

Identity, Belonging & Othering in Caryl Phillips's  
*Cambridge*

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JOHANNA MUUKKONEN: "Identity, Belonging & Othering in Caryl Phillips's *Cambridge*"

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Tarkastelen työssäni identiteettiä, kuulumista paikkaan ja toiseutta Caryl Phillipsin kirjassa *Cambridge*. Näitä jälkikolonisaation teemoja pohditaan kirjassa erilaisista positioista käsin. Yksi on valkoisen naisen asema, joka viktoriaanisessa Englannissa oli vain vähän lapsen asemaa korkeampi. Toinen on mustan koulutetun miehen asema, joka taas oli jo itsessään harvinainen. Ja kolmas näkökulmana on valkoisen valtaväestön. Se ilmenee kirjassa lyhyenä sanomalehtikuvaksena tapahtumista.

Tutkin sitä, kuinka stereotyyppit ja oletukset sekä valkoisista keskiluokan naisista että mustista vaikuttavat siihen, minkälaisista käytöistä näiltä ryhmiltä odotettiin. Kysyn myös sitä, kuinka kirjan hahmot rakentuvat näissä oletuksissa. Kuinka kirjan henkilöt identifioivat itsensä ja konstruoivat toiseutta, sekä mihin he kokevat kuuluvansa? Tutkielman alussa selvitän kirjan tapahtumien historiallisen ja yhteiskunnallisen kontekstin. Tästä käsin voidaan tarkastella sitä, mikä oli naisten asema kyseisen ajan Englannissa eri yhteiskunnallisissa kerrostumissa. Erittelen myös mustien historiaa Englannin maaperällä, sekä orjuuden historiaa.

Tutkielmassa käytän Stuart Hallin identiteettiteoriaa sekä Frantz Fanonin teoriaa kolonisoitujen ihmisten maailmankuvasta valkoisen maailman normien paineessa. Sovellan myös Kirsi Juhilan käsitettä leimatusta identiteetistä. Olen myös käyttänyt täydentävänä aineistona Caryl Phillipsin lausuntoja, matkakertomuksia, haastatteluja ja esseekokoelmaa analysoidessani syitä *Cambridgen* kirjoittamiseen ja toiseutta koskevien asenteiden suhteelliseen muuttumattomuuteen tietovarannossamme.

Identiteettikäsitteet ovat muuttuneet vuosien kuluessa ja kuulumista yhteisöön lähestytään nykypäivänä hieman eri näkökulmista verrattuna kirjan tapahtumien aikaan. Emilyllä ja Cambridgella oli kova työ, kun he yrittivät olla valitsemiensa yhteisöjen täysivaltaisia jäseniä. Nykyisin liikkuvammat identiteetit saavat hybridisiä muotoja ja ihmisten on mahdollista sukuloida eri positioiden välillä. Kirjan henkilöiltä tämä mahdollisuus puuttuu. Heille identiteetin joidenkin osien kieltäminen tai oletettujen ominaisuuksien puuttuminen aiheuttavat rajoituksia. Näin ollen tutkielma valaisee jälkikolonialistisessa ajassa tärkeitä teemoja kuten identiteetin moninaisuutta ja hybridiluonnetta. Ajankohtaisissa maahanmuutto- ja monikulttuurisuuskeskusteluissa *Cambridgella* ja tällä tutkielmalla on käyttöä, kun pohdimme kuulumista ja identiteettiä toiseuden kautta.

Avainsanat: Identiteetti, kuuluminen, toiseus, kolonialismi, orjuus, Englanti

# Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Historical &amp; Social Context</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 Victorian Women	5
2.2 Black People in Britain	10
2.3 Slavery	14
<b>3. Theory on Identity Construction</b>	<b>19</b>
3.1 Identity, National Identity & Othering	19
3.2 Categorization & Stigmatized Identity	24
3.3 Colonisation & its Effects on the Identity of the Colonised	27
<b>4. Of This World, of That Realm: Emily – “A Child of a Larger Growth”</b>	<b>33</b>
4.1 Othering as a Part of Identity Construction	33
4.2 Belonging & Feeling at Home	45
4.3 The Strength of Dominant World Views	54
<b>5. Cambridge – “An Englishman, albeit a Little Smudgy of Complexion!”</b>	<b>60</b>
5.1 Othering & Englishness	60
5.2 An Outsider that Belongs	69
5.3 Historical Fiction, Fictional History & the High Anxiety of Belonging	76
<b>6. Conclusion</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>93</b>

## 1. Introduction

A sense of identity, belonging and being part of a group or community have always existed. These images were constructed against the Other; those who were different from the group and who therefore did not belong. This separation between them and us helped create a sense of shared values and identity within the perceived group or community (Hall, 1996, 2). These boundaries have always existed and have been created to protect, include and exclude, and continue to be used so now as they were in the past.

Belonging, identity, rootlessness, migration (both forced and voluntary), and a nostalgia for a homeland that is elevated to a mythical position in the minds of the characters are recurring themes in many post-colonial texts. These themes are particularly central to both the fictional as well as non-fictional writings of Caryl Phillips, who has written diversely on topics such as the Holocaust, illegal immigration, migration and the slave trade. Caryl Phillips was born on the Caribbean island of St. Kitts, but moved to Leeds with his parents at the age of 12 weeks . Later, as a young man he moved to New York and has since then lived back in the Caribbean, and more recently has divided his time between the United States and England. (Ledent, 2002, 2) Perhaps due to his personal migrations and attempts to find where he belongs,<sup>1</sup> many of his works are set in the past and discuss the themes already mentioned from varying angles. He has stated that history is an important concept to him: “I am still deeply committed to the notion of “history” being the fundamental window through which we have to peer in order to see ourselves clearly.”

([www.dublinquarterly.com](http://www.dublinquarterly.com))

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<sup>1</sup> In the preface of *The European Tribe* “...a Europe I feel both of and not of.”(1987, ix) & in the introduction to *A New World Order* (2002) “....Africa....I feel at home here, but I don’t belong. I am of, and not of, this place.”(1) “....New York....I am of, and not of, this place.”(2) “...Leeds....my ‘Home’...Who am I? how do I explain who I am?...”(4).

The book I have chosen for this study, *Cambridge*<sup>2</sup> (1991) is also set in the past, between the years of the abolition of the slave trade in the United Kingdom in 1807, and the emancipation of the slaves in 1834<sup>3</sup>. *Cambridge* tells the separate, yet integrated stories of two protagonists who are both writing from subjugated positions. First we read of Emily Cartwright, a plantation owner's daughter, who sets sail for an unnamed Caribbean island<sup>4</sup> where her father's plantation is located. On her return she is supposed to marry an older widower with three children, to support her through life. She sets off for the Caribbean with an abolitionist mind-set and on her return intends to hold a lecture tour on the evils of slavery. However, her outlook and ideas change radically on the plantation, and her ideas become contradictory to her previous values as she begins to question her idea of home and her identity on meeting the Other.

Emily's story is followed by an account of the events by a man of African origin, who, for simplicity's sake, I shall be referring to as Cambridge (as he has several different names throughout the book). Cambridge was captured in Africa and brought to England where he serves a white English gentleman. Later on in the book he is a free man working as a Missionary. Unluckily for him, he gets tricked, and forced back into slavery on the Cartwright's plantation. Cambridge is a religious man, who holds himself in higher esteem in relation to the other black slaves, due to his English education, Christian beliefs and firm grasp of the English language. He has a Eurocentric sense of the world and regards himself as an Englishman. Despite his own identification with the white Europeans they cannot countenance the idea of a black man as their equal, or as English.

Phillips does not feel that England has seen a great cultural change from these attitudes over time: "I don't think there has been much cultural shift.... People continue to be upright about

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<sup>2</sup> Abbreviated to (*Cam*) when used as a reference in this work.

<sup>3</sup> The National Archives website gives the year of full emancipation as 1838 as this is when the Caribbean slaves were actually freed, despite the Slave Emancipation Act of 1833 that came into force the following year in 1834. ([www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk))

<sup>4</sup> It is very possible, although irrelevant, that the island is St. Kitts. In *A New World Order* Phillips mentions the name of the main road in St. Kitts which is called Island Rd., and in *Cambridge* (22) Emily writes of the main "island road".

miscegenation of all kinds--sexual, religious, class 'transgressions' are still frowned upon. It's still hard to be friendly to the 'other' in many parts of England." (www.dublinquarterly.com). As these are a persisting problem today, I will endeavour to find out how issues similar to those depicted in the fictional accounts in *Cambridge* in the 19<sup>th</sup> century might have changed in the time leading up to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and which factors were at play in the context and time that the book's events take place in. Despite the unity that is implied by the notion that we live in a multicultural world, these worlds are still, to a large extent, very separate. Many of the questions Caryl Phillips raises in his books are still relevant. In the Victorian era<sup>5</sup>, the world although multicultural too, was more divided in terms of colour and gender than it is today (at least in the West). In order to understand the separation that exists today, we need to look back in history to comprehend why this might still be so in our time. As Mirja Kuurola notes, Phillips "...explores the foundations of our post-modern world through the window of past discourses, in this way offering present-day readers his own insights into the experience of cross-cultural encounter and the management of human otherness." (2007, 129)

I will analyse the notions of identity, belonging and Othering, and what role they play for the two main characters in *Cambridge*. This particular book provides two juxtaposed accounts from different perspectives, and from two oppressed positions set in the Victorian era. It also includes a short newspaper article that is written from a position of power, a prologue and an epilogue. The research questions that I will aim to answer are: What kind of role does Othering play in the identities of Emily and Cambridge? Where do they feel they belong? And how the past affects the present an connected to this, why Phillips may have chosen to write *Cambridge*? First, there is a short description of the socio-historical context that the book is set in to portray the prevailing cultural ideas and circumstances of the era. Victorian women, the history of black people in Britain, in addition to the history of slavery and the Middle Passage are of concern here to map out the

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<sup>5</sup> This thesis concentrates on the Victorian era as the most dramatic events in the book take place in this later time, although the book straddles both the Victorian era and the Georgian period that preceded it.

conditions and context the book is set in. This is followed by the theory section, which includes theories from different fields such as cultural studies, namely through Stuart Hall's theory on identity and identity construction, social theory, particularly the notion of stigmatized identity as this applies to the characters in the book, and I also approach the topic through post-colonial theorist Frantz Fanon's books *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (2001) to gain a better understanding of the psyche of colonised and black people and their worldview *vis-à-vis* the white world. The analysis part endeavours to bring new information on *Cambridge* regarding my chosen themes. Finally, there will be the conclusion, where the main findings of this thesis are presented and discussed.

