as if D'Aguiar's fictional text is meant to honor the Africans who were sold into slavery. The reader consequently sympathizes with the victims since the law did not grant them justice and only treated this case as a commercial insurance matter rather than a murder. In this way, the reader is thought to approach the text from a human

perspective and to be reminded of the inconceivable cruelty and injustice of slavery. *Feeding the Ghosts's* narrative techniques offer the reader a clear vision to make his/her judgment in terms of historical and legal archives. This dynamic allows for a shift from the historical injustice of the event to the possibility of justice by dealing with historical silences in fiction. Accordingly, this reminds us of what Elisabeth Kowalski Wallace puts: “telling/narrating/making stories becomes a meaningful way to make meaningful transracial connections” (Wallace 123). D’Aguiar further explains that, visually, as a *mise en-scene*, this scene not unlike a play, reshapes the archive, because it tells an untold story to be acted out loud. Taking the trail into account as an actual historical event further inquires about the nature and status of the archive that documented it. By re-staging the historical event as a fiction, D’Aguiar invites us to consider the power of fiction to re-write the archive and re-produce history.

The *Zong* trial ends with the court decision to exonerate Cunningham and the crew of their murder. D’Aguiar further criticizes the injustice of the case closure by drawing attention to the innocence of Cunningham. In the legal case central to *Zong* African humanity is further silenced, rendering the narrative as a critique of slavery as well as of Captain Cunningham’s and Lord Mansfield’s inhumane treatment of enslaved Africans. Historically speaking, this is not a murder trial, but rather a hearing in which the insurers are asked to hold ship investors accountable for the jettisoning of enslaved Africans and demand their compensation. Paradoxically, Mintah’s diary, which was produced as a piece of evidence of what actually occurred on the ship, is discarded as “a fabrication by the insurers” (D’Aguiar 168), whereas the captain’s ledger is examined as a detailed record of his economic losses.

The *Zong* murder continues to gain more attention on various platforms. For example, originally broadcasted on Radio 3 on March 21 by News Team, published on March 19, 2021, Giles Terera’s “The Meaning of *Zong*”<sup>102</sup> on BBC Radio, reads as an Olivier winning play on the *Zong* murder. Terera’s play explores a watershed moment in the campaign to abolish the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Developed at the National Theatre Studio and Bristol Old Vic in 2018, it tells the story of the discovery of the massacre of 132 enslaved Africans aboard the slave ship *Zong* in 1781, and the impact it had on the pioneering abolitionist, Olaudah Equiano. In *The Transatlantic Magazine*, Terera states:

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<sup>102</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVovozwHHBA>.

I wanted to tell this story because it explains how we all arrived at the Britain we are living in today. It explains why people feel the need to pull statues down. We can better understand where we are by acknowledging how we got here. And we can understand where we're going by understanding where we've been...It is a difficult subject but the best stories, though they can be the hardest to face are often the most rewarding. (Terera 2021)

Performing the *Zong* story on both the eighteenth and late twentieth-century stages suggests another gaze at history and the way it still impacts our present particularly when similar injustices take place. This reconfiguration evokes emotional understanding from the contemporary reader. D'Aguiar gives their voices back to historical figures and rehumanizes them through their discourses, gestures, and emotions. Representing the trial scene in the empathetic space of theatre, D'Aguiar attempts to re-connect with an imposed historical archive while giving voice to those it had silenced.

### 5.1.2 The Archive and Emotion

This section studies the impact of the transformed archive on the reader/audience's emotions. These emotions are visibly those of remorse, empathy, sympathy, grief, and anger. The chapter's focus is thereby attributed to fiction and how it emotionally affects a reader in through interaction. Fiction, like the archive, can encourage recognition of the atrocity behind the case of the *Zong* trial. D'Aguiar's trial court scene provides an emotional re-working to engage the reader in the understanding of the past, while at the same time, remaining intimately linked to the present and the future. This interconnection between the archive and the future reminds us of Derrida's statement about the nature of the archive as "a pledge" (Derrida 18). According to Derrida, the archive "is not a question of the past [...] It is a question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow" (Derrida 27). The archive carries a notion of openness towards the future that enable us to understand the past in the present.

In keeping with the idea of the emotions that could be engendered by interacting with the archival text, in the *Gerald Aylmer Seminar* "Archives are places for feeling things" held on the 29 April, 2016 at the Institute of Historical Research (IHR), Carolyn Steedman shares her experience of reading William Murray's notebooks, written as the first Earl of Mansfield (1705-1793), while carrying out his role of Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench. Steedman

has argued that “archives are places for feeling things”, where researchers can experience an intensely close, even physical connection to past lives—in her case, hearing echoes of words spoken in court and transcribed in Mansfield’s notebooks in fragmentary form.<sup>103</sup> Similarly, in *the Pragmatics of Fiction, Literature, Stage and Screen Discourse*, Miriam A Locher and Andreas H. Jucker (2021), mention that in fiction, “emotions are discursively constructed, they are created and put on display for an audience, and there are two ways of doing this in fiction” (Locher and Jucker 178). The first way constitutes in a “telling” mode of presentation, in which the narrator is in control and tells us what is happening, while the second is a “showing” mode of representation, in which the reader experiences the fictitious events as an observer. Actors, Locher and Jucker state, use their craft to convey emotions in performed fiction. They play characters and demonstrate to us how these characters “experience and display emotions” (Locher and Jucker 178).

Equally important, in his article “Language and Emotion in Fiction” (2017), Andreas Langlotz points out that “creators of fictional discourse can activate emotional displays to index the emotional experiences of their protagonist. Through these semiotic constructs alone they may arouse complex processes of emotional interpretation in their audience” (Langlotz 520). In fictional discourse, Langlotz has attempted to address the concern of emotions and their nature, as described here:

When we consume fictional products like books, films, comics, videogames, and others, we are usually moved by them in some way or another. Beyond the cognitive level of understanding what is going on in a story, we tend to emote. Intuitively, we can sense the omnipresence of emotions and the impact that they have on us. Therefore, few people would deny the pervasiveness of our emotional engagement with fiction. However, it is considerably harder to capture scientifically what emotions are, how they function, and how fiction manages to move us. (Langlotz 517)

Such insights are intriguing to the degree that they hint at a communication process embedded in the official text. The fictional text suggests a copy of the legal archive as a transformed stage for a play. Additionally, the reader experiences a variety of emotional states as a result of this transformation process. Consequently, an open interaction between the writer and the

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<sup>103</sup> In The National Archive blog, Emma Jay has commented on the Gerald Aylmer Seminar “Archives are places for feeling things” held on April 29<sup>th</sup> 2016, at the Institute of Historical Research (IHR). The seminar has focused on the theme of archival experience and how this has changed over time. She further referred to Carolyn Steedman’s individual experience of reading and hearing the notebooks of William Murray, who was the first earl of Mansfield and how does that impact her feelings as a reader and a researcher.

reader is foregrounded through the literary text itself as the literary text, in Locher and Jucker's terms, must be "re-created by the reader" (Locher and Jucker 2). Fiction is thereby reconsidered within a theatrical context that leaves an emotional impact on the reader's mind and consciousness.

In favor of our analysis, one can distinguish narrative techniques from narrative voice in the work of D'Aguiar, as he disguises them so as to manipulate the reader's emotions and gain his/her empathy. These emotions might be further resonated in two forms: Empathy, which is defined as "a form of emotional understanding in which the recipient feels the same emotions as the person that he/she observes" (Panalp 64-65). Another type of emotional comprehension appears to be sympathy. Empathy emerges as another form of emotional understanding. While we can appreciate the emotions that another person is feeling and understand the reasons for the emotional state, we do not adopt the same emotional state but keep our distance and have our own feelings about the given situation. D'Aguiar implicitly conveys his impressions of the characters while assigning the task of judgment to his reader: "Simon was protected on the *Zong* from all types of abuse from the slaves, who knew his simple mind straight away. He was cared for on the *Zong*. He gained a family where he had none. Look how he repays everyone. This is the thanks we get for taking him off the streets of Liverpool" (D'Aguiar 160). In the preceding excerpt, Simon introduces the voice of one of the white crew members who, like the other crew members, mistreated and tortured the enslaved Africans aboard. D'Aguiar additionally represents the lucidity of his character's emotions through their gestures as seen below:

Captain Cunningham looked at Mintah and his eyes widened. He seemed to be noticing her for the first time that day. She was lying on the deck and her head was cupped in the crook of the arm of the young man chained to her, keeping her head just above the rainwater on the deck. Her mouth was open and her body shook but there was no sound of crying. There was too much rain on her face to discern tears. (D'Aguiar 129)

Kelsal grimaced as if struck unexpectedly on the back of the neck. (D'Aguiar 129)

Klesal [...] raised his eyebrows and turned down his mouth and retreated to the shelter of his piece of canvas. He gripped his ledger under his arm and clapped a couple of times. This had the desired effect of getting the crew to look in his direction. (D'Aguiar 130)

The crew dragged themselves to their feet and shuffled over the captain. (D'Aguiar 130)

Here, D'Aguiar returns to the different aspects, gestures, emotions, and visual images of Mintah, the enslaved African woman who almost died. The complex emotions and gestures

are juxtaposed to grant the reader a moment to imagine and reflect on the past setting himself/herself in the place of Mintah as a victim of slavery. In the twentieth century, Mintah might be symbolized differently to meet with contemporary issues of immigration and refugees.<sup>104</sup> Despite this, the narrator fuses himself sometimes with the reader through the use of the personal pronoun “we” which adds to engage the audience and the reader in a process of memorializing the Zong ship. D’Aguiar continues to influence the reader with his characterization of Captain Cunningham in the following passage when he is in the witness box:

Captain Cunningham entered the witness box to speak, but his voice foundered on the sandbar of his emotion and was lost. Words did not fail him, those were available to him in bountiful supply; but what left him speechless was a sudden constriction in his throat and a feeling of a tremendous weight on his chest. He thought himself a man more sinned against than sinning. Perhaps he had done wrong, but what was being done to him there and then in that courtroom was more wrong still. As captain of the Zong he had been given a command. Certain laws were in place to help him, he believed, in this governance. Yet there in the court those laws were being denied him. He felt he was now left without the very support that guided his actions in the first place. (D’Aguiar 163)

D’Aguiar ironically encourages the reader to judge the captain’s actions in the preceding passage. He makes a veiled reference to the absence of the law, which is supposed to shield the captain from any losses caused by the slave trade. D’Aguiar further describes Captain Cunningham’s possible miserable appearance during his testimony. He adds that the fact that all the testimonies “vindicated him” explain his intention (D’Aguiar 163). In addition to shaping Captain Cunningham’s immorality and corruption, D’Aguiar’s ironic tone does not only shape the immorality and corruption of Captain Cunningham but also propel the reader and audience to ‘see’ and ‘hear’ the truth:

He’d made the sea his bed, a deck his pillow. Dreaming of the sea more nights than he cared to recall when on land, and crying himself awake for its absence. All of what? These insults [...] Why had the honorable Lord Mansfield allowed this spectacle to run for so long unchecked? While he

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<sup>104</sup> It is sometimes relevant to find out certain fictional figures who resemble or can relate to our realities; Mintah, can be foregrounded in another contemporary figure of a modern journey of Little Amal, a giant puppet representing “a refugee child on an EPIC journey”, a Syrian refugee girl who travelled across eight countries in four months carrying the message “don’t forget about us”.<sup>104</sup> Her performance which is entitled *The Walk* (2021) is an artistic response: a cultural odyssey transcending borders, politics and language to tell a new story of shared humanity—and to ensure the world does not forget the millions of displaced children, each with their own story. This provocative walk proved able to touch the audience who mostly greeted her with smiles and followed her path of hope and survival.

had made modest gains as a captain in the trade he had made men like Lord Mansfield very rich. He was repaid with insults. He was astounded. And though he hadn't intended to, as he got to his feet the entire morning's proceedings had made the blood rush into his neck, tightened his throat, quickened his heart and pressed on his chest, and he wept, unable to open his mouth. Not only wept but could not bring his body under control. Could not open his lips; relax the clenched muscles in his jaw; speak. (D'Aguiar 165)

The reader still hears D'Aguiar's voice, suggesting a fictional conversation through which the truth can be revealed. The narrator's explicit agony, anguish, and rage toward these involved historical figures can be distinguished in the preceding passage. To put it another way, Lord Mansfield and Captain Cunningham were accused of actively participating in the slave trade. Being committed in this murder, D'Aguiar writes, Captain Cunningham, "could not open his lips, relax the clenched muscles in his jaw; speak" (D'Aguiar 165). Ironically, Lord Mansfield can "[make] a man think [s], and thinking always [makes him] hungry" (D'Aguiar 167). We might, as readers of the scene, put ourselves in the shoes of the narrator and stand against Captain Cunningham's decision to throw the enslaved Africans overboard. One can relate to how the language serves as a mediator to elicit feelings of empathy and rage while the narrator stages the archive for his readers and audience. A deeper emotional and affective connection is therefore brought into its archival history.