There have been some previous studies on *Cambridge*, for example Evelyn O'Callaghan (1993) has approached *Cambridge* from an inter-textual viewpoint in her essay "Historical Fiction and Fictional History: Caryl Phillips's *Cambridge*" as Emily's story is written in the style of, and heavily relies on actual diary entries or travelogues of women in the Victorian age. *Cambridge's*, on the other hand, relies on slave narratives. Bénédicte Ledent's book *Caryl Phillips – Contemporary World Writers* (2002) takes a critical look at Phillips's body of work. There is also a study on migratory male figures in Phillips's novels by Elena Machado Sáez (2005), but I have not come across any research solely on *Cambridge* that discusses the issues this thesis deals with in depth.

## 2. Historical & Social Context

Here, I will briefly sketch out the historical and social context of the time the book's events take place starting with white Victorian women, followed by the history of the black, mainly male population in Britain. The ordering is based on the order the narratives are presented to us in *Cambridge*. This look into the past, highlights some of the restrictions and values of the time, and sheds light on the values of the era that both shaped and influenced the identities of people. The last sub-chapter deals with the history of slavery and how it evolved into such a huge institution.

Understanding these aspects of history help understand the narratives in *Cambridge* in the right context.

### 2.1 Victorian women

Stuart Hall has noted that the West has not only considered countries and peoples outside Europe as their Other. For example, internal Others have consisted of the Irish<sup>6</sup>, Jews and women. Throughout European history Jews and women have formed under-classes (Hall, 1999, 83). Emily's position in *Cambridge* gives us an example of this related to this study. Even today, men and women still use Victorian standards to define themselves by either defending or reacting against some of the notions that were prevalent in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and in many societies women are still struggling to achieve equality and freedom from these values.

Modern "objective" social science, born during the Victorian period, both incorporated and legitimized Victorian prejudices about gender, the family, work, and the division between public and private spheres. These inherited categories still influence the way we organize our information, not only about ourselves, but about cultures different from our own. (Hellerstein, Hume & Offen, 1981, 1)

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<sup>6</sup> Elsewhere Hall notes that Ireland was Great Britain's first "colony" and that the Irish were the first group to be 'racialised'. (Hall, 246, 2003) Elliott (1989, 4) notes that Ireland was a model for later colonisation.



Although this was written almost thirty years ago, it still applies to some extent as shall be shown later. Industrialisation changed the way agriculture and manufacturing were carried out by mechanising production and concentrating the labour force. The rapid increase and uneven distribution of wealth increased class conflict, social dislocation and social fear. (Hellerstein & al., 1981, 1) The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw a growth in the urban industrial economy which led to the emergence of a powerful middle class with varied levels of income and occupations. This created the need for a clear class identity, to differentiate from classes both above and below. With more and more people cramming into the cities, some of the rich started to leave the city centres for the suburbs, as they viewed the cities as increasingly dangerous places filled with poor riotous mobs. (Nead, 1998, 32) The countryside was constructed as a static environment, where values were permanent and natural, although naturally this image was also challenged by evoking the city as a place of civilization and progress. Nead notes that “Paradoxically, this polarization of the city and the country took place at exactly the time when distinctions between town and country were being broken down...the social organization of rural England was no longer isolated from the social political and economic organization of the country as a whole; industrial and agricultural development were closely interrelated.” (Nead, 1998, 39) Nevertheless, this image of an untainted rural life, of old England, formed the backbone of the rural tradition and of a national identity (Ibid. 40-42). A more detailed description of national identity and its components is formulated in the theory section.

The separation of home and work developed and resulted in the cult of domesticity during the final years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although the idea of separate spheres was by no means new to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the obsessive way in which it was insisted on seems to be new (Hellerstein & al., 1981, 3). Nead observes that the separation of spheres had a profound effect on how gender identities were constructed (1998, 32). Women were increasingly forced to choose the role of homemaker or earn a small wage, a dichotomy which survives into our time and is probably the most enduring legacy of the Victorian period (Hellerstein & al., 1981, 2). Even today this is a

topic igniting heated discussions. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century women of upper- and middle-class suffered greater restrictions from gender differentiation as they were more subject to the separate spheres and the doctrines of domesticity, whereas working-class women often struggled with both paid work and large families which did, however, afford them some independence (Bradley, 1996, 109). Despite the women's sphere being described as "the domestic Empire", for the lower orders in practise it often meant a poorly ventilated room where the whole family lived, and sometimes worked too. For the women of middle and also upper classes, the sphere of which they allegedly ruled came to lose its isolation and autonomy as standardized printed advice from doctors, educators and other professionals on private issues such as sexuality, childbirth and raising children flooded their homes, replacing the traditional female culture of orally transmitting knowledge. (Freedman & Hellerstein, 1981, 118-119)

The cult of domesticity was founded largely on shared ideas of morality, respectability, domestic ideology and the production of clear gender roles. These codes of conduct were fragmented and often contradictory when it came to notions of sexuality, and their origins arose from a combination of 19<sup>th</sup> century concepts of moral, religious, economic and cultural systems (Nead, 1998, 5, 8). In addition to industrialisation and its effects, demographic changes also had an impact on the lives of women. Life expectancy rose and with the increase in population there was more pressure on the people in rural areas, which resulted in a slow decrease in birth-rates and increased migration both internally to cities to find jobs, and internationally, to the New World and other parts of the globe. (Hellerstein & al., 1981, 2)

The definition of respectability for ladies in British society rested heavily on the dichotomy of virgin/whore. This was not a new idea since it had existed from pre-Christian times but it gained a stronger foothold in later centuries. Ideas of chastity were most rigorously applied to white middle class women and it was also an important aspect of marriage and home life. If a woman displayed strong or immoral sexual conduct, she was considered to be exhibiting deviant or pathological

behaviour. Women were supposed to possess a weak and passive sexuality, whereas men were considered to be active and aggressive sexually. Respectability, with its strong double standards, meant different things for men and women. For women, it meant and was defined by being dependant and fragile. Independence was deemed unnatural and deviant behaviour which could be interpreted as boldness or sexual deviancy. (Nead, 1998, 5-6, 28)

For men, unchaste behaviour was regarded as regrettable but unavoidable, an indulgence of natural urges. For women, it was by far a larger and irreversible issue. It meant letting down ones family, home, father and husband — a fall from honour with all its finality. (Nead, 1998, 33-34)

Emily provides us with an example of this fall in *Cambridge* (1991) and the white men in the book of how little their conduct mattered as shall be shown in the following chapters. Women were seen as complimentary to men and deemed fit only for the domestic sphere, the angel of the house, where as the public sphere of business and politics was the man's dominion. Economic dependency was guaranteed by female inheritance laws, which meant money could only be received when a marriage settlement had been made, or through a trust which male relatives looked after. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century these were seen as natural rather than repressive on the whole. (Nead, 1998, 28-29)

Nead states that the contradictory images of the century were also carried over to the ways in which women from different classes were seen. Physical frailty was considered a sign of respectable femininity for the middle and upper classes, so women from these classes were often continually in a state of sickness, whereas working class women who were robust and healthy were viewed as a source of infection and disease due to their supposed immorality (Nead, 1998, 29-30) which arose through their construction as Other compared to middle and upper class women. Class and ethnic background played a part in how women were viewed. As a result of the upper and middle class women being morally bound up with the image of “angels”, the picture of the overtly sexualised woman was projected onto the Other by Victorian moralists and social scientists. This left the lower class, slave and foreign women very vulnerable to exploitation (Freedman &

Hellerstein, 1981, 125; Hall, 1999, 114). An example in *Cambridge* is Christiania, who at the age of ten is given as a “wife” to a man on the plantation and later she is raped by the overseer Mr Brown (*Cam*, 158).

Deviant behaviour was defined in relation to domestic values and the image of prostitute served as a paradigm of modern urban life. Domestic disorder followed the woman who had fallen in moral disrepute, as the ideologies of home and the separate spheres formed the base of an ideal middle-class marriage. (Nead, 1998, 34) Immorality was tied to slow population growth and economic stagnation and in accordance to this, improved morals and more marriages led to population growth and the colonial expansion in an 1851 census showing the “Civil or Conjugal Condition of the People”. Thus, moral and sexual behaviour was tied to a discourse of population demographics and economics. Class anxieties were also soothed through commonly held family values, which were hoped to have a unifying effect. (Ibid, 1998, 35-36)

The decision about marrying, an issue also addressed in *Cambridge*, took on new weight in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Life expectancy had risen, and women were aware that a bad marriage was hard to escape from due to customs and laws. Courtship was a step in trying to ensure that mistakes would be minimized in an era where romantic love started to emerge alongside the old notion of marriage as a “mode of transportation through life” (Freedman & Hellerstein, 1981, 120; *Cam*, 3).

Spinsterhood remained rare in England, with 85-88% of women marrying at the end of the century. Despite all the strict moral values, women had more freedom in choosing their partners than their mothers had had, and arranged marriages were becoming less the norm (Freedman & Hellerstein, 1981, 121). Emily in *Cambridge* does not have the opportunity to choose her own husband; her marriage is arranged by her father.