This idea of judgment reminds us of Mungo, in David Dabydeen's *A Harlot's Progress*, whose narration clearly defers to the reader's judgment; "But You, my sympathetic reader, will judge whether I serve Captain Thistlewood faithfully by presenting him as good and loving master; or whether my slavery to him is an act of self-mutilation, like the pauper's, or whore's or urchin's" (Dabydeen 75). Drawing on such instances, one can perceive how the narrator establishes an interconnection between the reader, the fictional text, and the archive. As opposed to the misconception that the archive can only be understood as a stored document, here the narrator gives it greater performativity and makes it a stage from which he connects with the reader. As such, the archive is transformed to be "formative in shaping history and thus perform human beings, structure and give form to our thoughts and ideas" (Borggreen and Gade 10). Theoretically speaking, Brecht's work as a playwright and a theorist is clearly relevant to any investigation of audiences. Along with his efforts to reactivate the exchange between the stage and the audience, his investment in the power of theatre to bring about social change have had a widespread and profound impact not only on theatre itself but also on its critical reception. In his study, *Understanding Brecht* (1998), Walter Benjamin addresses the concept of the audience as follows:



A double object is provided for the audience's interest. First, the events shown on stage; these must be of such a kind that they may, at certain decisive points, be checked by the audience against its own experience. Second, the production; this must be transparent as to its artistic armature. Epic theatre addresses itself to interested parties 'who do not think unless they have a reason to'. Brecht is constantly aware of the masses, whose conditioned use of the faculty of thought is surely covered by this formula. His effort to make the audience interested in the theatre as experts—not at all for cultural reasons is an expression for his political purpose. (Benjamin 15-16)

The idea of the audience seems inscribed in the process of theatre and the archive. By setting up this metaphoric visualization, both readers and spectators might share certain feelings and emotions<sup>105</sup> that respond to their reality and influence how we relate to each other. This connection can be further interpreted as an expression of creativity, one that can lead us to think of a literary text as a response to other artistic disciplines.

At the end of the trial, Mintah describes her survival scene, which evokes her mixed feelings of fear of death, and uncertainty to survive, a frozenness, ("the sea froze hard as wood"), body resistance ("her throat moved against the rub of that funnel", "her face, her neck, and wiped her dry with swift strokes"). However, the others in her African community eventually save Mintah:

Other hands, softer hands, passed long her arms, lifted her into space, splashed water over her and soaped her skin, washed under her arms, her face, her neck, between her legs, and wiped her dry with swift strokes, and laid her softly back on the planks smelling of vinegar. These hands stroked her hair until her eyes watered and rolled back in her head and her tongue fell to the back of her palate and her jaw slackened. And still the hands were there accompanied by voice that were soft and near, uttering a name she knew belonged to the body that was touched, lifted, washed, dried, positioned on its side and stroked to sleep. (D'Aguiar 133-134)

The metaphor of the Black community being a savior is frequently used in Caribbean literature. Although D'Aguiar does not make it clear whether these hands belong to the enslaved Africans on board the ship, these hands in Mintah's survival scene may also be taken as the ghosts of the ancestors who were lost in the sea. These strong communal ties represent a visible rejection to all sorts of disruption, displacement, and separation. This conception stems from D'Aguiar himself, who resists racism living outside of the Caribbean and is still

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<sup>105</sup> In a metaphorical sense, Mintah's appearance and the conclusion of the *Zong* trial correspond to Little Amal's Arabic meaning of 'hope'. This name echoes a sense of revival and survival, suggesting a message for the future. Both Mintah and Amal, represent fictional and artistic representations that serve to reflect upon literatures and art's power of evocation, which precisely make readers and spectators connect what they read and personal experiences.

interested in Black history. In this traumatic journey, the narrator reminds the reader of the strong sense of solidarity and bonding among Africans. In terms of the narrative, it is important to note that Mintah's survival scene depicts a sense of duality; "she had a back and a front [...] also there was an outside and an inside to her" (D'Aguiar 134). It seems that this duality refers to a similar duality as in death/life or remembering/forgetting. Today, the fictional journey of Mintah from death to life in the sea echoes the daily journeys of thousands of people who attempt to cross the Mediterranean. The fictional text may appear to offer a revisionist perspective on history on the surface; however, in reality, it offers a critical perspective on both the present and an unknown future.

Despite the fact that there is literally no inspiration when dealing with slavery, contemporary writers are attempting to wipe out all traces of trauma and transform them into contemporary representations that are more engaged and dynamic. This idea will be further investigated in the way in which NourbeSe Philip has attempted to recover the spirits of her ancestors and commemorate their memories by bringing the spirits of the dead to life and embracing the idea that the body played a crucial role in the history of the Atlantic slave trade. To empower African history, Philip suggests looking at and apprehending differently the trauma of the past through the body.

## 5.2 The Body as Archive

### 5.2.1 Materializing the Spirits of the Dead in NourbeSe Philip's Durational Readings

The ambiguous and hybrid nature of the body, as emphasized in the performance of *Zong!* enables the performance to embody both resistance and healing in relation to the trauma of slavery and the construction of Black identity. Performing the archive through dancing, most significantly by Black female bodies, offers an ethical and spiritual appeal to modern viewers to participate in such performance and commemorate past events. There is an array of symbols, metaphors, and emotions used to talk about the Black female body. The Black female body can be perceived as a place where the past, present, and future are connected. The very notion of performance and performing, materializing and materiality are

underlined in the study of this performing process of the archive. Here, I explore how this process of revisiting the archive leads to another process of performing it. Philip's playful use of the body to create an unsettling movement suggests a connection between the spiritual and the physical.

In performance studies, the study of the connections between performance making and the archive is largely neglected. Despite the fact that Diana Taylor, Helen Nicholson, Maggie B. Gale, and Ann Featherstone, among others, have written about the theoretical nuances of working with the archive, a more in-depth examination of the various dimensions of the relations between performance and the archive is required due to the specific contexts of performance practices and their emerging nature. In Philip's performance, as the dancer moves through a variety of eras and locations, the body's lived realities continue to accumulate layers of archival knowledge. As it continues to archive and draw on not only the movements and emotions but also the performance history and its journey, such a body naturally has an inevitable and tense relationship with historicity. In our context, Philip seeks to recreate and re-perform certain memories through performing the archive, creating continuity between herself and her ancestors.

Philip has previously approached the idea of the body as performative most notably in her work *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks* (1989), through which she underlines the complex relationship between the language and the body. This complexity is also manifested in her poem *Zong!*, in which she subverts the English language leading to her inability to read it. As a result, Philip relies on performance and oral transmission. In a similar vein, in her article "To 'Heal the Word Wounded': Agency and the Materiality of Language and Form in M. Nourbese Philip's *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks*", Brenda Carr studies the interventions a poetic text might make into our disciplinary truths about the relations between language and corporeality. In this regard, Philip notes:

That body might become tongue  
Tempered to speech  
And where the latter falters  
Paper with its words  
The crack of silence;  
That skin become  
Slur slide susurrations (Philip 98)

Philip describes the African body as a distinct entity that merits celebration. In addition, she writes in another essay entitled "Managing the Unmanageable", continuing with the image of

the African body: “body, text, history, and memory-the body with its remembered and forgotten texts is of supreme importance in both the larger History and the little histories of the Caribbean. I believe this to be one of the reasons why the body erupted so forcibly and with such violence in the text of *She Tries*” (Philip 298-299). While the terms “body”, “text”, “memory”, and “history” all bring to mind key aspects that the research aims to investigate, in this section, I suggest focusing on Philip’s provocative and interactive *Zong!*’s readings in which the Black female body is depicted as an emblem of freedom, reconciliation, living, resistance, and celebration of her Black heritage. The complexity of her text demands to be performed through the body to encourage her envisioned visual and spiritual experience. To restate, Philip’s hybrid text is often performed in and through the Black female body as a means of bringing the spirits of the dead to life, connecting with the ancestors, and recovering from trauma.

In line with the idea of the body as often embedded into *She Tries her Tongue, her Silence Softly Breaks*, Philip explains that there was a profound eruption of the body in the text and “That body should speak/ When silence is/ Limbs dance/ The grief sealed in memory;” (Philip 142). These lines challenge our perception about the efficiency of the body to speak the truth and perform the silence left in history. Important to mention, her concern for the body develops around her reflection, which fully mirrors her feminist position and her engagement with Black identity. Through the body, Philip fills the gaps of the archival text to reconstruct a ‘performing’ Black heritage. By performing her text, the body becomes a medium to convey for her political and cultural movements and draw attention to the racial injustice Black people have experienced in the past.

In a reading in the spring of 2015 at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto, Philip performed selected passages from *Zong!*<sup>106</sup>. She began her performance by slowly entering the room and ringing a bell, dressed in all white and accompanied by a percussionist. While slowly moving into the room, NourbeSe Philip begins with a reading of *Zong!*#15 and before reaching the poem’s end, she repeats the first line “defend the dead”, nine times. This intimate performance was well received and celebrated at the time of its presentation, and engaged the

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<sup>106</sup> Excerpts of *Zong!* readings, durational readings and performances 2013-2015 are accessible online following this link <https://youtu.be/zLIUFzrhyAg>, (Performance 2013-2015).

Excerpts of *Zong!* performances at the Royal Ontario Museum, Miami and 2016 Durational reading. Includes names from *Zong!* projected onto the night sky over west Africa in November 1871: (<https://youtu.be/0jxc5D44WXM>).

All her performances are available in her official you tube channel following this link (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCx2eYgKXXb6Xv9qvw-nMrwg/featured>).

spectators in a powerful feeling of unity. This connection with the spectators proves how Philip no longer has an individual experience with the archive but rather a collective one that she insists on sharing with others. In addition, in terms of her text, her performance reveals great innovation, such as the repetition of particular lines and allusions to African names that she often feels necessary to bring into the room.

The dynamic practice of transforming her text into a live performance produces a sense of alliance between the word/language and the body, which brings us to reflect upon the language or the speech that the body seeks to transmit. Consequently, the body here encodes what Merleau-Ponty referred to as the “verbal image”<sup>107</sup>. In our context, the body produces a coherent language, which helps to dispel the ‘aphasic’<sup>108</sup> impression that the poem might have given at first glance; all the words are shattered, fragmented, and repeated, and the structure seems difficult to understand without knowing where it comes from. Thus, the body might give a meaning a fragmented non-linear text. This is like the archive, for it is transformed into a visual structure that can be visibly seen rather than strictly read.

Moreover, the body, most significantly the Black female body, incarnates the power to connect the material with the spiritual. The poet’s and other female performers’ body movements create harmony, ensuring individual and collective memory transmission. To put it another way, the body connects with the past in order to reconnect with the present and, most likely, the future. Performing *Zong!* in the sea can be visualized as an attempt to connect with the dead, honor the ancestors, open a path to the poet for healing and reparation from the trauma of the past. The poet herself provides a more solid foundation for this concept of connection, as she explains in “Our stories: In Conversation with Marlene NourbeSe Philip” conducted by Chelsey Monie, that each time she performs *Zong!* she feels connected with the spirits as if some forces are giving her something to move forward<sup>109</sup>. These forces might be interpreted as the ghosts of the ancestors who keep haunting her. In this regard, Jacques Derrida’s essay *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (1994), describes this concept of “hauntology” as follows:

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<sup>107</sup> I used Merleau-Ponty’s term to speak about the language expressed by the gesture which stemmed from our body.

<sup>108</sup> In a different context, Merleau-Ponty speaks about the theory of aphasia in the process of articulating the words. The individuality of the ‘verbal image’ was, indeed, dissociated: what the patient has lost, and what the normal person possesses, is not a certain stock of words, but a certain way of using them” (Translated by Collin Smith 203).

<sup>109</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LyPgUZ31Izc&t=1210s>.

It is something that one does not know, precisely, and one does not know if precisely it is, if it exists, if it responds to a name and corresponds to an essence. one does not know: not out of ignorance, but because this non-object, this non-present present, this being-there of an absent or departed one no longer belongs to knowledge. At least no longer to that which one thinks one knows by the name of knowledge. One does not know if it is living or if it is dead. (Derrida 5)

In line with Derrida's concept of the ghost as an entity whose nature challenges definitive knowledge, Philip believes that she clearly knows and feels the presence of her ancestors whenever she performs. In this way, the act of performing takes her back to her African roots and introduces her to the cycle of life, which is the movement of the bodies of the dead that are connected to the living bodies. Through these performances, the boundaries between past, present, and future and the borders separating identities were flattened using both a redefinition of space and place, and a relocation of heritage.

Such themes are also present in Philip's performance entitled "Living Memorial for the victims of the *Zong* massacre" held in Historic Virginia Key Beach Park in October 2018<sup>110</sup> seems to perfectly fit the core idea of the performative body as a powerful embodiment of the archive. This powerful body figuration is further invoked in this performance, precisely, when considering the setting, which is the sea, the poem has taken another material shape. It is notably Philip's association of her text with the sea that reconstructs history and provides a site of reflection, healing, and reparation by allowing the present generation to experience the atrocities of the past. In her article "Poetics of Restitutions in M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!*" (2016), Laurie R. Lambert describes this symbiotic association as a "poetic[s] of reparation" (Lambert 108) and demonstrates that Philip's poems are primarily "poems of repair, meant to account for and counter the archival erasure of black life by creating textual and oral spaces in which erasures are acknowledged" (Lambert 110). Taking into account that the majority of enslaved Africans drowned in the sea, Philip performs her poem on the ocean providing her audience with a location of the archive or what Lambert has depicted as "leaving a mark" (Lambert 111). By doing so, Philip seeks to bring the archive back to life and continue the role of African-Caribbean woman who preserves memory and history.