Her narrative portrays her as a fairly typical woman of her time regarding her values and the tight moral atmosphere she has been brought up in, but in other ways she is not typical at all. For example, she is able to go to the Caribbean before her intended marriage, which was unusual as the

Caribbean suffered from a continuous lack of white women (particularly single ones). Emily is from an upper-middle class family and is therefore, more privileged than many women were during the Victorian era, although her class position also comes with restraints, particularly regarding the behaviour expected of her. I shall return to Emily later. Another section of British society was also without much power, or even human value. Here we turn to the black population of Britain and their lives from their first known presence to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## 2.2 Black people in Britain

The first black people to arrive in Britain are thought to have been part of the Roman army, although there is not much evidence as to how long they stayed or where they went ([www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk) & [www.channel4.com](http://www.channel4.com)). According to Panikos Panayi, the first black slaves arrived in Britain at the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and were attached to the court of King James IV of Scotland. In England, the first five slaves arrived in 1555. However, as their numbers steadily increased, hostility arose towards them in 1590, which resulted in Queen Elizabeth authorising the deportation of all “Blackamoors” from her realm in 1601. During the early years of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Britain had a very small black population, but from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century their numbers increased significantly. The estimate for the black population in the 18<sup>th</sup> century is 10,000-15,000, with the overwhelming majority being male, residing in the major port cities of London, Bristol and Liverpool. (Panayi, 1994, 15- 17)

Some alarmist sources, including the *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1764, estimated the figure at 20,000 in London alone, but these were more motivated by the desire to have the Africans (or black Britons)<sup>7</sup> ferried out, than reality (Winder, 2004, 129). It is difficult to estimate their number accurately, as the first national census was not taken until 1801 and even that was of limited scope.

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<sup>7</sup> Winder uses the term free Africans but since there had been black people in Britain from early on in history, they could be referred to as Black Britons, Phillips notes they felt they belonged there to some extent (Phillips, 2002, 252).

In addition to this, Chinese and Indian people were also referred to as blacks, and if they were not Christians their lives were not recorded in Parish records either. ([www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk) 1)

Winder clarifies that “Modern historians have combed parish lists, baptismal and marriage registers, criminal records, sales contracts and property tallies and have extrapolated these into a more or less plausible estimate of ten thousand.” (2004, 130) For the white people of Britain though, “...the African or Caribbean presence was striking enough to ignite heated outbreaks of distaste for ‘colonies of Hottentots’.” (Winder, 2004, 130)

Most were brought over as slaves and worked as butlers, stable boys, grooms, valets or servants for the upper class or people with money (Panayi, 1994, 17-18; Winder, 2004, 130). In theory, their status was uncertain. In 1706, Lord Chief Justice Holt declared that no man could have property in another and that there was no such thing as a slave by English laws. Later on the issue arose again when

In 1731 the Lord Mayor of London ruled that ‘No negroes shall be bound apprentices to any Tradesman or Artificer in this City’. So inevitably they ended up for the most part in ‘service’, initially only in the most fashionable households. Black servants soon became an elegant (and cheap) way of complementing and setting off the pale skin of their owners. A duchess could hardly afford to be seen in public without a dashing black companion, lavishly dressed in brocade and a turban, and given a heroic name like Pompey or Caesar, Scipio or Socrates. (Winder, 2004, 131)

Both legal judgements went largely ignored and even if the black population were legally free, they were barred from paid employment. The quote exemplifies how in rich households, slaves were treated almost as pets and through their Otherness, they showed off the status of their masters and these were the lucky ones. (Winder, 131, 132) Cambridge, in his narrative also mentions the contradiction between the law and actual practise, and the confusion this created regarding the status of black people in England (*Cam*, 147) and how blacks were like fashion accessories (*Cam*, 142-143). I will return to these issues in more detail in the analysis section.

Winder shows how little weight legislation carried, as slavery was again technically outlawed in Britain in 1772, when Judge Mansfield made a legal landmark by ruling that a slave boy named

Somerset could not be forced by his owner to board a ship. Somerset, (named after a town in England, as is the main character in *Cambridge*), was brave enough to claim he was free and set himself as a test case of British law. This legal judgement went ignored again, and Mansfield later declared that he had not outlawed slavery but merely ruled that slaves could not be forced to leave the country if they did not so wish. This ruling however, that had been well followed by the black population in London, helped bind the free Africans into a community in a loose sense of the word. After the trial, a black ball was organised in a pub to celebrate. (Winder, 2004, 134-136)

Cruelty to blacks was common and the black population was justified in fearing the authorities and forced migration. There are known cases where some of the unwanted population were rounded up in the streets with the intention of ferrying them back to Africa, along with 59 white “wives” who were in fact prostitutes, as well as cases of Africans being thrown overboard slave ships in fear of there not being enough water for the crew. (Winder, 2004, 142-143) Others belonging to the unwanted or unprivileged section of society, such as pick-pockets and criminals were sent to Australia. These examples illustrate the value, or lack of it, that was attributed to people with a different ethnic background, or those who could not live along the strict moral codes of the Victorian era due to their social status. They were like garbage that was better to be shipped out of sight than left to litter the streets.

There were very few black people who rose to any position of prominence in these times. A few who did included Job Ben Solomon, a self-taught genius who ended up working for the British Museum as an Arabic translator. Francis Williams, a poet and protégé of Samuel Johnson, was another to rise above the rank allocated to him. There was also Phyllis Wheatley<sup>8</sup>, who was hailed as a poet and a child prodigy and marvelled at for making lines rhyme, despite being “an uncultivated barbarian”. Ignatius Sancho is also mentioned in the history books; he was the first black Briton of African descent to be given an obituary in the British press and had a book of his

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<sup>8</sup> Wheatley arrived from Boston in 1772 and stayed as the guest of the Countess of Huntingdon. Wheatley was treated mainly as a “bizarre circus act”. (Winder, 138- 139)

letters on current-affairs published posthumously. It was at his shop that many members of the informal black community gathered. Olaudah Equiano also has to be remembered. In addition to being an author, he was also a political activist and helped on several legal cases. Cambridge's narrative is largely based on Sancho's writings and Equiano's first-hand slave narrative that also helped the abolitionist cause by gathering more supporters. (Winder, 2004, 137-138, 140-142)

Panayi claims that amongst the black population, there was no clear class structure as it consisted of relatively small communities (1994, 18). I believe Panayi means that there were not such clear demarcations between the blacks of different status as there were with whites of different classes because, as has been demonstrated, some black people managed to gain some prominence in society, although they were never treated as much more than amusing characters by white people. Also the fact that they were discriminated against so heavily might have helped in creating a stronger sense of unity amongst them. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a black ethnicity had developed in London. This largely disappeared at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century because the number of blacks arriving in Britain declined and there were very few black women, so black men married white women whose children "disappeared into white society" (Panayi, 1994, 18; Winder 2004, 145) rather than mingled or connected with the black people of Britain.

Some masters were kind to their slaves and remembered them in their wills. Such was the fate of Lord Mansfield's slave girl Elizabeth Dido, who was freed and left with a £100 annually. (Winder, 138) These cases were an exception though, and for the most part the black population in Britain was scorned at and lived from hand to mouth by busking, peddling goods and prostituting around their dilapidated tenements known as "rookeries". For most free black women, there were only two options, either pick-pocketing or prostitution<sup>9</sup> (Winder, 138-139) or for a lucky few, laundry and sewing work (Panayi 1994, 18). In the same way as black men were feared as sexual

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<sup>9</sup> In *Oliver Twist* Charles Dickens portrays Nancy as being a pickpocket in her childhood before turning to prostitution although this is somewhat ambiguously portrayed in the book and never stated directly in the text. However, according to Laurie Langbauer in the 1841 preface to *Oliver Twist* Dickens wrote that "the girl is a prostitute." (Dickens quoted in Langbauer 1986, 412). The description of Nancy's life portrays the limited options available to poor women of any colour in Victorian Britain.



predators, so were the women who were also vilified for being pernicious temptresses. (Winder 2004, 139)

Even those black people who did manage to make a decent living or rose to some prominence as previously mentioned, were treated as either some sort of circus act or relied on patronage to be able to achieve such a position. On the whole though, they lived a sorry existence and had to keep a low profile for fear of rising above their assigned station. They made a living as best they could, which was not easy when paid employment was legally barred. This drove many to be live-in servants and the unluckier ones on to the streets. Due to the inhumane value attached to them and their supposed barbaric nature, improving their lives was difficult to achieve as societal structures allowed them little room to manoeuvre. Despite all this, they managed to have a good network for communicating with each other and some degree of social life. Next, I turn to examine the conditions that caused the massive demographic changes and the major migrations of many peoples of the world.

## **2. 3 Slavery**

Slavery has existed in almost every complex society around the world, although it has often meant domestic slavery. Few peoples have escaped it and in most cases, the slaves have been treated as "...outsiders, rootless and ahistorical individuals ultimately held against their will by the threat of force." (Klein, 1986, 1) However, where slavery came to be recognised as an essential institution, it was the lack of ties, be it to kin, family or community that separated them from other workers, since true slaves were completely dependant on their masters with no linkages or bindings of the sort even the lowest free persons had. (Ibid, 1-2) Klein notes that African slavery is a late development

in the evolution of slavery<sup>10</sup>. Even before the Portuguese and other Europeans tapped into the lively slave markets of Africa, there had existed a thriving internal, in addition to an external trade, before recorded times. (1986, 1, 10) The Arabs had been dealing in slaves very actively for a thousand years (Winder, 2004, 125). Caravan routes across the Sahara transporting slaves go back to before records were kept, but a boom occurred during the 8<sup>th</sup> century with the expansion of Islam. The majority of slaves between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries were women and children. During the six centuries before the Portuguese arrived, an estimated 3.5-10 million people were uprooted and migrated annually. This active market enabled dual slave routes to exist to the North and to the East before the West African- Atlantic routes. Despite the widespread use of Africans as slaves, there were few major slave regimes in Africa before the Europeans arrived. (Klein, 1986, 10-12)