Visually, while performing the poem on the seashore, it seems appropriate to focus on the body movement and its water immersion. This immersion might evoke certain emotions of sorrow, pain, fear, and resistance at the same time. In these performances, the perception of

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<sup>110</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0jxc5D44WXM&feature=youtu.be>.

the body as a source of pain is given a new dimension. As both a visible resistance on its own terms and a celebration of Black heritage, the body conducts a critical assessment of and accounts for what Saidiya Hartman has coined “the pained bodies”. To illustrate, in *Scenes of Subjection* (1997), in her chapter “Redressing the Pained Body Toward a Theory of Practice”, Saidiya Hartman examines the body as a source of pain and how the practice of dancing embodies “innocent amusements and harmless pleasures as a central strategy in the slave owner’s effect to cultivate contented subjection” (Hartman 49). According to Hartman, the slave owner used dancing as a means of introducing the promise and possibility of releasing the pained constraints placed on the captive body. Such a practice, as Hartman describes, develops into “the ambivalence of pleasure and its complicity with dominative strategies of subjection” (Hartman 50). However, in Philip’s performances the body proves its possibility to go beyond all sorts of subjection into a conceptual space of emancipation.

In Philip’s liberatory readings, the Black female body is reconsidered as a form that is steady, free, and devoid of pain. As such, the politics of pain have evolved into a powerful and visible presence and an instrument of resistance against a suffering body. Borrowing Hartman’s terms, the performance becomes “a practice of resistance”. As mentioned above, in terms of engaging with the other, Philip attempts to offer much more room for the other, the emancipated woman, to be more visible and to embrace the politics of reviving the past. The sense of sharing this pain of the past can be conceived as “the history that hurts—the still unfolding narrative captivity, dispossession, and domination that engenders the black subject” (Hartman 51).

Cultural meanings further inscribe the body as an active process of expressing certain historical possibilities. Philip’s performers are notably all Black women. To draw on Judith Butler, “the body is not merely matter but a continual and incessant “materializing of possibilities” (Butler 521)<sup>111</sup>. Philip’s work can be perceived to honor Black women and encourage a new representation of the Black female body as a historical concept and as a realizable space of possibility. One of these many possibilities is found in the location of female body in the center, as in the majority of Philip’s durational readings<sup>112</sup>, in order to dominate the space and empower the Black female body. She gains strength and resistance to racism and rejects marginality from the center. Visualizing the performance, one can see how

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<sup>111</sup> Judith Butler “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory”, p. 519-531.

<sup>112</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zLIUFzrhyAg>.

the African dancing movements depict an emancipated and unrestricted woman. In keeping with the Black body, Brenda Dixon Gottschild, an African American cultural historian, performer, choreographer, and anti-racist cultural worker, describes it as a “polycentric body” (Gottschild 44). In the following lines, she further reflects on the idea of centrality in the Africanist body movements:

Africanist dance idioms show a democratic equality of body parts. The spine is just one of many possible movement centers, and it rarely remains static. The Africanist dancing body is polycentric. One part of the body is played against another, and movements may simultaneously originate from more than one focal point: the head and pelvis, for example. It’s also polyrhythmic (different body parts moving to two or more rhythms simultaneously) and [demonstrating] privileges flexible bent-leg postures that reaffirm contact with the earth, sometimes called a ‘get down pose’. The component and auxiliary parts of the torso, of course- shoulder, chest, rib cage, waist, pelvis-can be independently moved or articulated in different directions. (Gottschild 44)

The dancing moves encompass a comprehensive verbal and physical awareness that promotes harmony between oneself and the other. In a similar vein, one can recall a similar scene from Fred D’Aguiar’s *Feeding the Ghosts* in which Mintah describes the enslaved Africans dancing as “dances of freedom” and recognizes herself in the body of another young woman dancing in front of her (D’Aguiar 218). This time the visualization of the dance is created through the fictional writing though, indirectly:

Men and women dance and raise a lot of dust. Drums, whistles, horns, singing and clapping fill my ears, nose, eyes and mouth. They dance before me and bow. I clap and laugh and nod. I have seen these figures in other dreams moving like this. I shaped them out of wood. I thought the shapes were trying to rise from the sea, but now I know they were dances. Each figure made by me was in the square. A man, woman or child in some movement to the music. Not movements to the music of the sea, as I had thought. These were dances of freedom. The faces were not scared on those figures but excited. I had made them then read them wrong. Now they were here before me showing me their meaning, and I had helped to shape it. They were dancing not struggling. Ecstatic not terrified. A young woman moves in front of me in a pattern I recognise. I see myself at her age on the deck of the *Zong* in the throes of the fertility dance. She has those movements now bearing down on land, her feet kicking dust into the air, her open palms facing the earth and the sky, drawing one to meet the other (...) Now it is here being demonstrated in front of me in sweat, flesh, blood, breath and on land. Earth rising to meet sky. Sky invited down to earth. Earth rising to meet sky. (D’Aguiar 219)

Contrary to Gottschild’s technical description, Mintah’s portrayal above depicts distinctively the African body by conjuring other African bodies as a form of celebration and celebrates the



dancing on her community. In another literary context, Suzanne Scafe explores in her article “Gendered, Post-diasporic Mobilities and the Politics of Blackness in Zadie Smith’s *Swing Time* (2016)”, how Black performances of popular dance forms are represented in the novel as a “diasporic resource” where “the young female protagonists use these dances to counter the challenges of a racist classist society” (Scafe 95).

Philip also establishes a “performing memory” by connecting the living and the bodies of the dead through her durational readings. As already stated, in the same interview with Chelsy Monie, Philip adds how she sees herself as part of “a long tradition of resisting and speaking to another truth that we know in our bodies is there” (Philip 2018). In this regard, she explains:

When I write I have two peoples on my shoulders: there is a Beswa and John from Sussex and there is always a kind of fight going on because I can’t pretend, I didn’t come out of a colony [...] There is a Beswa, a little old lady who is sometimes laughing, who keeps pulling at me and nagging at me to do what has to be done, so the performance I did last night, where is that come from? I say, I don’t know because we have made strangers to these practices. African spiritual Practices have been demonized outside the continents and even within the continents. Part of what Zong! is working with is trying to say some of these practices, like honoring our ancestors, open a path for us to heal ourselves [...] Last night, I felt connected because of the gallery space, it is difficult to perform but it leaves me ‘feeling some entity’/ some forces are giving me something for the next day. (Philip 2018)<sup>113</sup>

The poet’s daily task resonates with speaking the truth and honoring an ancestral past, as a constant struggle that she lives with. She continues to be driven to act and perform by these two whispering voices on her shoulders. These constant voices might be interpreted as the voices of the past and the present. As previously stated, the poet frequently experiences and feels haunted by these voices she is subjected to listen to.

In contrast to Philip, Betye Saar, an African American artist, views her work as a liberation from the past. In her assemblage entitled *Liberation of Aunt Jemima* (1972), the sculpture of the Black woman figured as “Aunt Jemima” is transformed into a symbol of Black power, liberating herself from the past. This act of making art, as she explains in one of her interviews about her Moma exhibition “The Legends of Black Girl’s”, is a ritual, from the past, present and future”.<sup>114</sup> Most importantly, her art resonates and evolves around the

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<sup>113</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LyPgUZ31Izc>.

<sup>114</sup> Most of Betye Saar’s installations are further explored in *The Art Story* official website accessible online: <https://www.theartstory.org/artist/saar-betye>.

attempt to insist on a simultaneous liberation from women's oppression and from slavery so as to empower her subject in the present. This idea of liberation from the traces of the past does not fit with Philip's intentions since she herself considers her poem to be "hauntological". It is "a work of haunting, a wake of sorts, where the specters of the undead make themselves present" Philip states (Philip 201). This hauntological aspect motivates her live performances and constant endeavors to preserve such practice and bring the stories of these murdered Africans into light. When we examine closely the constant reconstruction of the Black body, we find that Philip seeks to demonstrate how the body is reconstructed to form a sense of unity and power, in short, an interdisciplinary entity that markedly differentiates it from its traumatic practices of enslavement.

The preservation of an African past, keeping it alive in the present, is central to Miami's performance, "A Living Memorial for the Victims of the *Zong* Massacre" first performed in the historic Virginia Key Beach Park on Thursday October 4, 2018. M.NourbeSe Philip performs her reading using African instruments such as Ekwe, Marimba, Balafon, Algaita, and Kora as seen in her online performance.<sup>115</sup> Among these African instruments, we can refer to the ekwe, which Philip uses to start her 'appeal'. This instrument is also known to be derivative of traditional, cultural and spiritual events. In the past, it was used as a method of communicating with others across time. Figuratively, these instruments depict powerful spiritual entities.

The addition of sound creates a variety of rhythms, like celebrations to emergencies, sounds that produce and "can agitate spirits, impact living things positively or negatively and also bring inanimate things to life" (Hagan 4). The drum, also known as the "heart of the community", is an important instrument because it conveys emotions and moods and creates a rhythm that binds dancers together. In history, the language of the ekwe or the drum also carries the news of death. While the Black female performer climbs into a tree, waving her body out of moan, the poet keeps asking "where are we, and why are we here?". After that, the female performer runs toward the water and then turns to see the poet crying before they hug. Visually, the two women have shown that they have a strong emotional connection. At the end of their performance, they look out at the sea for a long time with a peaceful smile that shows interaction, resistance, and continuity. They share a powerful individual and collective experience of death and life. In other words, their living bodies are spiritually fused

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<sup>115</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-ZOx5tteTk>.

with the bodies of the ancestors. In doing so, the dancing bodies tell stories of encounters and produce new encounters between the dead and the living.

The body might also take another conception in D'Aguiar's *The Longest Memory* (1994) particularly through visualizing the intense love story of the mixed couple beyond sexuality and lust. In his interview "Building Bridges Back to the Past" with Maria Frías, he was asked about the scene in which the white female body and the Black male body lie side by side, both naked, but they do not embrace. His response provides a better explanation for his conception of the body:

For me their bodies in such awful proximity is a taboo full of wonderful purchase in terms of storytelling this time and the time of slavery. There is a narrative framework there that is a gift to tell the writer who cares about history as understood through the body; about burying thoughts about history in physical detail; about sensuality as a mode of historical discourse. (D'Aguiar 421)

D'Aguiar's understanding of the body goes beyond a physical encounter and connection to reach a universal understating of history and sensuality as part of the historical discourse. And, this literary discourse promises a mutual connection between white and Black. This interconnection between the body and memory is brought again by Brenda Dixon Gottschild who investigates gender, nationality, guilt, memory, and racial issues in her performances. For instance, during her lecture, titled "the Black Body as a Measure of Culture"<sup>116</sup>, she begins her performance with a libation and a prayer since she believes that bodily memories and memories of Black female enslavement memories are strongly linked:

Me\*moires, yes, indeed, the body remembers, the body remembers, the body speaks. The body tells us what's valued in the culture. Bodies are mirrors that absorb, remember, and reflect society's politics, art, religions, aesthetics, hopes, fears, strengths, failings-both the officially sanctioned versions and the sub-rosa closeted taboos. Bodies are barometers measuring the pulse of society. And I'm here tonight with you to celebrate the body, the black body, the dancing body, our dancing bodies, as a measure of culture that bridges divisions and blurs boundaries. (Gotschild 41- 42)

The body thereby also moves beyond lust and desire to become immersed in spirituality, empowerment, and morality. Understanding the language of bodies helps to express certain

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<sup>116</sup> This performative lecture was presented as part of Reclamations! Lectures on Black Feminist Performance, curated by Jaamil Olawole Kosoko at Princeton University's Lewis Center for the Arts, October 2, 2017. It was transcribed and edited by Contact Quarterly dance journal, vol. 43, no. 2, 2018, it is published in Chorus International Dance Journal after a special agreement with Brenda Dixon Gottschild.

feelings, like fear, to the other side. Importantly, in *Zong!*'s performances, Philip transforms words into body language, opening up a new but equally profound medium.

Relating this inquiry to the contemporary archive, Philip demonstrates her personal connections with the memories of the *Zong!*. She continues her annual readings and performances today despite the global pandemic, particularly through Zoom encounters with participants from all over the world. Her engagement helps to document and preserve this memory as a part of her identity and self-existence and shapes a ritual of loyalty to history. The archive's digital subversive status aligns with the perception of its contemporary audience, increasing engagement and accessibility. As such, this archival process influences our lives and acknowledges deceased ancestors. For instance, the title of one of Marlene NourbeSe Philip's online performances, "A haunting Lifeline, Between Archive and Memory, Law and Poetry",<sup>117</sup> encourage a feeling of "continuity" since the poet adapts to the circumstances of the present in order to continue her practice of being engaged with the past. In addition to making it easier to deal with the archive, such continuity makes it necessary to endure. It is important to mention that online access to these durational readings is free and unrestricted in either space or time. This accessibility of the archive leads to the creation of a "common ground" where all materials are explored in the present and will continue to be used in the future.

Writing and performing *Zong!* demonstrates the dynamic process of engaging with the archive as it not only commemorates enslaved Africans who perished at sea but also becomes commemorates the past as a way to address current identity issues. In accordance with the body, this interdisciplinary approach to the archive makes it more like a living institution and eliminates singularity, limitations, and centrality. Philip's work aims to break barriers between the archive and literature, the archive and performance to meanwhile question our perception of history. The question of the body as a source of contact with the world has been raised by Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (2002) who states that the body is the primary site of our experience of and in the world:

In so far as, when I reflect on the essence of subjectivity, I find it bound up with that of the body and that of the world, this is because my existence as subjectivity is merely one with my existence as a body and with the existence of the world, and because the subject that I am, when taken concretely, is inseparable from this body and this world. The ontological world and body which we find at the core of the subject are not the world

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<sup>117</sup> "Zong! Global 2020 Rebroadcast, Day 4, Tune in this evening at 6 pm EST" in December 2021.

or body as idea, but on the one hand the world itself contracted into a comprehensive grasp, and on the other the body itself as a knowing-body.<sup>118</sup> (Merleau-Ponty 475)

Reflecting on the question of the body, we are able to think of it as a crucial part of connecting ourselves to others in the world. The body's capacity to both reveal and free itself from unresolved trauma is at the heart of this complexity. In this sense, Philip's performances reflect the politics of connecting the body and memory, the self and the other, the past and the present. This kind of interconnection results in the performance, archive, and language. Moreover, the archive's temporality is another aspect that her readings highlight. As such, the archive is viewed as a parade and continuity of the past, present, and future. In this part, the body clearly sways between the past and the present, the visible and the invisible to uncover the mechanisms of embodied memory and offer a new perception of the dynamics of the archive.