The Caribbean has a long history of colonisation and has seen many changes over the centuries in both the products it has produced, as well as the construction of its populations. The first grown produce in these parts included tobacco and indigo, which were finally replaced by sugar. Sugar was by far more costly to produce and required a different labour arrangement. The Europeans first exploited by taxation, and then destroyed the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean, the Carib Indians and Arawaks, with European diseases (Klein, 1986, 15, 25, 41, 50). The ones who survived were confined to designated areas (Marshall, 1998, 15). James states that colonisation entailed economic, political and military domination of the indigenous and colonised populations, in addition to a sometimes overt, but mostly clandestine process of cultural oppression. This included the undermining of any positive self-image which the colonised might have had. As a consequence of the African slave trade and the enslavement of millions more, the image of Africa and Africans was systematically being tarnished. “In the eyes of the slave owners, humanity in Caribbean slave society was not only conceived to be congenitally hierarchical (with the European in the

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<sup>10</sup> The Greeks are credited with the original development of the institution in the 6<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. Nevertheless, the Romans took the institution to a completely new level of intensity when they conquered huge areas in Eurasia. From the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, many invasions, including the Crusades, by Christian Europeans, created a new impetus to slavery. This is where the term “slave” originates, as during this time many Slavic people were taken and enslaved. (Klein, 3-4, 8)

superordinate position), but the African barely reached the lowest rung of the human species.”  
(James, 1989, 230-231)

In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, the labour force in the Caribbean consisted mainly of white indentured labour. Although there were slaves from the beginning, they were heavily outnumbered by the white population. By 1700, when sugar production had taken over cultivation of other crops, the black population outnumbered the white by ten to one, which also resulted in stricter control and harsher punishments designed to enforce control and intimidate, as the white population feared for revolts and their own safety. (Greene, 1989, 236) With the increasing use of black slaves, harsher laws and stricter control were enforced in all planter societies, as the events of the Saint Dominique rebellion of 1791<sup>11</sup> were fresh in the memories of plantations societies in the Caribbean area. Another way to reduce the threat of rebellions by slaves was to have slaves from varied backgrounds. Also the rise in the number of Creole, or local born slaves who were accustomed from birth to slavery, and who had a better understanding of the military advantages and the culture of the white people lessened the threat of rebellions. Solidarity was lacking in the ranks of slaves due to the strong colour division and the values attributed to skin colour between blacks and people of mixed ethnicity (or mulattoes as this group is also referred to sometimes). A division also existed between field labourers and the comparatively privileged other jobs, such as gang drivers or domestics. (Ward, 1998, 436) In *Cambridge* Mr Brown tries to undermine long standing friendships between the slaves by offering the position of Head Driver to Cambridge (*Cam*, 161).

It was only in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century that humane treatment of slaves became an important issue to British West Indian planters (Sheridan, 1998, 401). This was largely due to moral pressure from the mother country which later led to the abolition of the national slave trade from Africa in 1807 (Sheridan, 407). By 1815, the slaves greatly outnumbered the white population of the West Indies

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<sup>11</sup> The Slave Rebellion of 1791-1804, that later escalated into a civil war, was the only successful slave rebellion in the history of the Americas. The white planters retracted the Paris Estates-General's decision that allowed the free mulatto population the right to vote and citizenship. The rebellion started as an aftermath of the French Revolution of 1789 in which a huge debate of the basic freedoms of man was on the agenda in France. (Klein, 1986, 89-92)

(Ward, 1998, 432). In the slave cargoes from Africa, males outnumbered women two to one but creolization balanced the ratios which helped develop some family relationships. White men took slaves as mistresses which consequently led to the growth of the mixed ethnicity slave population from 5% to 10% by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. (Ward, 1998, 435)<sup>12</sup> Harassment and rapes were also common, an issue touched upon also in *Cambridge*. Cambridge's 'wife' Christiania suffers this fate repeatedly from around ten years of age onwards and she is also treated brutally for not producing children (*Cam*, 158). Concubinage to white men had become a tolerated local practise by the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, largely for the persistent lack of white women<sup>13</sup>. Most of the slaves that managed to acquire their freedom were the sexual partners of white men and their offspring. For the most part though, whites still remained hostile to the social group consisting of free people with a mixed ethnic background. (Ward, 1998, 437)

The actual figures for the Africans taken from their homes during the Atlantic slave trade continues to be disputed, but it is somewhere in the range of 15 to 20 million people<sup>14</sup>. A great many of those captured went unrecorded altogether, and as many as 10-15% died along the voyage either on the march to the coast, in the cellars of slave forts or onboard the ships. (Klein, 1986, 28) At first, mainly men were taken as slaves, as they were considered stronger. They were worked to death and replaced by a new batch of slaves. Later on, women were brought over too, mainly for field work, household and domestic duties, and to give birth to new slaves, although slave marriages were not legally recognised and birth rates were low. From 1801 onwards, there was a high concentration of female slaves on many British Caribbean plantations ([www.nationaarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationaarchives.gov.uk))

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<sup>12</sup> Between the years of 1748-1815 the British West Indian "free coloured" population grew from 3,000 to 70,000 which in terms of percentages means from 1% to 8% of the total population. By 1815 they slightly outnumbered the white population. (Ward, 437) I realise the term "coloured" is offensive and have tried to avoid its usage in the main body of my text, despite many of the books used as references still using this term as well as mulatto or mixed race. I have tried to use the term "mixed ethnicity" to cover these, although this term is not without its problems either.

<sup>13</sup> The number of white men continued to outnumber white women. As an extreme and more unusual case, Tobago's European settlers seem, for a time in the 1770s, to have been exclusively male. (Ward, 433)

<sup>14</sup> The English-heritage website estimates this figure could even be as high as 50 million.

2 & 3). Generally though, the batches of slaves had nothing to do with the requests of European buyers. Europeans took what they were offered. It was the African concerns that defined what was available, as women both free and slave, were in high demand locally<sup>15</sup> (Klein, 147-148).

Although slavery has always existed, the way it was practised during the years of the Atlantic slave trade has had a profound impact on the way the world looks today in terms of the make-up of our societies and our attitudes towards Others. The financial impact on the practising societies was so great that any consideration as to the morality or legality of the trade went largely undermined, or was ignored completely until very much towards the end of the slave trade. As demonstrated, the slaves too felt the need for an Other to degrade, so as not to be the lowest in the hierarchy, or order of things. Now I will introduce the theoretical tools of this thesis as to understand why Othering occurs and how identities are constructed.

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<sup>15</sup> In some of the African societies, it was through a woman that a man could acquire status. West African societies were known for their matrilineal and matrilocal kinship systems, which go some way towards explaining the lower female ratios entering the Atlantic trade. Females also carried out most of the agricultural labour in West African societies, which is the main factor for there being fewer women on the international market. (Klein, 147-148)

### 3. Theory on Identity Construction

A look at the theoretical framework in which the *Cambridge* (1991) is analysed follows. First, a general look at some of the historical and prevailing concepts of identity and the foundations of national identities are introduced. The latter is largely built upon a mix of myths and facts as well as what we are not. Othering is related to these concepts as a means of including and excluding. This is followed by a more detailed account of categorisation, stigmatized identity and what effect colonialism has had on the identity of colonised people.

#### 3.1 Identity, national identity & Othering

There are several ideas and movements that have influenced the way we look at identity. These are the *Reformation* and *Protestantism* where individual conscience was separated from the church institutions and placed under the direct gaze of God, *Renaissance Humanism* which placed humans at the centre of the universe, *scientific revolutions* which enabled people to investigate and research mysteries of nature, and lastly, *the Enlightenment* which placed high emphasis on the rational and scientific male human being. (Hall, 1999, 30-31) In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, people believed that the processes of modern life concentrated around the individual's sense and subjectivity, but this way of understanding acquired more collective and social forms as modern societies developed and placed the individual more firmly into the modern societies and their structures. The main influences for the change were Darwin's biology theory and the new social sciences. (Hall, 1999, 33-34)

A contemporary understanding of identity, to a great extent, derives from Stuart Hall who has argued that “[i]dentity is a structured representation which only achieves its positive through the narrow eye of the negative. It has to go through the eye of the needle of the other before it can

construct itself.”(Hall cited in Grossberg 1996, 89) This argument indicates that identity construction is built on fundamental differences rather than on what the similarities between individuals are. In other words, we construct our identity through what we are not. Elsewhere, Hall points out that identities are not dissimilar to language in the sense that we know what “day” means because it is not the same as “night”, and we know what “white” is because it is not “black”. We know who and what we are in relation to others (1999, 40-41).

In addition to defining ourselves through others, the same mechanism is harnessed when a sense of belonging is at stake. Hall (1999, 46) shows that national cultures, their representation systems and symbols are a discourse, or a way of constructing meanings which organise the way we think of ourselves and how we act. They build our notion of identity and the idea of a nation within which we can identify ourselves. Benedict Anderson (1983, 15) calls these types of communities “imagined communities”. According to Hall, we know what it means to be “English” only because we know how “Englishness” has been represented in a series of meanings in English culture and its cultural system of meanings. A nation is a symbolic community and due to this “imagined community” within the nation, it can help create an identity and the feeling of loyalty towards the nation.<sup>16</sup>(Hall, 1999, 46) It also enables the feeling of belonging to a place, in other words, it facilitates roots.

Nationality is a fairly modern component of identity. Key elements in representing national cultures, for example Englishness, are as follows. Firstly, *the nation's tale*, as it is told in the country's national history books, literature, in the media and in popular culture. These all give certain meanings to what it is to be English through representations of victories, disappointment, rituals etc. Secondly, the notions of *origin, continuity, tradition and timelessness* are used. National identity is perceived to be something original that has always existed. The third discursive practise is the *invented tradition*. These include many seemingly old traditions and rituals, which in reality

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<sup>16</sup> The creation of a national culture helped in creating a homogenic culture and maintained cultural institutions such as schools improving general standards of literacy and making one way of speaking the standard way of communicating throughout the nation. (Hall, 1999, 46)

are not in fact that old on closer inspection. Their purpose is to represent the norms and ways of behaving and hint at continuity in relation to an appropriate historical past. The fourth element is myth and some kind of *founding myth* of the nation that places the nation and its people in an early stage of time where “truth” merges with “myth”. The fifth and last element that national identities are often based on is the idea of a *pure* or *original people*. (Hall, 1999, 48-50) The long list is to explain why it is so hard for Cambridge to be accepted as English, to which I turn to later.

In Britain, nationality has always competed with more particularistic loyalties and other forms of belonging (Samuel, 1989, xxiv). In the Middle Ages, there was no national identity as the rich and poor spoke different languages. However, during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there was a sharp rise in national self-consciousness with the rise of the nation state and with English becoming the language of literary expression in the last decades of the century. This did not stop the Civil War from taking place in the 17<sup>th</sup> century suggesting “...that English people were still able to separate love of country from loyalty to government...” (Samuel, xxviii) The 19<sup>th</sup> century brought with it a proliferation of sectarian identities, although religion was still a defining notion of belonging (Samuel, Xxix). Society was deeply filled by a spirit of caste, with strict demarcations between in and out groups, with a rigid order of precedence between the classes (Samuel, xxx). These demarcations also play an obvious role in *Cambridge*, as I will later demonstrate.

In the Caribbean area, identity was also constructed through a complex hierarchy of pigmentation and facial features, with higher status being awarded to European-like characteristics. Something of the importance of colour – or lack of it – is illustrated by the fact that pigmentary charts existed, and were used to define people, their value as humans and chances of liberty. In Spanish America there were 128 different gradations of colour in the system. (James, 1989, 232) This shows that identity was firmly constructed through the notion of Othering based on colour, and value ascribed to features resembling those likened to those of the Europeans. The standards of the white plantation society regarding different coloured people and their value were transferred to the



slaves and their descendents. James notes that even in Jamaica, which was renowned for its fairly high level of retention of African culture, there are records from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, testifying to the contempt which the newly arriving slaves met with from the creole slaves. “Newly-arrived Africans, traumatised successively by capture, the march to the coast, the horrendous middle-passage across the Atlantic, the humiliation of ‘inspection’ by prospective buyers, the branding of their bodies as if they were cattle, were derogatively referred to by creole slaves as ‘salt-water negroes’ and ‘Guiney birds’.” (James, 1989, 233)

James adds that the lighter hues demeaned the darker skinned people, just as the whites demeaned everyone darker than themselves. “Whilst the coloureds<sup>17</sup> were demeaned and humiliated by whites even after death, they, in turn, bloated with what the eighteenth century planter-historian Edward Long aptly called the ‘pride of amended blood’, had few qualms about pouring scorn upon Africans, including those who were legally free like themselves.” People of mixed ethnicity thus expressed their social insecurity by ruthlessly oppressing their slaves. “They were notorious, even amongst white plantocracy, for exceptional cruelty against slaves. A common Jamaican saying among the African slaves reflected this state of affairs: ‘If me fe have massa or misses, give me Buckra<sup>18</sup> one- no give me mulatto, dem no use neega well.’” (James, 1989, 233)

In contrast to the Caribbean, James notes how the different colours were perceived in Britain. There the colour divide of ethnic groups was simply divided into two polar oppositions, black and white, which James states: “...helped severely undermine the colour hierarchy which vitiated the Caribbean psyche.” This, along with British racism has helped create “...an identity – which perhaps under different circumstances would not have developed – among Afro-Caribbean’s living in Britain.” (1989, 230-231) The lesser value of the more obvious others is demonstrated by the fact that by the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the major powers of Europe were ready to use the wealth, labour, riches

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<sup>17</sup> Collins Cobuild Dictionary states that this term is offensive. ( Sinclair *ed*, 2001)

<sup>18</sup> Buckra, (sometimes also spelt backra) meant either “owner” or “boss” in their African source languages but later was also used to refer to white people and their race/ethnicity (Alleyne, 2005, 105)

and resources of others to their own advancement. This had already been the aim of the major powers in the 15<sup>th</sup> century even before they had “discovered” some of the areas they later went to (Hall, 1999, 90-92).

Othering did not start all of a sudden, nor was it always done deliberately, but the framework with which the West saw other cultures had a long history even before widespread contact with other cultures materialized. Stuart Hall has compiled a compact summary of knowledge about Others using Edward Said’s examples in *Orientalism*. Although these relate mainly to Islamic countries, they still exemplify the foundations Western notions of outsiders were built on. Said notes the information, or the archives, on others came from four main sources. These were: 1) Classical knowledge of antiquity in texts from Plato and Aristotle, 2) religious and biblical sources where Jerusalem was the centre of the world and this was used to interpret geography in the Middle Ages, 3) mythology which played a great role and mixed with reality making it difficult to discern fact from fiction and finally, 4) the many travelogues written about exotic places teeming with monsters and freaks. (Hall, 1999, 107-109)

As is clear, this was the evidence on which the framework for viewing the rest of the world was built in the West. It was a mix of myths and facts where people made contact with the Other for the first time. The representation was built on an analogy to something known. For example, different peoples were described as animals shaped like humans. (Hall, 1999, 94, 103-109,120) Alleyne points out that even today the non-European populations still use the names of for example, flora and fauna named by Europeans which demonstrates the power and resiliency of the colonial heritage (2005, 89). Next, I will turn to categorisation and particularly to the category of stigmatized identity.

### 3.2 Categorisation & stigmatized identity

An integral part of human behaviour is dividing identities into categories. This practise enables us to understand each other and work together. It helps us maintain and produce social and moral order (Juhila, 2004, 21)<sup>19</sup> Categorisation is practised to achieve difference. Cultural differentiation systems are based on over-simplified differences and stereotypes, which in turn are based upon polar opposites (Juhila, 25). These binary oppositions, much like identities, produce meanings through difference as Saussure has shown in his work.<sup>20</sup> According to Juhila, categorising people and producing social identities has two sides. On the one hand, they maintain societal and cultural harmony by making situations where one has to meet other people more organized due to the assumptions we have of the other in advance. On the other hand, they can maintain inequality by upholding particular negative stereotypes assumed to be traits of that category (2004, 24).

*Stigmatized identity*<sup>21</sup> is a category which includes particularly negative representations of a group and its members. To rectify and reproduce meanings, the members of this category may talk back against these representations. Categories are always present despite being invisible, and they are the organizing principles which help us understand information (Juhila, 20, 24). As differences are often defined by the terms of the privileged or majority group, differentiation can be viewed as a source of power. These differences then become the yardstick against which the other group is defined, measured and categorised. This other group then comes to be seen as somehow lacking or deviant, and the member of this group comes to be viewed as unnatural in their behaviour or customs, constituting a stigmatized identity. Hall notes that “The Western world” category has been produced in the historical setting where different peoples met each other for the first time, for

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<sup>19</sup> All references to Juhila’s text throughout this section are translated by the author of this thesis.

<sup>20</sup> *Cours de Linguistique Générale*. Posthumous compilation of his lecture notes on general linguistics.

<sup>21</sup> Originally Erving Goffman’s term (Juhila, 2004, 24)

example, during the times of the crusades, imperialism, colonialism and the Westward migration of peoples. However, this category is not a geographical fact, but is rather, a produced category the main purpose of which is to highlight racial difference. It enables us to think of them and us in terms of “The West and the Rest”. (Hall, 1999, 78-79, 86)

Darker people were portrayed as primitive, innocent and overtly sexual. In other words, they were thought of as childlike, or as part of nature and were then compared to and measured against the cultivated, more developed white people (Juhila 2004, 25; Hall, 1999, 114). Both Emily’s and Cambridge’s narratives are abound with examples of how they differentiate themselves from others whom they consider to be of a lower, or a different class to themselves. The history of racial categorising is part of our cultural “knowledge”, which is also linked to the history of our institutions, particularly law. This cultural knowledge is not shared by everyone or everywhere equally, as it has grown-out of historic encounters and varies between peoples and local contexts. (Juhila, 22)

Situating somebody or placing oneself in a certain category has consequences, as this produces social identities which have certain attached features or behavioural expectations. Often, it is enough for a category to be mentioned, for us to draw certain conclusions (Juhila, 2004, 22-23). This is also a way of controlling, of keeping people in their own place. As an example related to this study, we can look back at the 19<sup>th</sup> century attitudes that white English people had of the black Britons and Africans or consider the negative way women were regarded by the rest of society (particularly if they could not live up to the moral standards). When one feels this negative social identity being attached to oneself, the stigmatized identity is reproduced (Juhila, 27). Juhila continues that despite the emphasis on ourselves in self-evaluation and the choices we have made in the late modern period, there is not total freedom in choosing an identity or identities. This lack of freedom is constrained by our historical knowledge base. We try to describe ourselves based on what others assume of us, and what we assume the other to understand about us.

The situation is made more complicated if the identity offered to us by others is a stigmatized one. It requires challenging the negative notions. Because identities are constructions of the imagination, it is impossible to fix them permanently, even though stereotypes and their usage tries to do this. It is possible to negotiate new meaning to these constructions, which is precisely what is at stake when we talk back from a stigmatized identity. Talking back always occurs against culturally founded categories; without these talking back could not exist, as identities would then be freely defined. (Juhila, 28-29) Talking back to stigmatized identities does not necessarily involve a strong denial of the category, rather it involves a delicate negotiation of the assumptions, which then are questioned and new possible identities negotiated (Juhila, 29).<sup>22</sup> Although talking back also occurs in most situations where stereotypes are being questioned and fought, the most forceful talking back occurs in situations where there exists a persistent stigmatized identity which the individual is attempting to renegotiate.

In the more serious negotiations, there is an instrument available which Harvey Sacks (1992, 40, quoted in Juhila, 2004, 21) has named *doing being ordinary*<sup>23</sup>. When others view an individual as belonging to the stigmatized identity category, it is important to the individual being viewed as such to portray themselves as an ordinary person, not as what the viewer assumes, thus distancing themselves from the stigma in their own way. According to Juhila, it is a way of saving face, a way of surviving by detaching oneself from the stigmatized identity and its values (2004, 30).

Cambridge feels he is different from the other slaves; he is like an Englishman and tries to behave as such to distance himself from the stigma. Emily tries to speak from a position of power, even though she is not in a position to do so any more in the Caribbean than she was in England.