Rather than to limit the conception of the body to its material form, this study brings the body to interact with historical, cultural, and material realities. This is also present in the performance of *Zong!* for it establishes an emotional response to historical injustice. Such ethical consideration is essential to the consideration of the suffering of others who were forgotten in historical events. Thomas Blake's "Affective Aversion, Ethics, and Fiction", further highlights how physical embodiment shapes our decision making, influences empathic behavior, and informs conceptions of the ethical (Blake 214). In his study, Blake argues how our bodies express emotion to understand how other bodies signal what he coins "affective states" (Blake 216). In this light, Philip's performances propel our emotional conception of modern viewers to access the memories of sufferings inscribed in the Zong murder, incarnated through the body motion and flow.

Despite praising the body's ability to express itself, Merleau-Ponty typically defines it in terms of silence. In his earlier mentioned study *Phenomenology of Perception*, he argues that the body represents "the unspoken cogito" or "the silent cogito" (Merleau-Ponty 468).

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<sup>118</sup> The original book is written in French, entitled *Phénoménologie de la perception* (1945) in which we can find the original statement as follows: « Si, réfléchissant sur l'essence de la subjectivité, je la trouve liée à celle du corps et à celle du monde, c'est que mon existence comme subjectivité ne fait qu'un avec mon existence comme corps et avec l'existence du monde et que finalement le sujet que je suis, concrètement pris, est inséparable de ce corps-ci et de ce monde-ci. Le monde et le corps ontologiques que nous retrouvons au cœur du sujet ne sont pas le monde en idée ou le corps en idée, c'est le monde lui-même contracté dans une prise globale, c'est le corps lui-même comme corps-connaissant ». Maurice, Merleau-Ponty. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Translated by Colin Smith, 1962.

According to Merleau-Ponty, the body remains a “silent consciousness” and what he coins “the tacit cogito” does only exist when “it has found expression for itself” (Merleau-Ponty 470). In other words, the body as gesture engenders a silent language that exists in the interaction with the external world and seems the foundation of all expression. In our current study, however, in our current study, the body can be taken as a powerful medium to uncover the constraints of colonial archives, but also to reveal how bodies move through space after slavery and racist state regimes. In the following lines, Christina Sharpe shares the constant terror of Blacks between the present and the past, that can be figured through the Black body:

Living in the wake means living the history and present of terror, from slavery to the present, as the ground of our everyday Black existence; living the historically and geographically dis/continuous but always present and endlessly reinvigorated brutality in, and on, our bodies while even as that terror is visited on our bodies the realities of that terror is visited on our bodies the realities of that terror are erased. Put another way, living in the wake means living in and with terror in that in much of what passes for public discourse about terror we, Black people, become the carriers of terror, terror’s embodiment, and not the primary objects of terror’s multiple enactments; the ground of terror’s possibility globally. (Sharpe 15)

Sharpe’s lines underscore how the Black body holds its scars from slavery and continues to confront racialized terror in the present. Following this idea of the Black body today, another performance that might be brought into the conversation here is that of Carlos Martiel “Mediterranean” (Mediterranean), presented at the 57<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale, in Venice Italy in 2017, and curated by Jose Manuel Noceda. In his words, the visual artist describes his piece of art: “I kneel in the lower level of a metal and glass structure inspired by the design of the ancient hourglass. The upper level is filled with water from the Mediterranean Sea, which gradually seeps through an orifice until I am submerged”.<sup>119</sup> I recall this recent performance since it correlates with this idea of the body and its interconnectedness with water. In line with the process of archiving via performance, the artist states in his official website how “recording performance art is much like creating an archive”. In this respect, in her article the “Animating Memory: Affective Touch and Corporeality in the Work of Camilo Godoy and Carlos Martiel”, Clara Maria Apostolatos reports how the artist describes in his words how his performance art is “like an archive in itself, in terms of its documentation. The photographic and video documentation becomes registered like an archive of the times I am living through, as well as an archive of the problems of the times I have had to live”

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<sup>119</sup> <http://www.carlosmartiel.net/mediterraneo/>.

(Apostolatos np). This interconnectedness with water is strongly relevant to Philip's performances, the memory of the Zong can never be forgotten when performed in the ocean, the same memorial site where the bodies of the dead were buried. This "lieu de mémoire", in Pierre Nora's terms, implies a space where the spirits and bodies of the living and the dead can come together. Therefore, in honor of the Atlantic slave trade, the sea becomes a material space where the material and immaterial interconnect. Taken as a metaphor, water has a wide range of emotional, cultural, and sensual associations and emerges as an essential location for healing, rebirth, and reparation.

### 5.2.2 The Materiality of the Sea/ Water

I feel strongly that I need to seek "permission" to bring the stories of these murdered Africans to light — above the surface of the water— to "exaqua" them from their "liquid graves" [...] the approach to the water is mossy and slippery and, on my way, back from pouring the spirits I fall flat on my ass. I am embarrassed, wondering if anyone has seen me fall and whether the fall means the pleasure or displeasure on the part of the Ancestors. (Philip 202-203)

Our entrance to the past is through memory. And water. (Philip 203)

In the "Prologue" to *Feeding the Ghosts*, Fred D'Aguiar refers to "the sea is slavery", in reference to the Derek Walcott's poem quoted in the epigraph. The sea can be seen as a place of imagination, a place in which creative remembrance enables the voices of the past to be both heard and appropriated. In this part, I approach the sea in terms of its performative nature—as a heritage site and a ritual of trauma purification. For the sake of clarity, I will begin by briefly considering the concept of "materiality" which is most commonly tied to "matter"<sup>120</sup> and "the quality of being composed of matter; material existence; solidity". It is derived from the verb "to materialize", which involves different meanings; "to invest or become invested with a physical shape or form", "to cause (a spirit, as of a dead person)", "to appear in material form", "to take shape", "become tangible". However, when referring to the sea or water, these distinct connotations advocate a distinct approach to "materiality" and "materializing". Here, I propose reflecting on the sea as a space to encounter spirits of the dead with the bodies of the living. Importantly, the sea evokes a substantial setting where Philip's performances of the archive have taken place.

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<sup>120</sup> <https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=materiality>.

Despite everything that has occurred in the past, the sea still includes this threatening double system; a system of representation that is both honorable and oppressive at the same time. This setting exceeds its natural space to become a metaphorical space of life and living. The sea presents a confronting set of ideas; a system of representation that is both capable of functioning honorifically and repressively. The language of *Zong!* is the best example of this double function due to the fact that water serves as the poem's opening image—a motif that continues throughout. Other emotions come to the surface when performing the poem in the water. To put it another way, the sea is reconceived as a new place of hope, spirituality, reconciliation, and liberation. It is now a living space rather than a place of mourning.

Philip views her readings as prayers to God for the blessing of all deceased bodies and for communication with their spirits. As previously mentioned, these spirits, Philip declares, keep calling her and she has to respond. In an interview conducted by Chelsey Monie, “Our stories: In Conversation with Marlene Nourbese Philip”, Philip articulates “ancestors I see you” which exemplifies the duty she feels to respond again in and through the sea. This powerful correlation between the poet and the sea engenders a sense of spirituality and then performance becomes a double-sided ritual, to heal from traces of the past and re-connect with it. It is worth noting that performances that incorporate water, worship, and healing are well known in African artistic traditions. As such, this healing practice can be incorporated into the process of cleansing one's body of past trauma to stimulate recovery. In her study “Poetics of Reparations in M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!*”(2016), Laurie R Lambert explains how the notion of reparation in this context is also focused on “structures of healing that have been produced within harmed communities for and by themselves” (Lambert 109).

Consequently, the purpose of Philip's performances is to convey the uniqueness of an individual experience that eventually becomes a collective one. By connecting herself with the spirits of the ancestors, Philip is also connected with the Atlantic in a comparable way to other Caribbean writers such as Derek Walcott, Kamau Brathwaite and Edouard Glissant, who rely on the ocean as a site of poetics.<sup>121</sup> For instance, we can bring here the Caribbean poet/historian Kamau Brathwaite's theory of “tidalectics,” an analytical method based on what he describes as “the movement of the water backwards and forwards as a kind of cyclic . . . motion, rather than linear”<sup>122</sup>. Importantly Brathwaite's theory embraces the materiality of

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<sup>121</sup> See Evie Shockley, “Is *Zong!* Conceptual Poetry? Yes, it isn't”, *Dialogues with NourbeSe Philip*, edited by Janet Neigh, 2013.

<sup>122</sup> Mackey, “An Interview with Edward Kamau Brathwaite,” 44; Brathwaite, “Submerged Mothers”, p. 48-49.



the ocean, which is not surprising given that Caribbean literature is known for its hybrid form and engaged aspects with the ocean as both “dystopian origin and aquatopian future”<sup>123</sup>. In their study “Submerged Bodies: The Tidalectics of Representability and the Sea in Caribbean Art”, Elizabeth Deloughrey and Tatiana Flores examine visual artists who “visualized a different kind of ontological relationship between the human body—particularly one that is racialized, sexed, and gendered—and the sea” (Flores and Deloughrey 135). They argue for a *tidalectic* method that engages a range of experiences and representations of the submerged body, emphasizing how the ocean can be taken as planetary and local.

Edouard Glissant’s theory also depicts the interaction between the sea and the sand as an exemplary form of mutual existence without harmful dependence. This meeting of the sand and the ocean at the shore is simultaneously a process of destruction and renewal; as one wave<sup>124</sup> breaks, the energy from this break travels back into the ocean to begin another cycle (Glissant 261). These reparative practices symbolize the creation of new, contemporary knowledge regarding the past. The process of transforming/tracking the legal case into poetry and then into performance produces a new approach of perceiving the archive, what Lambert calls “a production of new knowledge”.<sup>125</sup>

Furthermore, considering critical heritage theory, the sea, as a natural place and space can be understood as “heritage”. In his study *Heritage: Critical Approaches* (2012), Rodney Harrison expands on this idea by illustrating a variety of geographically spaced locations. He introduces two distinct images to demonstrate his theory; the first is a place that is “natural”, while the second is a structure made by “humans” (a building). After comparing the two places, he concludes that both locations can be qualified as “heritage” (Harrison 5). Thus, the sea has evolved from a figurative image in Black literary studies to a historical legacy. This open-ended natural space is transformed into a place of universal significance where the material, cultural, and sensual are mixed with individual and collective memories and experiences.

Understanding the politics of heritage, Harrison unravels how recognizing specific locations as heritage can become an “official heritage” process, subjecting them to a series of

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<sup>123</sup> Elizabeth Deloughrey and Tatiana Flores, “Submerged Bodies: The Tidalectics of Representability and the Sea in Caribbean Art”, *Environmental Humanities*, 2020, p.136.

<sup>124</sup> In her essay “The Site of Memory”, Toni Morrison also uses water to indicate conceptual shifts that mark the development of Black ancestral memory. This form of memory is also depicted in her novel *Beloved* as a “splash” that washes over characters like Sethe as they contemplate past trauma, p. 62.

<sup>125</sup> Laurie R. Lambert, “Poetics of Reparations in M. Nourbese Philip’s *Zong’!*”, 2016, p. 109.

assumptions about how they should be treated differently from other locations (Harrison 8). The manner in which this place and the memories it holds should then be preserved for future generations. In line with Heritage studies, one can say that each historical landmark ought to be dealt with differently due to its value. In the context of our analysis, the sea can be additionally imagined as an ‘ethical and spiritual’ space where rituals occur. It appears to be a peaceful spot due to its secrets and visual ambiguity with no boundaries. The fact that these performances begin and end in the same spot may also reflect the space’s circularity and continuity. Perhaps of equal importance is that it is performed alongside young students which serves to foster stronger inter-generational ties. The sea becomes a place of interaction and participation as students are also invited to read aloud and repeat with Philip. Again, due to its powerful visual and auditory elements, this experience is spectacular and unique. Thereby, the sea evokes consideration for otherness, and therefore evinces a clear ethical orientation.

These dynamic performances help to preserve this site of heritage from total oblivion and moral annihilation by integrating these ethical values of sharing and participation. Instead of living among the spectral traces of the past, a new creative practice can take place. It reincarnates as a heritage site associated with slavery histories by performing in the sea.

If literature and visual art consistently depict the sea as a graveyard of the dead, performance endows it with another symbol. The sea is both a place of life and death because the dead still haunt the living, so the living continues to interact with it. With regard to *Zong!* performances, the sea incorporates these contradictory encounters and transforms it into an active setting for commencement and remembrance—a place of intangible heritage. Consequently, this setting serves as a connection between the archive and the actual world. As Philip expressed before, the spirits of these ancestors actually collaborate with the living, and by naming them in her performances, she insists on returning to the same area as a place of memory and gives them life to make new records and archives about the *Zong* and the enslaved Africans who were on the ship, as well as to stress the transcultural exchange between young generations in the twentieth century.

In keeping with the materiality of the sea and drawing on what has been illustrated in this part, the sea is thereby displaced from its original dwelling of dreadfulness to a dwelling of reparation. By repositioning the sea from its context of enslavement and painful experiences to a space of performing and healing, Philip challenges our perception toward

history and the trauma of the past. The sea, in these performances, establishes a close connection between the self and the other and deconstructs the very idea of displacement. As has been depicted in Philip's performances, the sea goes beyond its natural setting to represent a heritage with a view to developing a sense of common history and a shared future in terms of Black identity. This new production of the text gives the archive a very special dimension and challenges its most known definition as a dusty and static institution. The materiality of the sea stems from its complex and multi-generic aspects that Black performances make new possibilities for a new archival process.

The approach to the archive has also taken on a new digital practice by incorporating the sound effects and the rhythmic soundings of the waves to provide a more realistic and authentic process to better engage with the contemporary audience. Water seems an ephemeral element, and a "being dedicated to water is a being in flux".<sup>126</sup> This interconnectedness between water and the Caribbean continues to emerge in a different range of digital and artistic works. In the following section, we will examine Gardner's video installation *Omi Ebora* which simultaneously brings cultural memory into the present and engages the senses. Sound is explored as well in Lubaina Himid's *Naming the Money* whose installation transforms the sounds and voices of mourning into voices of resistance and continuity, to give new voice to the Black Experience.

## 5.3 Sound as Archive

### 5.3.1 Joscelyn Gardner's *Omi Ebora's* Video Installation<sup>127</sup>

This study's approach to the archive constantly shifts from a 'traditional' to a 'performing' and 'digital' process as the previous chapters demonstrated. In keeping with this transformative process, this last part studies the dynamics of the archive through sound. This is revealing of certain contemporary approaches from multimedia that seek to preserve and save Black heritage. As previously indicated, I start by focusing on Joscelyn Gardner's *Omi Ebora* to investigate the contemporary reproduction and re-making History, which provides digital knowledge for future generations. Joscelyn Gardner is a Canadian visual artist of

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<sup>126</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*, Translated from the French by Edith R. Farrell, The Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, 1999, p.6.

<sup>127</sup> <https://vimeo.com/111986837>.

Caribbean descent whose work centers primarily on printmaking and multimedia installation. In order to investigate her (white) Creole identity from a postcolonial feminist perspective, her contemporary practice investigates the colonial material culture found in the archives. In our context, *Omi Eborá* implies a dynamic digital version of Nourbese Philip's *Zong!* well introduced as follows:

This video clip documents the video installation titled “omi eborá (ode to *Zong!*)” produced in 2014. The clip shows a still of viewer looking down on the one channel video projection followed by footage of the projection as it appeared when installed for Nuit Blanche in London, Ontario (June 2014). Five speakers with individual sound channels were placed around the exhibition space to provide an immersive experience. In *Omi Eborá* (Yoruba for “spirits of the waters”), submerged syllables and words float up from beneath the ocean's turbulent surface while a cacophony of haunting voices. moaning, groaning, gasping, whispering. attempt to “tell the story that cannot be told yet must be told”, the story of the murder by drowning of nearly 150 slaves on the slave ship *Song* in November 1781. (Gardner 2014)

As previously cited, *Omi Eborá* is inspired by NourbeSe Philip's poem *Zong!* (2008) and produced in collaboration with her. According to Gardner, this digital representation plays around the words to “pluck sounds and syllables from within the poem much as the poet has plucked them from the legal case” (Gardner 2015). In Gardner's words, the produced sounds reflect the silent souls struggling to speak, their garbled voices muddying the waters of history's infinite tomb. In a similar vein, Gardner empathizes with these sounds made from words that represent the past of slavery in Philip's readings. A digital performance of this kind may also be determined as an engagement of all the senses, including sight and hearing. These visual and audio elements further develop and create new innovative archival processes, as they enable ‘the human body’ to be conjured with the archive and further underscore the archive's temporality that corresponds with the current era. With that in mind, the senses of duality between the material and the digital appear to be directly relevant to the current debate about the performing archival process. Additionally, when dealing with the poem, we might also refer to the effect of silence, as something oral, yet read as blank, thus becoming visual. The visual blank that caught the reader's eyes ought to be translated and transformed into a sound as a way to break the silence.

This section has two main aspects: performing and digitizing the archive. In the same way that the process of creating an archive does in the present day, the idea of digitizing demonstrates its concept of knowledge preservation and accessibility. In other words, the

archive process has evolved into a digital structure to better serve the modern reader and audience of today who are increasingly reliant on digital information as a result of technological progressions. Thus, the process of ‘digitizing’, is associated with the present time that can drastically increase accessibility creating more ways to present records to new and wider audiences.

The image of bodies floating to the surface of the sea is brought to mind by Gardner’s digital transformation of the poem’s words; this digital performance gives them back their voices after they were drowned. Such visual depiction makes them visible and allows them to interact with a modern audience. Additionally, to represent the idea of non-linearity and the erratic process of the archive, words are flipped upside down which might echo the fragmented aspect of the *Zong!* poem. Visually, Joscelyn Gardner mobilizes the poem to put forward new re-visiting and re-remembering of the murder. Once more, this inventive process engages the role of the audience to interact with the installation to see and hear the enslaved African voices without seeing them in reality. In doing so, Gardner makes space for the viewer to recall all of the stories that lie behind these voices, which could be referring to the voices of lost immigrants in the sea nowadays:



(Gardner 2014)<sup>128</sup>

It seems likely to trace a line of accountability for the *Zong!* through voices and sounds, reframing letters and allowing the language to interact with the visual. Letters are infused with a sense of modernity and the continuity of the matter to create a more self-reflective experience of reading the archive and visualizing it. This chain of words as clearly seen above might be a metaphor for the death of those held in the archive and revived in the digital. It generates the archive’s transformational power. In line with this visual displacement of letters,

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<sup>128</sup> <https://www.joscelyngardner.org/multimedia>.

Gardner states on her official website how within the water, “individual letters and words splash against the glass and slowly slip down to the ground to be theatrically washed into the street”. Accordingly, in another installation, entitled “words... just words”,<sup>129</sup> Gardner exhibits the words of a fragmented text from Glenn Ligon’s 1657 “True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados” mixed with NourbeSe Philip’s poem *Zong!*. This combination is exposed by a mixture of instrumental music of a 17<sup>th</sup> century lute with a contemporary African percussion instrument and the sound of water crashing against the glass. As portrayed by Gardner, this projection wall “seals off the library’s rarified space and becomes the stage for the performance of a slippery choreography between the colonial and the postcolonial”. As such, this technique of combining two distinct texts with music styles engender once again the contemporary aspect of the archival transitional process from the past into the present and the way it can be perceived by a contemporary viewer. Hence, incorporating the sound into a text offers another stage of performance in terms of the archive.

Following thematic lines of sounds and voices, it is useful to add that Philip’s poem refers to this idea of underwater sound that never stops. These voices can be heard across the Atlantic Ocean. Her poem *Zong!* “bears witness to the resurfacing of the drowned and the oppressed” and transforms the desiccated, legal report into a cacophony of voices—wails, cries, moans, and shouts, that had earlier been banned from the text” (Philip 203). She further adds how “the sounds of those murdered Africans continue to resound and echo underwater; in the bones beds of the sea” (Philip 203). In line with making these voices heard, Gardner suggests her multimedia installation as an ongoing process to what Philip has already started.

In this part, Gardner breaks with the misconception that the archive is a conventional storage space by conjuring up the location, the space, the archive, and the voice to create a powerful combination. As previously stated, attention to musical elements is often visible when performing *Zong!* in academic settings or outdoors, particularly along the ocean’s shore. The archive, then, seems identified with new forms of interaction and audio-visual dynamics that the following part will further demonstrate, namely through Lubaina Himid’s *Naming the Money*, which offers another dimension of sound.

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<sup>129</sup> This installation has been created for the Black Diaspora Visual Arts Symposium held in Bridgetown, Barbados in 2009. The video was displayed in the entrance of the Barbados Public Library.

### 5.3.2 Black Voices in Lubaina Himid's *Naming the Money*

Sound is pertinent to the second section of this part, which examines Lubaina Himid's innovative and modern use of audio effects to identify all of her figures and provide a space for them to tell their stories. Soundtracks, on the other hand, can be seen as modernized voices adapted to give new life to these African figures. Lubaina Himid gives life to wooden Black cutouts by concentrating on the sound, almost literally using her own voice. During the exhibition, the soundtrack gives the impression to the audience that these people who possessed the entire space were all around them. The archive turns into a living institution as a result of this visual encounter, which strengthens the connection between these figures and the audience. By doing so, Himid creates a powerful dialogue between the audience and her visual art by breaking the boundaries of traditional exhibition and artistic representation of the past. As for Philip, these voices could be the spiritual voices of enslaved Africans in her exhibition in Bordeaux (2019), the voices in English and French are also heard as the audience moves through the space, creating a direct and vivid correspondence with all of these figures and evoking various emotions. She makes all of these personal stories into bigger stories, which encourage the audience remember them all and in doing so her visual art becomes universal and easy to understand when the soundtrack is displayed.

These wooden figures by Himid construct a modern visual and linguistic sign to give the viewer a unique experience he/she can create while exploring them. Similarly, it should be recalled that these signs are also a means of re-humanizing these figures and whether it is through stories, costumes, colors, for example, they are ultimately connected to the present. In this discussion on sound, in contrast to Ferdinand de Saussure, who views sound as a signifier and positions the voice as the medium for the spoken sign, Himid makes it abundantly clear that the figure's relationships with and experiences of the surrounding environment give sound meaning.

Through the sounds recited by the artist herself, she brings the individuals that she created to into the realm of an external world. She sketches out some clues to the importance of giving voice to these Africans who have been silenced in the past and restricted in the archive. Using English as a universal language to facilitate this connection, Himid seeks to fill in the gaps left by this silenced past of slavery:

My name is Anika  
They call me Sissie  
I used to make boxes for jewels  
Now I make boxes for children  
But at least they are used (Himid 2019)

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My name is Olusade  
They call me Jenny  
I used to cure diseases  
Now I make the tea  
But am never ill

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My name is Akante  
They call me Jenny  
I used to make perfume for me and my girls  
Now I make soup with the cook  
But I still smell nice

The three descriptions above are shown on the back of the figures, all having been given European modern names; from Olusade to Jenny, Anika to Sissi, Akante to Jenny. This shift in the process of naming reflects at the same time a shift in the politics of identity. Himid wants them to embrace a new identity in addition to being visually contemporary to fit with the current ideology of the Black presence in the present. She responds with the following more in-depth explanation of her reasons and motives behind the choice of naming:

Well, the names came from everywhere I could find them. So, I asked everyone I knew, “What’s your uncle’s name? What’s your cousin’s name?” People would say, “I have this auntie who lives in Accra.” I read lots of African folktales, and I took names from there—Heinemann African Writers Series; I took names from there. Some of them were unfamiliar to me, but I needed 100 names. I looked at baby names. Everybody has a real African name. “My name is Vuka; they call me Sam. They are my owner, and my owner called me that” because they only could be bothered. In the States homes, very often, when there were white or black servants, there were people looking after the horses, people cleaning, people mending, the grooms, chambermaids. For instance, you would call all the grooms John, so when you wanted your horse, you only had to shout John. Even if they came and went and years went by, if you wanted a horse, you always shouted JOHN, and the grooms would come. All the people in there, these are their real names, their actual names. But they give them another name, another identity. The names are repetitive because there are 10 Jacks, 10 Sallies, 10 Dans.

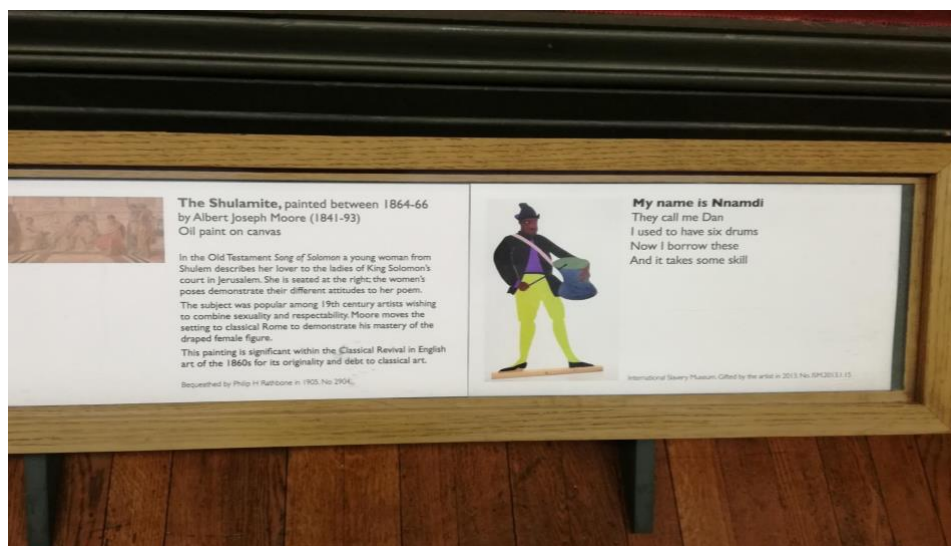
Himid evokes her process of attributing new identities to her figures by giving them new names. The focus on this sense of novelty in terms of the politics of Black identity can be traced to the way that Himid chooses to displace her figures in museums and public



institutions. To illustrate this, in the Walker gallery of Liverpool World Museum, she has chosen to put her Black figures within the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. This historical preference creates a powerful duality between the present and the past. To respond to this intentional exposure, Himid states:

I am really trying to take them out of this state, take them out of the ground European paintings and bring them all together in a space to talk to each other. So that way of showing them in amongst the collections has its disadvantages but sometimes I do it because it's much more complex to have it. And whatever museum has the courage to do it sometimes you think okay I will go along with that because they do genuinely want to try to do that, to put a cutter next to a Rembrandt, it is like outrageous, because the people that come to see the Rembrandt do not want the politics of black representations interrupting their dialogue, so if the museum will do it sometimes it is good but it's sort of not really what the piece was made for. (Himid 2019)

As Himid articulates, it appears her work seeks to create a dialogue between white and Black art. This speaks to controversy around access for Black artists to certain British museums. Here, one can consider how museums today help to bring attention to Black art and start a creative and empowering conversation about slavery. To better illustrate this, the following spot is taken from her 2017 installation at the Walker Art gallery in Liverpool, where we can see her figures alongside paintings from the 18<sup>th</sup> century:



(Himid 2019)<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> I took this picture during a visit to the World Museum in Liverpool in 2019 in which Himid had exposed a few figures.