Juhila argues that finding an exception to the rule in the category of stigmatized identity is not sufficient to break the assumed qualities of this category, as the cultural assumptions are deep, even

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<sup>22</sup> Normally talking back occurs vocally but silence or facial expressions can also be interpreted as talking back. (Juhila, 29)

<sup>23</sup> Juhila's term for it is "tavallisuusretoriikka", which loosely translated could be called the rhetoric of being ordinary.

where exceptions are reported (2004, 30). This can also be seen in the novel, where despite being English in all his ways, Cambridge is persistently viewed as an African and assigned the same attributes as the other slaves. Cambridge feels a need to be seen as English, to be the same, or on the inside of the category as most of the other people and values he associates himself with. Emily is wrapped up in her class consciousness and unhappy this aspect is ignored in the Caribbean as well as her position as the owner's daughter. Juhila concludes that those who do not achieve this sense of sameness as "normal" people and who are persistently viewed as Other end up with a stigmatized identity and are left feeling as if they were outsiders (2004, 31). Colonised people have often been left on the outside and here I turn to the effects of suppression on identity.

### **3. 3 Colonisation & its effects on the identity of the colonised**

Frantz Fanon has written extensively on the psyche of colonised people, particularly of the effect the French have had on the Algerian people as well as those of Martinique. Fanon was writing at a much later point in history than the time in which *Cambridge* is set in and much earlier than the book in question was written. Nevertheless, his theories highlight the effects of the colonial system and its values and can be applied to Cambridge as he is product of the colonial values and system. Fanon argues that colonised people have been maltreated so long that they live in a state of non-being (Fanon, 1967, 8). Mervyn Alleyne also draws attention to "the corruption of the minds of those African slaves who came to accept the race and culture hierarchy (later transformed into a colour hierarchy) imposed by their European masters...." (2005, 82). The inferiority complex, where there is one<sup>24</sup>, rises out of double process. First and primarily, there is the economic condition, and secondly and consequently the internalization of this inferiority. These are a result of

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<sup>24</sup> Maroon communities escaped this "mental conditioning" and the European hierarchical values did not become internalised in their communities as these groups had very little contact with white people. (Alleyne, 2005, 82) Maroons are not mentioned in *Cambridge* at all, which is why the topic is not elaborated on in this work.

society juxtaposing the black and white races, thereby creating a huge psycho existential complex. (Fanon, 1967, 11-12)

White civilization and European culture have enforced an existential deviation on the black people. As the dominant groups in the Western world are white, the black people acquire and internalize the attitudes of white society when “in contact with the white civilization.” (1967, 11-12, 14) Hall too notes the power of prevalent ways of thinking. He sees these as a cultural and symbolic context in which the more dominant groups have the symbolic power of representation; to commit symbolic violence in which the key role is played by stereotyping. (Hall, 1999, 193) One of the key elements is played by language and in the way in which it ascribes meaning to the Other, or being the Other. The black person has two dimensions, one for his fellow blacks and another when he is facing the white world; “That this self-division is a direct result of colonialist subjugation is beyond question...No one would dream of doubting that its major artery is fed from the heart of those various theories that have tried to prove that the Negro is a stage in the slow evolution of monkey into [white] man.”(Fanon, 1967, 17) Cambridge disassociates himself from his original background by only speaking English. Considering the way in which values were transferred to the colonised, this is not surprising.

The belief in the superiority of the English language existed until very recently, with all other dialects of English seen as uneducated. An example in *Cambridge* is given by Emily who muses that “The loquacious tongue of the *creole* negro boasts much bad dialect, but that of the African is almost unintelligible...” (*Cam*, 38-39) Cambridge regards himself as English due to his ability to speak the language. This ability also means the acceptance of a culture and “...to support the weight of a civilization.”(Fanon, 1967, 17-18) In the Caribbean, speaking Creole was deemed less civilized than speaking the language of the coloniser or ex-coloniser. (Fanon, 1967, 20) Fanon argues that the colonised are elevated from their savage position in proportion to their renouncement of their own culture and the acceptance of the mother country’s cultural standards, and become whiter the

more they renounce their blackness. (1967, 18) Language has also been the standard with which one was judged in England.<sup>25</sup> However, the Africanization of the English language in the Caribbean also shows that black culture greatly influenced the English language in the colonies (Greene, 1989, 244). This argument can be extended to the fashion value “black English” is seen to have in today’s Britain, particularly in youth culture.

Language was also used as a form of resistance and survival as Ashcroft & al. have noted in

*The Empire Writes Back:*

...slaves could not avoid an awareness of the cruel pressure of an imposed language and the loss of their own ‘voice’, a loss incurred...in an alien landscape. So, subject to a tragic alienation from both language and landscape, the transplanted Africans found that psychic survival depended on their facility for a kind of *double entendre*. They were forced to develop the skill of being able to say one thing in front of ‘massa’ and have it interpreted differently by their fellow slaves. (Ashcroft & al., 1989, 146.)

The ability to be understood differently, to double talk or to have a double voice can also be seen as a survival tactic and as a form of resistance of colonial authority. According to Hall, identities are creations that are formed in the unstable positions where stories of subjectivities meet the stories of history and culture. The colonised subject receives its position in relation to those cultural stories which have been expropriated; therefore the subject is always either marginalised doubly or always moved from its place to another. Life and living are learned alongside and through difference. (Hall, 1999, 11) The collective unconscious, or our cultural knowledge base, consists of the myths, prejudices and collective attitudes of a given cultural group, which are not inborn but acquired through that culture (Fanon, 1967, 188). In other words they are learned socially. Fanon explains that in classic psychoanalysis, projection or transference has been described as the process of discovering something distasteful or reprehensible in oneself, and in order to rid oneself of this, it needs to be transferred or ascribed to someone else. The function of black people in Europe is to represent the lowest emotions, the dark side of the soul (1967, 190). Emily uses the black people

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<sup>25</sup> Non-standard English and regional variations have been seen as less civilized and inferior to RS-English (Received Standard English) or “Queen’s English”. (Ashcroft & al., 1989, 7)



and the employees on her father's plantation as a site on which to project her low position in order to give herself some importance as her position due to being a woman is not respected. Cambridge projects his distaste of the stigmatized identity he is offered onto the other slaves whom he considers as having lower status.

Furthermore, Fanon criticizes the way in which the media has reinforced existing stereotypes (1967, 34). This is also the case in the newspaper report in *Cambridge* to which I will return in more detail later on. It is on contact with Europe and the white population that the black person is made to feel inferior and has to face up to the established myth of the "Negro [as] a phobogenic object, a stimulus to anxiety." (Fanon, 1967, 150-151)<sup>26</sup> In effect, if they do not perform the role assigned to them, they are considered suspect. With such fixed deeply rooted cultural and ethnic notions of what a black person is like, it is difficult to move away from these stereotypes. (Fanon, *Ibid*, 35- 36; Juhila, 2004, 30) In *Cambridge* Emily refuses to accept Cambridge's mastery of the English language as intelligence, his Englishness or as him belonging to England. Instead she sees it as a sign of Cambridge trying to rise above his rank and being haughty. As a 'compliment', black people are sometimes told that "inside you are a white man". Both Fanon and Phillips criticise this idea of honorary citizenship (Fanon 1967, 38; Phillips<sup>27</sup>)

For Fanon, the finality of it all for the black person is on contact with the European where if the psychic structure of the black person is weak, his ego collapses and he stops behaving as "an *actional* person. The goal of his behaviour will be The Other (in the guise of the white man), for The Other alone can give him worth." (1967, 154.) This is also known as the act of veiling, a term coined by W.E.B Du Bois (1969, 44). The black person tries to hide behind a veil to conceal his blackness. According to Fanon's diagnosis then, Cambridge suffers from a lack of judgment. The

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<sup>26</sup> Fanon believes that in the minds of white people, everything regarding the black person happens on a genital level (1967, 157). Black people are believed to have sexual powers unlike that of white people and the negrophobia of black men by white men can be seen as a feeling of impotence or of sexual inferiority (159).

<sup>27</sup> In the preface to his play *The Shelter* (1983) Phillips stated that: "In Africa I was not black. In Africa I was a writer. In Europe I am black. In Europe I am a black writer. If the missionaries wish to play the game along these lines then I do not wish to be an honorary white." In *The European Tribe* (1987, 48) Phillips notes that Othello's father-in-law is reassured that his son-in-law "is far more fair than black."

desire to be admitted to the white world of “sanctuary” is a result of an internal intention of white approval (Fanon, 1967, 51).

I begin to suffer from not being a white man to the degree that the white man imposes discrimination on me, makes me a colonized native, robs me of all my worth, all individuality, tells me that I am a parasite on the world, that I must bring myself as quickly as possible into step with the white world...Then I will quite simply try to make myself white: that is, I will compel the white man to acknowledge that I am human. (Fanon, 1967, 98)

There is a flaw, an impurity that exists within the colonised people. The black person has to be black but also black in relation to the whites (ibid. 110) (as well as in relation to different shades of browns and black!) and he has to find his station between these frames of reference. In *Cambridge* an example of the significance of skin tones is mentioned in Emily’s narrative when she writes

It appears that there are my shades of black, some of which signify a greater social acceptability than others...but generally speaking the lighter the shade of black, the nearer salvation and acceptability was the negro. A milkier hue signified some form of white blood, and it should be clear to even the most egalitarian observer that the more white blood flowing in the person’s veins, the less barbarous will be his social tendencies.”(*Cam*, 25)

In many places even today there is a certain stigma attached to darker shades of black skin. Fanon argues that this derives from the colonial legacy and because the ways of the colonised were in conflict with those of the coloniser, their customs and value systems were wiped out by the imposing intruders (1967, 110). He continues his argument and claims that there is a need for the black person to rid himself of the complexes that the colonial environment has created (1967, 30). In order to achieve this liberation, Fanon states in *The Wretched of the Earth* (2001) that the colonised need to fight the oppressor with the tools the coloniser has used to achieve his position; violence. Violence is the only language the oppressor understands. It is also the key to freedom for the colonised that have veiled aggression in the desire to assimilate to the colonial world. (2001, 41, 47) “After the conflict there is not only the disappearance of colonialism but also the disappearance of the colonized man.”(2001, 198) Alleyne (2005, 82) has pointed out that Bob Marley was advocating change in the mental conditions of the Caribbean non-white people when he sang

“Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery /None but ourselves can free our minds”<sup>28</sup> although Marley’s methods were more peaceful than Fanon’s. However, both Fanon and Marley realise that the colonised people will have to be the ones to initiate change, whatever the method. What follows, is a look at how these concepts work in the context of *Cambridge* for both Emily and the protagonist the book takes its name from.