The image above clearly demonstrates how Himid juxtaposes her African figures with the 19th-century painting “The Shulamite”, which was painted between 1864-66 and represents Victorian art as opposed to Modern art. Additionally, it inspires us to consider the archive’s transparency and continuity as a source of knowledge that ought to be framed within the context of the present and speak out about the representation of Blacks in museums and galleries. Drawing on this visual setup, Himid seeks to make her figures more visible to the modern viewer and challenge one’s reflections about the presence of Blacks in art.

Himid’s act serves to memorialize the past against a kind of “national amnesia” (Morrison 58) in the words of Toni Morrison, and to reconstruct her Black identity in the present. Reflecting on her Black identity among other Black women artists in the twentieth century, Himid states how they “must continue the process of gathering and re-using”.<sup>131</sup> This process of gathering echoes Black creativity and its relationship to political change. In this way, art functions as a vehicle to give Africans a voice, both in the archive and in contemporary art visualization. This revolutionary position is best exemplified by the works of Himid and other British *artists* of African and Caribbean descent like Eddie Chambers, Marlene Smith, Keith Piper, Ingrid Pollard, and Maud Sulter, among others:

As the form and function of her own and other artists’ bodies of work confirmed, they endorsed a shared sense of protest against the widespread and systematic erasure of the histories, memories and narrative of Black peoples in mainstream society which worked in conjunction with the exclusion of their art-making traditions from a white-dominated art world. Channeling their political anger into new forms of artistic liberation, she and other African diasporic artists, whether they were working within or without involvement in the Black Art Group, shared the same governing impulse:” we wanted to interrupt art history” (Bernier, Rice et al. Durkin 12)

The voices of Himid’s figures can emphasize these women’s voices. There is a sense of narrating histories while reciting the stories of these characters, and the form of the introductory texts work together to create an account of a very personal experience with the slave past. This illustrates the workings of the voices and music in terms of content, but there is one particular innovative aspect that exposes how the sound also works formally on the narrative level. Conversely, Himid’s voice on the soundtracks firmly alludes to slavery in various ways. This means that memorial politics in today’s views are strengthened by seeing and hearing about African heritage in such a new light.

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<sup>131</sup> In a discussion about cultural retention in Lubaina Himid, “Fragments,” *Feminist Art News* 2 (1988), p. 8-9.

Equally important, the fact that Himid's figures are constructed to make their physical presence undeniably vocal makes the sound appear extremely significant. The soundtracks used in conjunction with the violin music serve as a background, bringing another distinct musicality or voice to the archive. This brings to mind the framework that Julia Kristeva lays out in her well-known study *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984), in which she further illustrates the interaction of the mediated and cultural aspects of musical communications, as well as the unmediated, bodily, and psychological dimensions of the process by which any language acquires significance. When considering how Lubaina Himid and other Black female artists have created their own language to construct Black identity politics, this psycho-linguistic theory may be relevant in this instance. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the cultural aspects of displaying music as a background simultaneously as introducing the figures by their names and positions as recently shared. The importance lies in the way Himid manages to establish a dialogue in which the significance of words is subordinated to the experience of musical aspects, namely the semiotic. Kristeva tells us more about this musicality of language:

Language thus, tends to be drawn out of its symbolic function (sign-syntax) and is opened out within a semiotic articulation; with a material support such as the voices, this semiotic network gives "music to literature". But the interruption of the semiotic within the symbolic is only relative. Though permeable, the thetic continues to ensure the position of the subject put in process/on trial. As a consequence, music is not without signification; indeed, it is deployed within in. (Kristeva 63)

The semiotic modality, according to Kristeva's theory, is embodied in musical performances and interplay. As per Kristeva, musical elements turn out to be the attributes of the semiotic modality in language articulations. In other words, the semiotic is expressed in music by rhythm and intonation. To illustrate this, while reciting the names of her figures, Lubaina Himid creates a violin background in the style of musical instruments. The violin is for the most part perceived as the backbone of most of classical music. It echoes specific emotional expressions of sadness, melancholy, and sorrow.

The choice of music as a sound could also be interpreted as a form of mourning for the enslaved Africans lost in the sea. Addressing the idea of melancholia, in her study *Black Sun Depression and Melancholia* (1989), Julia Kristeva examines the term in the context of art, literature, philosophy, the history of religion and culture, as well as psychoanalysis. Kristeva describes how "melancholia pertains to a common experience of object loss and of a

modification of signifying bonds” (Kristeva 10)<sup>132</sup>. To this end, the violin’s vibration and tone<sup>133</sup> embody the shape of the text as inseparable encounters between sound and subject to center rhythm as the African experience. Himid’s desire to give Black people voices to tell their stories, and to attribute new identities, creates a new social position for Black identity in the modern world. Himid’s musical practice sheds light on the impact of the rhythm and tone as semiotic aspects of language and its effects on the meaning and the structure of the text that can be associated with a symbolic effect of language. In a contemporary setting,<sup>134</sup> the viewer is invited to reflect upon each figure and learn more about each story and melody. We are able to interact with Himid’s Black figures in a manner that is more verbal thanks to the rhythm that she has given, of which breaks silence.

The use of sound installations additionally appears in the Tate exhibition of Himid’s work, *Between the Two my Heart is Balanced* (1991), curated by Magda Stawarska-Beavan. Himid explicitly speaks about sound in an interview with Robert Barry (2021), entitled “Inner Listening: Sound & Image in The Work of Lubaina Himid”. Her Tate exhibition talks about memory, performance, and listening. The vivid soundtrack added to many of the works by artist Magda Stawarska-Beavan transforms the experience from a series of things one “looks at to an encounter you find yourself engaged in” (Barry n.p). The use of sound, in Himid’s words:

I think the way sound is in an exhibition space,” she continues, “we’re not blocking one sound from another. They co-exist. Almost the same way you can layer the sound in multi-track editing, but that sort of editing happens in the space.” “They interweave,” Himid adds. “And even within the sounds, there are moments of silence. Because although sound is absorbed in your body, you can listen and not listen. You can still make space – sonic, silent space for yourself. It’s an interweaving, yes, it’s absolutely not an illustration. And it’s about movement. I think the sound adds an ability for the audience to become performers through the piece, rather than observers. I think somehow sound and music helps us do that. Because it fills the space, I suppose. And gives you some kind of feeling that the visual doesn’t. I think we think of the whole show as a piece – a performance piece, really. (Barry n.p)

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<sup>132</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Soleil noir : Dépression et mélancolie*, Paris, Gallimard, 1989.

<sup>133</sup> The following video represents selected pieces from Naming the Money shown as part of Talking on Corners Speaking in Tongues. And the violin sound is clearly heard:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n92dRBiWfeM&t=46s>.

<sup>134</sup> I am referring here to CAPC musée d’art contemporain de Bordeaux in which she displayed her installation in October 31, 2019. In the official website of the museum, Himid has been described as the “artist who restores an identity to the forgotten, “l’artiste qui redonne une identité aux oubliées” (Mailys Celeux Lanval, 27<sup>th</sup> November 2019).

Himid's use of sound incorporates certain moments of silence to push the audience to listen and experience gaps felt from the inside and the outside. A dialogue between the self and the other occurs through this silence. The audience becomes an engaged 'other' who encounters the paradoxes of sound and silence, and is compelled to look beyond the paintings and exhibit more global human experiences. The dualism that the sound might convey echoes how performing art serves in making Black identity visible. Explicitly performative, Himid's painted figures of Black characters promise to turn their silence into transformational engaging discourse. Reflecting on the use of silence, Stawarska-Beavan argues how "in some of the projects where [she]ask[s] people to participate and listen to something back; listening to their internal, audible memories, and try to get something out of that." (Barry n.p) In this way, the sound disrupts silence by offering simultaneous visual and verbal communication.

This chapter has sought serve as a reflection on the way in which the archive has transformed as a theatrical stage in works of both fiction and theatre. This creative process of 're-making' and 'performing' serves to visualize the past, transform the traces of memories, and make the invisible visible. The fictitious trial of the *Zong!* that Fred D'Aguiar imagines offers his subjective thoughts and ironic reflections in terms of the inadequacy of the British legal justice. Central to this study, staging the archive stimulates emotional engagement from and with a respective audience: the reader and the viewer. Drawing on examples from D'Aguiar's text to position the archive into a more 'human' and empathetic experience, the emotional impact on the audience inspires questions of certain historical speculations. These historical traces alert the reader to past atrocities. Our perception of the past and, by extension, the world around us, is shaped by these novel representations, especially in light of the attacks and of the marginalization of Blacks today. Hence, this transformation of historical events from the material into the digital proves to offer new understandings of history.

NourbeSe Philip commemorates the archive through the Black female body as a means of remembering, resisting, and reconstructing the past in order to empower Black heritage and identity today. Through the combination of word, of language, of the body and of music, the post is reconfigured in the digital through a visible multidisciplinary complex. The chapter examined these digital reconfigurations to make visible a multidisciplinary approach to the archive. In order to establish a dialogue between art, poetry, and the archive, this chapter has also relied on Joscelyn Gardner to show how the artist develops a dialogical performance to fuse many disciplines and create innovative knowledge around the archive.

One can argue that the archive demonstrates these many possibilities to creatively inhabit the contemporary institutions of literature, art, theatre and multimedia. Through studying literary and artistic examples in this chapter, a variety of new approaches to the archive have been revealed. This process defies previous misconceptions of the archive as static, rather shifting cultural memories of it. The archive thereby transforms into a dynamic and reflective medium that challenges its own ontology. As demonstrated in the second and third parts, the conception of the body and sound evoke a regenerative capacity to reshape the archive, promoting access to silenced histories. Through visual and audible reproductions, cultural performances reflect on African heritage and honor how the other lurks at the hub of the archival renewal through audience and viewer engagement. Indeed, D'Aguiar's text, Philip's readings, Gardner's video installation and Himid's soundtracks all serve to evoke a consideration of otherness, and evince an ethical orientation within the archival process as a whole. These stated works most significantly serve to both counter and repair past and ongoing erasures made by a colonial archive.

## Conclusion

In this multi-disciplinary research, which includes critical readings of literary texts, poems, and works of visual art, I have tried to investigate the process of the archive, demonstrating its dynamic, fluid, and constantly transformative potential. Contrary to traditional considerations of the archive as a stable and unchanging resource, this study tries to encourage the transformative possibility and potential of the archive when put at the heart of literary and artistic creation. The major question that guides my research is precisely how the archive can be an active resource that contemporary writers and artists can revisit and re-create in favor of a new ‘meta-archive’. By inscribing the archive into their works, they deconstruct inherited conceptions and invite new innovative discourse around the transatlantic slave trade. In line with this perspective, my thesis attempts to show how Black writers and artists have responded to written and visual archives and how they have condemned its inconsistencies. My research honors the alternative approaches offered by their creations for contemporary discourses concerning Black identity, Black artists’ positions and Black innovative practices in both fiction and visual art. The historical dialogue proposed in this thesis can offer new ways of interpreting the archive to be engaged in the present so as to serve future considerations. The duality of remembering and engaging with the archive, in its inconsistency, prompts a fundamental reshaping of the archive, perhaps most visible in digital form.

Seeking answers to these questions, I would like to underline the main findings that have emerged from this interdisciplinary approach. This study examines how the archive has been transformed and demonstrates how its previous omissions have strapped writers and artists to critically uncover forgotten injustices and traumas. The fluid process of the archive is metaphorically and figuratively displayed in the general structure of my chapters. I began from the seemingly ‘traditional’ refiguration of the archive, first reflected upon in several criticisms of Caryl Phillips’s reliance on the historical sources used in his texts. As the analysis unfolds, Phillip’s historical considerations offer new “performing” and “performative” representations through which creative practices have emerged.

Black British writers and artists have revisited historical materials in an effort of reconstructing Black identity by resurfacing the traces of memories in new archives. This

process of retrieval helps in the constant reconstruction of memory, preserving the African past and revitalizing it in the present. In contrast to what other studies have analyzed in terms of the archive as seen in Chapter One, this research has dealt with a specific corpus that includes different genres generating a sense of “polyvocal” approach. This complex approach has emerged by bringing together literature and art, as an attempt to come to terms with Black British writers’ and artists’ individual experiences. To most of them, revisiting the past as history serves their collective interest to re-construct an identity and its heritage. I have sought to further explore how the archive should be thought of, away from any conceptions of singularity, accumulations, and repetition, to underline instead aspects of fluidity, creativity, and rather of performance. The study layers narratives, poems, and artworks to produce in a rather distinctive and inventive manner a new written and digital ‘palimpsestic’ archive. The etymology of the term “palimpsest”, derived from its classical Latin “*palimpsestus*”, meaning a “paper or parchment that has been written on again, scraped again” (*OED*), embodies the process and purpose of this study. To describe these writers’ and artists’ approaches as palimpsest promotes the possibility of change and of reformulation. The term indicates how this process of alteration is a process of reworking, remaking, and a move towards reformulation. The creative transformation of the archive does not negate traces of the past, rather tries to engage history through creative approaches. The consideration of an established archive has allowed for recreating and thereby reemphasizing the archive as we experience it, today.

The thesis seeks to put Black writers’ and artists’ voices in dialogue, so as to articulate their collective visions. This interconnection, structurally represented, echoes the innovative perspectives and understandings of artists in their current contexts. Recognizing how difficult this dialogical approach can be, the thesis reflects the complexity of such practice. The complexity of providing an in-depth reading of each work at times confounded the distinct voice of each writer from the other. I have intentionally decided not to draw this distinction, so as to better serve the complexity when dealing with the question at stake. I believe that this dialogue allows us to explore the interaction between theories, texts, and artistic works by challenging our preconceptions. This approach also serves to raise other questions and tensions that are worth preserving in so far as they stimulate further thought about the dynamics of the archive.

Building on the central question of this research, the emphasis was put on the new textual and visual versions that stem from this revisiting and rewriting of the archive. I have



mostly focused on the textual and visual reconfigurations of certain historical and artistic archival materials. To confront the concept of the archive, I started by reflecting on the terminology of the term itself, offering a historiography of previous archival studies, and previous methods of approaching the term. This introduction served the analysis of my works of consideration to refigure a history event, which is the *Zong* murder. I revisit this event in almost all chapters as it appears in central works such as: *Feeding the Ghosts*, *Turner*, *Memorial to Zong*, *Zong!* and *Omi Eborá's* digital installation. These works have deconstructed the common understanding of the past, of history, and memory to create a counter-memory and a more dynamic and living archive, that fits with the contemporary reader and audience. This initial introductory chapter set the scene for the analytical chapters that follow, precisely, in demonstrating the manner in which Black British writers and artists of Caribbean and African ancestries have rewritten the historical records of the archive.

In Chapter Two, I attempt to offer new textual devices that Caryl Phillips implements in his fictional texts as a way to reject the criticism he endured of relying too heavily on historical records. His apparent alterations convey his contribution in creating new fictional discourses through the use of multiple archival records. Phillips' comparative approach is also present in the work of Lars Eckstein, his study *Re-Membering the Black Atlantic: On the Poetics and Politics of Literary Memory* which investigates the textual strategies of Phillips's writing in its use of slave narratives, journals, newspapers, and travelogues. First recognized by Eckstein, who described Phillips's engagement with these sources as a "brilliant montage of long forgotten texts". I add to Eckstein's observations by accentuating other resources present in Phillips's body of work, so as to demonstrate how the Black-British writer, playwright, and essayist has creatively shaped a 'recycled' version of the archive.

In order to examine Phillips's *Crossing the River* and *Cambridge*, the first section in Chapter Two served to remind us of the well-known sources employed by Phillips. Defining his adopted sources is effective in further contextualizing and investigating Phillips's fictional discourse. I centered eighteenth-century slave narratives for their structural and thematic perspectives. Upon selecting a few examples from both sources, this chapter attempts to emphasize the textual dynamics of Phillips's novels, featured by his techniques of montage, collage, and intertextuality. By comparing both texts, I argued that Phillips's fictional texts allow the reader to be granted access to multiple archives in the same narrative. Fiction, therefore, builds a bridge between the past and the present through tropes of remaking, reassembling and repurposing. In doing so, this narrative discourse breathes life into these

archival materials, generating a new fictional archive. As contemporary writers fill the gaps in these archival materials, they revive history's silenced voices.

Not only is *Crossing the River* built around historical and literary archives, in the sense that it rewrites and echoes other narratives, but it is also based on the narrator's contribution in "altering" and "correcting" these texts to give them relevance for the contemporary reader. Despite the apparent concise modified version of Phillips's texts, a sense of duality between the original source of the enslaved African and the new amended version is remarkable. As indicated in the analysis of Phillips's texts, the process of correcting spelling errors and adjusting grammar mistakes might be conceived in itself an alteration and transformation. Visually, Phillips has corrected all the grammar and spelling errors existing in the official version to adapt it to the contemporary reader. The techniques of intertextuality, montage, and collage in Phillips's two novels have been thoroughly studied to highlight the complexity of creating multi-generic texts. In line with the transforming archive, these techniques demonstrate his dynamic "recycling" of historical records. For instance, in contrast to the norms of a slave master reports often including weather forecast, Phillips includes letters that encompass the slave masters' emotions and feelings overlooking insights into enslaved Africans' emotions and interests.

The hybridity of Phillips's fictional texts demonstrates the complexity of the historical records, which most often are heard from the white discourse. The fact that Phillips has decided to add this effective dimension invites us, as readers, to reflect upon the accuracy of these sources. In other words, by inserting and creating an emotional letter written to his wife into Hamilton's logbook, removing all hints of time and dates, prompts the idea of bringing what the archive has failed to reveal.

As demonstrated, in *Cambridge*, Phillips has offset interest of master narratives with narratives of enslaved Africans. Studying Phillips's fictional text leads us to define it as a "novel of transformation"<sup>135</sup>. Importantly, Phillips's transformative approach to the original texts has been explored through his deconstruction of the language of the slave master, explicitly shown in the example of the "slave for sale advertisement". The writer deconstructs the language of the master by giving an alternative to the myriad types of traumas and silence that confine Black identity to a white archive. The result of such a comparison between the

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<sup>135</sup> I borrow this term from Mark Stein's title *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation*, by Mark Stein, 2004. In his study, Stein examines Black British literature most significantly the transformative possibility inscribed in and induced by a heterogenous body of texts.

source and the fictional text engenders another different discourse. The new discourse provided underlines how memory and witnessing are deeply intertwined with the form, which offers the possibility of creating a dialogue between the traditional and the innovative use of the archive that prompts the creation of new Black identity. The fictionalization of the archive echoes Phillips's intention to reveal his desire to play around historical documents and alter them to convey the possibilities of transforming historical records. In a similar vein, Phillips has inscribed the archive into a fictional "mosaic", if one can call it that, using montage and assemblage techniques. This mosaic paradigm enables the reader to freely access history and interact simultaneously on a single platform with both old and new archives. In the process of constructing and reconstructing the archive in fiction, Phillips's approach of recycling can be interpreted as innovative and a way to make new knowledge for the contemporary reader. That line of practice has to be understood in relation to the cultural and aesthetic new dimensions Black British writers have established to inaugurate a new discourse. Phillips's adaptation of the original text enables him to engage with the legacy of colonial history and archive and with its effects on racial identity. In the case of *Crossing the River*, Phillips not only reinscribes the archive with his texts, but also makes his ending more relevant to the present. At the same time, in *Cambridge*, he often uses slave narrative biographies, written by female white masters, juxtaposed against Black voices. Phillips's fictional texts suggest a better understanding of the source as a resource for present issues, thereby producing a more engaged discourse that might serve as a reference for a new archive.

This practice foregrounds the unfinished and dynamic nature of the archive that is open to alternatives, possibilities, alterations, and should be used to serve the present. Phillips is equally concerned with the ways in which Caribbean literature seeks to show its power to rework the canons into a dynamic, hybrid and open-ended fictional corpus that inscribes history, culture, and memory. By recollecting all the fragments and traces left from the past, Phillips brings a sense of novelty that can be perceived as a form of reparation. The investigation of Phillips's novels, as examined in this research, suggests a "recollection of something remembered, a vignette<sup>136</sup> from the past that returns the narrator to an almost forgotten scene" (Begam and Valdez Moses 167).

In keeping with memory, the structure of Phillips's text is often fragmented and non-linear waving between the importance to remember and to forget. It is still difficult to respond

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<sup>136</sup> Richard Begam and Michael Valdez Moses. *Modernism, Postcolonialism, and Globalism Anglophone Literature, 1950's to the Present*, Oxford University Press, 2019, p.167.

to the question of authenticity and excessive reliance on the archive. This study has instead attempted to focus on the emergence of new stimulating fictional discourses that help in the making of a Black discourse often considered as hybrid and complex. Away from notions of imitation, intertextuality, pastiche, and plagiarism, Phillips's adaption of the archive can be understood as a modern innovative approach in which the reader does not lose sight of history and follows at the same time the flow of the present. I argue that the revolutionary and deconstructive quality of the texts and expositions under investigation can be found in the form and structure that they adopt.

Another aspect of the recycling of the archive this study has examined, emanates from the "ekphrastic responses" provided through D'Aguiar's *Feeding the Ghosts* and Dabydeen's *Turner* and *A Harlot's Progress*. These texts expose a new practice in line with the eighteenth-century British archive. David Dabydeen's *A Harlot's Progress* writes back to the archive by suggesting a fictional stage, through which the marginalized Black figures, displayed as invisible in the original source, could have the possibility of making their voices heard. Chapter three has demonstrated the possibilities for literature to give another account to the visual archive. An alternative conception of modernity and a sense of shared community seem to be inventively evoked in the ekphrastic responses to eighteenth-century visual art. Fred D'Aguiar's *Mintah* shares her wounds as a Black woman battling for survival while Mungo tries to learn to live with his ancestors' voices and ghosts to restore their stories. Their complex and postmodern reworkings of the visual archive transpose eighteenth century images onto critical words and figures of twentieth century.

In line with the transforming archive, the legal discourse, represented in the case of *Gregson vs Gilbert*, is also deconstructed by Philip to implement a textual and visual new discourse, without ignoring the fact that almost her poem takes its words from the case. According to Philip, her fragmented poem pays tribute to the lost enslaved Africans through strengthening the ties between the living and the dead. This is articulated in Chapter Four, which indicates the relation established between legal discourse and poetic creativity as a mode of deconstruction of the former. This chapter has sketched out some textual, linguistic, and visual new forms of the archive, in particular through a study of some extracts from Philip's *Zong!*. I have attempted to study the dialectics between silence on the *Zong* massacre, and the linguistic and literary strategies deployed by Philip in *Zong!* to revisit the historical murder. Chapter Four additionally cites selected moments of the legal discourse, i.e., to reconsider how the archive frames the murder case differently from poetic and artistic

responses. In abandoning the English language of the legal document, *Zong!* offers a structural reinvention and re-inscribes the text with footnotes and visual fragmentations. This intertextual relation between the legal discourse and poetic creation deconstructs previous understanding of the legal case. Much has been written already on the legal entanglements of this poetic text, but in this study I have tried to deal chiefly with the textual and visual deconstruction of Philip's *Zong!*, which triggers the second section of this chapter, on the aspect of "visual deconstruction" in Himid's artworks. This approach of deconstruction finds expression in 'curating' the archive, if one can articulate it as such, through Lubaina Himid's deconstruction of eighteenth-century visual art, namely through her installation *A Fashionable Marriage*.

Himid's deconstruction of the order in *A Fashionable Marriage*, subverts the male body and gives room instead to the Black female body to stand in the center. In doing so, Himid offers a provocative response to the visual archive, establishing a new interpretation. As a curator, artist, and African Black woman, Himid seeks to raise her voice providing an evident Black and African powerful presence in her work, that can be traced in color. As mentioned in the analysis, the Black resistant woman who often stands in the center of her exhibitions, the African heritage and names that she used as a celebration to her roots might be interpreted as an appeal for acceptance refusing all sorts of denial and rejection. As a Black artist, Himid seeks a shift from rejection to acceptance and recognition from British society. Her thinking on certain questions of identity and memory progresses in such a way as to create a dialogue, as she puts it in one of her interviews, and not a response. Central to this process, Chapter Four intentionally handles two female voices that I have simultaneously included because of their common thematic concerns and positions.

To represent another discourse wherein language, structure, and voice are undermined, these writers and artists deconstruct the authority of the archive perceived as authentic source of history through their techniques of subversion. The voices these new texts have created foreground a sense of plurality, rejecting the singularity of the archive and generating its multiplicity. Lubaina Himid and M. NourbeSe Philip embody the African voices that carry the memory of loss and suffering through a visual and textual personification of the Atlantic to a place where the silenced other can be recognized. Given this interrelatedness of the archive and power, the task of the poet and writer, as well as the artist, is to subvert and challenge the hegemony of certain textual and visual sources of the past.

The writers' and artists' approaches discussed in this study do not break with the archive since it epitomizes a source and resource of creation. Rather, they seek to intensify the cohesion and necessity to look backward and move forward. This innovative reconstruction of the archive is highlighted in its adaptation to other mediums such as media, art, and theatre. An example of this innovative representation may be found in Himid's installation *Naming the Money*, discussed in Chapter Five. Lubaina Himid endeavors to give life to her wooden Black figures by connecting them to sounds, giving them an 'incarnated' and 'individualized' presence through implementing her own voice. While visualizing her figures, effects of soundtracks heard in the room generate a connection between the audience and the African heritage. In doing so, Himid creates a powerful dialogue between the audience and her visual art by breaking the boundaries of traditional exhibitions and artistic representations of the past and allows performance to take place.

This performance dimension is at the heart of the last chapter, in which I bring to attention other innovative elements in the performing archive. This performance process incorporates "the archive as theatre", which covers how the archive can be staged in fiction. Interestingly, what is remarkable and innovate in D'Aguiar's *mise en scene* of the trial, is the fact of making the historical figures involved in the murder case the main actors in this 'imaginary provocative performance'. What this study has endeavored to bring anew is an interpretation of the scene through identifying theatrical elements inscribed in the text, such as exposition, the play's opening, characters' discourse and gestures, and the audience. My attention turned to the tropes and devices that D'Aguiar has dynamically framed to stage the historical scene where access is granted for his reader to distinguish his critical insights uncovered through the use of tropes of irony and inner vocalization.