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<sup>28</sup> These lines were taken from a speech delivered by Marcus Garvey (Le Gendre, 2008)

## 4. Emily - “A Child of a Larger Growth”

The concepts of identity, belonging and Othering overlap and are interconnected to a large degree. In constructing identity, belonging or feeling at home and Othering are devices or building blocks of the construction process. In the following sections I endeavour to separate these slightly and analyse Emily through them. The last section presents the short but important part of *Cambridge*, the newspaper report that brings representation of “truth” to the forefront and shows the strength of dominant world views.

### 4.1 Othering as a part of identity construction

In this subchapter I will look at Emily’s way of constructing her identity through Othering on her arrival in the Caribbean. As mentioned in the introduction, Emily begins her voyage as an abolitionist. *En route* to the Caribbean she writes as follows in her dairy. “Of late, I have thought much of this Ocean, whose breast has supported many a ship heavy with slaves. The torn roots of these *children of the sun* has occasioned the stain of the institution to mark first their native soil, and then bleed across the waters to deface the Americas.” (*Cam*, 16) Although she disconnects herself of any guilt or involvement, and patronises the Africans by viewing them as children, the quote shows some sympathy towards them. Her perception towards the slaves, however, changes very rapidly as she enters her father’s house in the Caribbean, where far from home she seems to initially forget her position as a woman and asserts herself as her father’s replacement.

I believe this change in her occurs as there are Others on the island that she, and society at the time, considered even more inferior to being a woman. There are white people of a lower class than she is, and the most obvious inferior group is represented by the blacks. Emily is also travelling alone, without her father or maid to put her in her place and remind her of the correct moral

behaviour she should exhibit. In England, most probably the only contact she has had with lower classes prior to arriving on the plantation has been with her servants, for example, her governess and nursemaid (*Cam*, 3). Emily, as a woman, has been the subject of belittlement by society as well as her own father, whom she has overheard saying that "...sensible men should only trifle with these children of a larger growth." (*Cam*, 4) This line resonates with Emily's quote above, where she sees Africans as children. Emily's future has been decided for her with her father's decision to marry her off to the older widower "as a mode of transportation through life." (*Cam*, 3). Now on entering a new environment, she is surrounded by what she views as her inferiors, and sees herself as being both of the master class and master race. As Gail Low (1998, 124) puts it, "her initial encounters with "negroes" on the island is testament to the strength and depth of European racial prejudices....[and] whiteness as an index of civilization." These factors propel a sense of superiority and freedom within Emily. She goes from a submissive young lady into acting like she has some authority.

Jack Greene (1989, 228) states that many people went to the Caribbean to improve their economic situation and the language of improvement was carried over in the hope of transforming new places into better ones. The language of improvement also acquired a wider meaning and was used to describe a state of society that was different, and therefore better and more civilised than the savagery thought to be characteristic of the Americas original inhabitants. Emily views the institution of slavery and the presence of white people as "a civilizing and economic mission." (*Cam*, 24) In her diary she writes that "[h]appy for us, paganism with all its accompanying horrors, has now given way to a milder doctrine, which has freed this land of the soul-sickening human feasting with which the original natives once polluted it." (*Cam*, 25) Colonisation and slavery on the massive scale that they manifested are thus constructed as a "milder" doctrine than the alleged ritual cannibalism of the Caribs.<sup>29</sup> The new societies were constructed in the image of the mother

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<sup>29</sup> "Cannibal" is derived from the word Carib as they were presumed to practice eating human flesh. (Hall, 1999, 121-122)

country and the settlers saw their own presence and language as improving their new environment.

It has been noted that religion and "...liberal faith in the moral effects of education had a particularly potent expression in the belief that the dissemination of the English language could itself create a civilizing and moralising climate." (MacKenzie, 1990, ix)

Categorization of people into inferior groups served as a way to justify colonisation and helped construct white identities as superior to other groups. Wetherell and Potter argue that the description of groups as biological types or species was very influential in the United Kingdom. For Victorian colonisers and scientists it was "common sense." (1992, 124) In addition to these legitimating arguments, Greene has shown that as a justification of slavery, it was often claimed that the European form of slavery was far less savage than the form practiced in Africa. Thus the institution of slavery was viewed as redemption for Africans. "'Regularly' fed, clothed, housed, doctored, and allowed time and space to cultivate their own fruits and vegetables and raise their own small animals, slaves....not only lived with less care and 'in much less indigence' than 'the poor inhabitants of many poor European countries,' including even Ireland...". (Greene, 1989, 257) In the Caribbean Emily is surrounded by, and has more contact with different "types" of people. This environment is also less morally binding than the circles of high society in England due to the mix of people of different classes and various ethnic backgrounds surrounding her.

Emily starts her stay on the plantation with a condescending and superior attitude towards the staff on her father's plantation. She treats them as her servants. The general attitude in England was that the Caribbean was peopled by a loose set of vagrant people (Greene, 239) which highlights the reasons for Emily's arrogant attitude towards them. Of Stella, the matriarchal slave, Emily writes "She held herself as though the mistress..." (*Cam*, 26), which of course she is to a certain extent by making sure the household runs smoothly, and the white book-keeper who has picked her up on arrival is referred to as "my book-keeper" (*Cam*, 27). She questions him of the whereabouts of Mr Wilson, the overseer, on their way to the Great House, and he declines to give her an answer (*Cam*,

25). She does not realise that he does not need to report to her, she is only a woman and not his superior in any shape or form despite being the daughter of the owner. He does not involve her with the details of Mr Brown overthrowing Mr Wilson, as this matter is the concern of her father. This type of information relates to the business sphere, the sphere of a man. Emily has been kept in the dark about the replacement and she is furious to find herself being rushed to dinner with Mr Brown, whom she has no knowledge of on her arrival: "I determined that having travelled across half the world I would not, in my father's own house, be hurried into preparing myself to a dinner with a man who had yet to explain himself to me. How dare he demand my presence as though I were some form of chattel?" (*Cam*, 28) Emily has hit the nail on the head without realising it. Chattel is about as much worth as she is assigned, she just has not realised it yet. Mr Brown does not need to explain himself; he is the man of the house.

An even more radical change happens in Emily as she meets the black people face to face *en masse*. She is repulsed as she catches her first glimpse of their barely dressed bodies, even though she realises the hindrance of clothes in the Caribbean heat. When she sees the washer women she remarks: "The appearance of the females was truly disgusting to me, for without a single exception their arms were drawn out of their sleeves and from the waist upwards they were in a state of unashamed nakedness" (*Cam*, 101). This revulsion is intensified by her strict Victorian upbringing, which does not allow women to dress "...without concern for conventional morality" (*Cam*, 21). Here she distances herself from the Other by the Victorian ideas of morality. As she becomes accustomed to seeing the slaves scantily dressed, as well as in their Sunday bests which are similar to European clothes, she later remarks: "I for one take greater comfort in viewing the negroes, male and female, in their filthy native garb, for in these circumstances they do not violate laws of taste which civilized people have spent many a century to establish" (*Cam*, 66).

No longer is it a morality issue shocking her with its difference, it is an issue of keeping the civilised and uncivilised apart in a more rigid categorisation process. Clothes make the black people

too similar thus narrowing the gap between Emily and them. She is distancing herself by comparing herself to the Other; the fully clothed white Victorian woman and the naked black ‘savages’. It feels more ‘natural’ for her to see the slaves half naked due to her assumptions of them and their place. Extravagant clothing is deemed as copying the dress of “civilized people” which Emily feels the black people do distastefully and should leave to the white population. She feels more uncomfortable when they look similar than when she can draw a clear difference. Hall has pointed out that black people often over-dressed and over emphasized the way their white master’s dressed to make fun of them, it was a parody of white conventions and manners (1999, 169). This is also known as mimicry to which I turn to in further detail in chapter 5.1.

Emily’s act of distancing herself and her projection of distaste on to the Other work to construct identity through difference, as Hall has argued (1999, 40-41). She repeatedly experiences distaste, revulsion and through this, superiority towards the people for whom she originally had some sympathy. Emily’s superior attitude towards the black people is displayed in the following quote: “A mere glance should be sufficient to convince an observer that the West Indian negro has all the characteristics of his race” (*Cam*, 52). These supposed characteristics are that they are lazy, overtly sexual and inferior amongst other things. From her arrival and contact with the black people her abolitionist state of mind begins to erode. One of the reasons for her attitude to change is her need to distance herself from the slaves and free blacks. She needs to do this to be able to fit into the part of society she ‘naturally’ is a part of. The longer she stays among the blacks, the more she acquires a superior attitude.

From the onset of her arrival in the Caribbean, the terms with which she refers to black people or people from different ethnic backgrounds are very animalistic. She refuses to see their human qualities and continues to discuss them as animals, for which examples are numerous. Here a few examples which can be found in a few short lines: “creatures...livestock...as they would horses and mules...that they might *stud* the stock” (*Cam*, 38) She compares black children to monkeys (*Cam*,



23), and her attitude of the black people as the Other is also evident from the way she speaks about them. The way she discusses the everyday life of the slaves makes one think of a present day safari. “I was also fortunate enough to be able to witness the negroes at work and play, their behaviour being interpreted with a suitable commentary by Stella” (*Cam*, 40). It is as if Emily cannot understand what she is seeing without the commentary of the expert. It is as if she were viewing a different species.