This present performativity re-emphasizes the extent to which the archive can be recycled and restaged to address the modern reader and audience. The performing process of the archive can be equally achieved through studying the Black female body as underlined in Philip's performance of her readings, choosing the ocean and the sea as a space of healing and performance. Another aspect that Chapter Five has tried to spotlight emerges in further exploring the various ways in which the archive can be materialized with the Black female body. Envisaging the material and the immaterial within the framework of performing directs our attention again to the performing dimension of the archive. Philip's performances highlight the idea that Black memories can be reincarnated through bodies, which are inherently provocative and communicative. Performing the archive publicly helps to make

these bodies visible, thus creating a new form of Black powerful existence. Additionally, transforming the sea from a graveyard into a rebirth space in Philip's durational readings evokes a new beginning and transforms the sea into a heritage space in contrast to its common connections to death connotations in the context of slavery. In Philip's performances, the duality incorporated in "the sea" as a space of trauma and reincarnation is echoed on the moment Black female performers have explicitly shared their emotions when interacting with the ocean. This cohesion and fusion function as a source of power and resistance that Philip continues to perform yearly. Through engaging herself in this yearly performance task, she continues to commemorate and connect with the past in the present and for the future. The ability of performance creates meanwhile much power in terms of including and thinking about the ethics of the other. In the context of our analysis, the sea can be additionally imagined as an 'ethical and spiritual' space where rituals occur. It appears to be a peaceful spot due to its secrets and visual ambiguity with no boundaries. The fact that these performances begin and end in the same spot may also reflect the space's circularity and continuity as demonstrated in Chapter Five.

Sound, the body and the ocean are intertwined as elements of performance that I put the emphasis on through analyzing Caryl Philip's readings, Joscelyn Gardner's *Omi Eborá's* digital installation, and Lubaina Himid's *Naming the Money*. These works also capture the qualities of emotion, compassion, and acceptance towards the past to establish this sense of continuity to engage with memory to reconstruct the present.

The shift from the material to the digital can be grasped in Gardner's *Omi Eborá* (Yoruba for "spirits of the waters") that involves both the performing and the digitizing aspect of the archive. The attempt to display Gardner's installation in terms of her refiguration of the *Zong!*, breaks with the conventional archive to suggest a combined scene where words from poetry, voices from the past, and waves of the ocean are mixed together in a dynamic and fluid representation. By exposing this digital installation, which is also inspired from another rewriting of the archive, I bring attention to the multiplicity and complexity of the archive, which can be transformed into different textual and digital forms. Therefore, the metamorphic archive is perfectly identified with new forms of interaction and audio-visual dynamics to be thought of out of the box.

By casting out these new shapes, the archiving process can be thought of as a medium where the ethics of the other becomes a necessity. In other words, through this constant shift

and interaction, a sense of alterity has emerged, rejecting singularity and self-reflexivity. The archive is no longer restricted and limited within the dust of the past, but instead offers a new stage where the individual and the community, the self and the other, the material and the immaterial all together shape this fluidity and dynamics. Focusing on these new elements, the archive becomes a space of reconciliation rejecting all sorts of racism and injustice. It seems worth noting how thematic and aesthetic fragmentations inscribed in these texts and artworks foreground a sense of coherence with the contemporary eras. In other words, reflecting on the notion of anachronism, the possibility of incorporating the historical archive into the contemporary text cannot but serve as evidence of the potential of the archive to be fitted with spatial and temporal settings. These performances are expanded to unveil existing global matters, like illegal immigration, political frameworks of injustice, and violence against Blacks.

Moreover, the novel approach that this dissertation has sought to offer lies in the genuine interactions with some of the writers and artists included in the study. For instance, incorporating interviews conducted with David Dabydeen and Lubaina Himid into the analysis might help us to better understand their individual positions when revisiting the past, which is a way to preserve their Black identity. As mentioned in Chapter Three, Dabydeen has shared how *A Harlot's Progress* and *Turner* lead to a sense of “re-construction of archival documents dealing with slavery that, in turn, permit him to understand [his] ancestors and [his] past” (Kingston 2018). His constant concern with the legacy of slavery functions as “a self-discovery” of his own past and identity as a Caribbean writer in an England that he describes “ruined by race”. In order to construct his identity, Dabydeen believes it is necessary to explore the heritage and the records of the past through implementing African discourse, names, and creole language.

In my research, I place emphasis on another aspect of the archive and demonstrated its dynamic and complex nature. The methods I use to frame my analysis evolve around a comparison or identification of the archive in the fictional and poetic text to better distinguish visible differences between both versions. Given that some scholars have already explored such field, I seek to bring to the fore different features that delineated the archiving process as dynamics that further produce and open to alternatives and possibilities.

The new performing and performative aspect of the archive can be described as a form of reparation and conciliation from the trauma of history.



Despite this difficult comparative approach, this study utilizes a “multidirectional”<sup>137</sup> framework for thinking about the archiving process. It has tried to offer new politics of commemoration inscribed in the rewriting of history to remember the past through the dynamics of the archive. In a slightly different context, in his study *Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (2009), Michael Rothberg further elaborates what he calls, *multidirectional* memory to explain “the interaction of different memories of the Holocaust that illustrate the productive intercultural dynamic” (Rothberg 4). Seeking to define this term, Rothberg states: “I suggest that we consider memory as *multidirectional*, as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and privative” (Rothberg 3). Building on Rothberg’s definitions of memory, this multidirectional approach can be aligned with the archive in terms of its productive ongoing process. I argued that the archive should be both competitive and comparative to create this aspect of “multidirectionality” addressing legacies of slavery and racism. In this respect, Rothberg has called for “multidirectional memory” against “competitive memory” as he considers collective memory as indivisible, rather than collective histories merge dialogically. This study’s structure reflects on this aspect of dialogism, by merging different writers, artists, disciplines, and approaches together, it serves to acknowledge an archival process as constantly in flux. Projecting into futuristic insights, the archive as process remains in a constant movement of “becoming” to serve the present and moving forward. The progressive turning from traditional to modern mediums replicate also a shift from the individual to the collective memory. This examination of the textual and visual archives leads to a consideration of new methodological insights into those same sources as well as a renewed embodiment of cultural heritage.

At the heart of this investigation on the transforming archive lies another key aspect which is the temporal and spatial accessibility of the archive. This process of digitization and virtual access help in the paradigms of keeping the archive ‘alive’ and ‘accessible’. As mentioned in the analysis, Philip continues to keep her yearly “ritual” of the *Zong!* readings active and accessible, promoting this digital transition of heritage. Consequently, this engaging practice operates as a new method of regularly producing and reproducing the archive, which in itself serves as a medium of commemoration and interaction. It is about constructing and revisiting the past through the digital archiving process that facilitate access

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<sup>137</sup> Michael Rothberg, *Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, Stanford University Press, 2009.

to archival materials, catalogues, special collections, and exhibitions today. This digital engagement and ‘revolution’ continue to emerge strengthening the interaction with the other, building community bridges, and opening up a potentially more productive approach. A great example of such practice can be found in “Memorial to Zong virtual Tour Exhibition”, displayed in the Lancaster Maritime Museum as a permanent digital exhibition. In doing so, museums also play a crucial role in spreading awareness about Black heritage and enhance the visibility of Black artists’ productions. Such undertaking breaks with the limits of space and time, away from any possibilities of erasure and amnesia.

Although this is the conclusion of this thesis, it is not quite a closure in the typical sense of the term. Indeed, many of the key aims of this thesis were addressed in Chapter Five, which itself functioned as an opening to other digital refiguration of the past. There is, however, a few areas of concerns that I have not yet reflected on—namely, the visual dimension of the archive on screen. The fact of displaying the archive on screen leads to a cultural revolution and a preservation of memory. Film and series are brought to the screen to further visual aspects of “visualizing” the past. Mindful of the effects and potential of digital networking for visualizing the past and the multimedia evolution, the cinematographic medium can be an efficient area for future research, bringing together the archive and the visual to further investigate the dynamics of the archive. Not only writers and artists but also filmmakers and producers have used their creative versions to revise and re-visualize the archive. It is beyond the scope of this study to provide an extensive list of all the movies made around slavery. Nevertheless, it might be pertinent to include some of the movies whose stories moved the audience and made them reconsider the atrocities of slavery over time. The digital practice of projecting the archive on screen can serve as a vehicle for cultural change and the preservation of memory. In short, movies, series, and visual media have influenced the audience, creating an emotional bond to the past. The audience is significantly affected by the visual representation inscribed in movies and television series about slavery. Amma Asante’s *Belle* (2013), *Roots* (1977), *The Book of Negroes* (2015), *12 Years a Slave* (2014), *Emancipation* (2022), are just a few examples. As a matter of fact, re-telling the history of slavery to the modern generation engenders a revival of the past and prevents its amnesia. Producing emotional effects and individual experiences on the viewer and the audience contribute to preserving the knowledge of history, especially when displaying historical atrocities like slavery and the Holocaust.

As its title suggests, I invoke the term ‘transforming’ due to its articulations with aspects of complexity, interdisciplinary, materiality, and immateriality. Putting a special emphasis on the performing aspect, this academic study has reflected upon the politics of telling, showing, and performing history. These reproductions further raise awareness on current issues in terms of Black identities and foreground interactions in which resistance and power are at stage. The aim of these writers and artists lies in exposing this challenge to gain more knowledge of history. The performing potential of the archive promises new insightful possibilities for the future of how we see Black identity. It invites a new discourse that crosses both discipline and genre globally, in an attempt to deepen our knowledge and strengthen an ethics of alterity.

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## Résumé

Cette thèse, intitulée « Les Archives en mutation : une étude de Caryl Phillips, David Dabydeen, Fred D'Aguiar, Lubaina Himid et Marlène NourbeSe Philip », propose une réflexion sur l'utilisation des archives dans la littérature des Caraïbes ainsi que dans les arts contemporains. Contrairement aux interprétations traditionnelles de l'archive comme étant statique et manquant de dynamisme, ce projet montre le processus de transformation et les possibilités de métamorphoses de l'archive lorsque celle-ci est placée au cœur de la création littéraire et artistique. Nous montrons comment l'archive devient une ressource active que les auteur.e.s et les artistes revisitent et transforment afin de créer une archive nouvelle qui déconstruit les conceptions héritées et ouvre de nouvelles voies dans les discours sur la traite transatlantique. Comment ces textes parviennent-ils à réécrire, à revisiter et à archiver une nouvelle fois l'histoire grâce à un regard rétrospectif sur les atrocités du passé ? Comment l'archive inspire-t-elle plusieurs genres fictionnels contemporains ? Nous répondons à ces questions en analysant quelques œuvres fictionnelles et poétiques de Caryl Phillips, David Dabydeen, Fred D'Aguiar et M. NourbeSe Philip, ainsi que la pratique artistique contemporaine de Lubaina Himid. A travers une approche déconstructive, comparative et interdisciplinaire, cette thèse explore les nouvelles versions textuelles et visuelles que ces auteur.e.s et artistes ont créées à partir de documents textuels et visuels. La recherche met en évidence les mutations de l'archive en démontrant sa nouvelle nature performative et digitale, jetant un regard nouveau sur la traite transatlantique. Nous observerons comment par ces mutations auteur.e.s et artistes posent un œil critique sur les injustices et les traumatismes que les archives ont passés sous silence, comment ils ajoutent une dimension émotionnelle à des documents historiques afin de montrer que l'archive peut être source de métamorphoses lorsqu'elle est utilisée dans toute sa multiplicité et qu'elle est réinventée. Nous montrons comment auteur.e.s et artistes non seulement interviennent dans la lecture des sources, mais aussi ébranlent notre lecture de l'histoire par l'inscription créative de ces documents dans leurs textes, poèmes et réalisations artistiques.

**Mots clés :** archive, littérature des Caraïbes, métamorphoses, mémoire, la traite

Transatlantique, art visuels

## Abstract

This thesis, entitled “The Transforming Archive: A Study of Caryl Phillips, David Dabydeen, Fred D’Aguiar, Lubaina Himid and Marlene NourbeSe Philip”, explores the use of the archive in Caribbean literature and contemporary arts. Contrary to traditional interpretations of the archive as static and lacking dynamism, this project shows the process of transformation and the possibilities of metamorphosis of the archive when put at the heart of literary and artistic creation. We examine how the archive becomes an active resource that authors and artists revisit and transform in order to create a new archive that deconstructs inherited conceptions and breaks new ground in discourses on the transatlantic slave trade. How do these texts manage to rewrite, revisit, and archive history anew, looking back on the atrocities of the past while moving forward? How does the archive inspire several contemporary fictional genres? We answer these questions by analyzing a selection of fictional and poetic works by Caryl Phillips, David Dabydeen, Fred D’Aguiar and M. Nourbese Philip, as well as art works by Lubaina Himid. Through a deconstructive, comparative, and interdisciplinary approach, this thesis explores new textual and visual versions that their authors and artists have created from textual and visual documents. The research highlights the metamorphoses of the archive as it becomes performative and digital, taking a new critical look at the transatlantic slave trade. We investigate the ways in which these transformations have made it possible for writers and artists to critically examine the injustices and traumas the archive has silenced, how they add an emotional dimension to these historical documents. This project demonstrates how authors and artists not only intervene in the reading of the sources, but also challenge our reading of history by inscribing creatively these records in their texts, poems, and art works.

**Key Words:** archive, Caribbean literature, metamorphosis, memory, transatlantic slave trade, visual art