Based on her assumptions of the loose morality and animal-like behaviour and manner of the black people, she also suspects Stella’s children of not sharing the same father.

Perhaps this is her *black* [sic] way of disguising some greater embarrassment?...but I suspect strongly that the three siblings do not share the same paternal blood...negro relations would appear to have in common with those practised by animals of the field...An indication of the looseness of the negro morals might be derived from an examination of how easily they appropriate titles which in our world have a deep and proper meaning. (*Cam*, 36)

In addition to the issues already mentioned, this quote also portrays Emily’s lack of understanding of a collective culture in which it is very normal to give names such as ‘aunt’ and ‘uncle’, or ‘brother’ and ‘sister’ to people not necessarily in that particular biological position. Their collectivity is also evident from the way in which Emily notes their tendency to look after elders in the community; one of the rare positive attributes she allocates to the black people (*Cam*, 69). She makes these judgements solely based on the stereotypes and prejudices she holds.

The quote also indicates Emily’s blindness of the options available to slaves regarding families. For them it was very difficult to have one, with family members often being separated and sold on and as was stated before, slave marriages were not legally recognised. Emily also displays an incredibly blind attitude about the horrors of slavery when she muses that “If I were to be asked if I should enter life anew as an English labourer or a West Indian slave I should have no hesitation in opting for the latter. It seems to me manifestly worth abandoning the propriety and civility of English life for the pleasant clime of this island and the joyous spirit which abounds it” (*Cam*, 42). With this line she takes for granted her own freedom on the island, with the few limiting lines of

advice from the bookkeeper at the beginning of her stay, where he warns her not to take exercise after nine in the morning or to expose herself to the dew after sundown (*Cam*, 22) in this “tropical paradise” (*Cam*, 18). What she does not consider is that the slaves (and the free blacks who had a living to earn), have no choice but to go out and work, and when they have free time they have to cultivate their own crops to feed their families. Further ignorance is also portrayed when she describes the physical form of the Africans “far from being a sickly race, the negroes are in general muscular and robust...[e]rect and well-formed, their quality is attributed by Mr McDonald directly to their lack of tight clothing, which in infancy and childhood can lead to deformities among the white and civilized people.”(*Cam*, 34-35) What Emily and the doctor do not consider is that only the fittest and most able bodied slaves were brought over from Africa.

Due to her ethnocentric attitude and her desire to be different from the black people and lower class people, she fails to acknowledge the European values she encapsulates. When she meets Cambridge and he speaks to her in perfect English, she assumes he is elevating himself to a higher position. Fanon has remarked that when white people talk to black people, they often do it condescendingly, as if the black person was a child. He argues that this is a way for the white people to step down to a level where black people are perceived to be, thus, automatically assuming the black person is primitive or uncivilized. (1967, 31- 32) We saw this in an earlier quote by Emily and it is visible again here, as well as Emily’s need to distance herself from Cambridge.

I noted that I appeared to have disturbed him in the most unlikely act of studying the Bible. I asked if this was his common form of recreation, to which he replied in highly fanciful English, that indeed it was. You might imagine my surprise when he then broached the conversational lead and enquired after my family origins, and my opinions pertaining to slavery...I quickly closed the door, for I feared this negro was truly ignorant of the correct degree of deference that a lady might reasonably expect from a base slave. (*Cam*, 92-93)

She is surprised he can read, that he is reading the Bible, and at his ability to speak the English language. Despite the evidence in front of her, she assumes him to be unrefined. She is offering him a stigmatized identity. She has presumed him to be like the other slaves, who are unable to read and

can not speak “tolerable” English. Even though she is shown to be mistaken, she refuses to adjust her opinion. Had Cambridge been white, Emily would not have felt the need to close the door or marvel at his actions. Cambridge both speaks and acts like an Englishman; yet to Emily he does not fit the “genuine” traits of one, because he is black and in Emily’s mind he does not, and cannot, share the same cultural heritage.

From Cambridge’s account, we can infer what Emily means by ‘fanciful English’. “I asked her from which part of fair Albion she originated, and if her father approved of the institution of slavery, to which she replied that she imagined he did, but her attitudes were her own and somewhat different.... [She] seemed truly fascinated by my knowledge and fluency of her language...” (*Cam*, 165) He is resisting the offered identity by trying to show that he is not what she assumed. Cambridge’s account portrays Emily as being more interested and open to talk than her own account does. Emily was very surprised to find he could read and that he spoke English so well. Her surprise could explain the contradiction in their accounts, she may have lingered but she resists adjusting her own views by maintaining her prejudiced stereotypes. What is interesting here is that Cambridge refers to English as “her language”, instead of English.

By reading the two protagonist’s stories against each other, we as readers can perceive the tension between the accounts. This type of reading against the grain highlights the ideological hierarchies operating within the text and from *Cambridge* we can infer the protagonists struggle against these power structures. A similar reading strategy is known as contrapuntal reading where instead of a univocal or unambiguous reading the effects of metropolitan history and the forces of resistance to it are also considered. This allows both the voice of the centre and the margin to be heard (Said, 1994, 59; Savolainen, 1998, 21). “Implicit in this procedure is a structuralist notion, that is, no identity can exist by itself: identity or essence is constructed through oppositions and negations.” (Savolainen, 1998, 21) Together the two subjective accounts in *Cambridge* form a more balanced picture of the whole, particularly when the socio-historical context is kept in mind. Emily

sounds almost modern sometimes, as does Cambridge, despite their setting being the 19<sup>th</sup> century Caribbean plantation. Emily does not seem to fit the Victorian woman's mould at times. She is continually adjusting to, and resisting her position. She is stuck in the past but sometimes fights that position. When she dreams, she writes she dreams about "England, of course. And a life sacrificed to the prejudices which despise my sex. Of loneliness. Of romance and adventure. Of freedom." (*Cam*, 113) She is a slave of the prevailing opinions that have socialised her into thinking the way she does; yet she struggles against these ideas. This is shown by her swaying opinions. Emily is so contradictory in her attitudes that it is sometimes hard to make out where she stands, as is exemplified by the following quote of her opinion of the doctor. "Clearly this was a man of impartial mind who would neither herd with the unprincipled whites, nor rally the blacks for their self-evident inferiority" (*Cam*, 35). She tries to be against slavery but she cannot, as she is also "an unprincipled white" and regards the black population as inferior.

Despite her attempts to see the bigger picture, the root causes, such as ethnocentric attitudes and through that the justifications of slavery elude her. "Most of the sooty tribe have embraced dully a belief in their own degradation and inferiority, and clearly this is the greatest impediment to their making progress, for self-love can never be as towering a sin as wilful self-neglect. This desperate tendency to despise their own race and colour is the one of the ugliest consequences of their miserable condition" (*Cam*, 105). She understands slavery has caused this, but does not comment on the reasons why it is carried out, or see that she is also responsible for those attitudes as she too embodies them. She needs to disassociate herself from the Other, and keep these attitudes up in order to construct her own identity as opposite to them. How could the slaves possibly make progress in the condition they were in? And when they did, if progress is viewed from the Western perspective and in the way Cambridge improved himself, she is unable to accept it. Hall notes that accepting the Other as human had limits when Europeans first went and colonised the rest of the world. These limits lived on in stereotypes. If the Other was made in God's image, they could not

be enslaved. (Hall, 1999, 125) Emily can not make progress either, as she despises even culturally fairly similar people. She compares the black population of the Caribbean to the Irish. “Their lying subservience, their sly pilfering, their murderous violence, mark them out as very like the Irish, but of an even more childish character.” (*Cam*, 129) Emily is also very class conscious. Other people serve merely as a reference point of something inferior to which she can compare herself to.

In the beginning Emily places herself above everyone on the plantation. She laments the lack of clear divisions in society.

Without rank and order any society, no matter how sophisticated, is doomed to admit the worst kind of anarchy. In this West Indian sphere there is amongst the white people too little attention paid to differences of class. A white skin would appear passport enough to a life of privilege, without due regard to the grade of individuals within the range of that standing. The only exception I have so far observed was the modesty displayed the book-keeper who first conveyed me here. However, sensible to propriety, he has subsequently maintained his distance. The other men, perhaps because I am a woman, have shown little courtesy in affording the attentions proper to my rank. They converse with me as freely and openly as they wish. This is barely tolerable amongst the whites, but when I find the blacks hereabouts behaving in the same manner I cannot abide it, and see no reason why I should accommodate myself to the lack of decorum which characterizes this local practice. (*Cam*, 72)

Despite this criticism, she starts to associate with the white people and socialise among them. With the black people being so obviously different in her view, she needs to associate with someone, albeit with her inferiors and uncouth people. She bemoans that the men speak to her and do not keep their distance as they should. Yet, she also seems to enjoy this freedom as she encourages them to visit her, and indeed appears rather grateful for the company and the “lack of decorum”. Without this, she would only have Stella to talk to and could not converse freely about slavery and other pressing issues as Stella is a slave. The strict separation of classes and sexes is what she would have been used to in England and now in the Caribbean with her new found freedom, she does not quite know what to make of it at times. Nevertheless, Emily considers the white men closer to her level than the black people.

Emily carries on throwing her womanly weight about on the plantation. She still feels she has a right to voice her opinion on matters, such as whether the slave woman Christiania sits at the table

or not. Despite Emily's protests, Mr Brown allows Christiania to be present according to his whims. Emily questions Stella on the matter and she replies "...massa do like she and that is enough." to which Emily concludes "...but assuredly did not explain Mr Brown's desire to have her share his table" (*Cam*, 74-75). These lines clearly position him as the head of the household in the absence of Emily's father. Emily does not seem to realise, or does not want to acknowledge that he is sleeping with Christiania. Nevertheless, Emily feels that she has a right to voice her opinions, due to no slight part, the cause of aggravation being her own inferior and a rival for the affections of Mr Brown. Finally Mr Brown puts Emily in her place when he has her physically carried off the field by one of the slaves that Mr Brown orders to this task.

At this confrontation Emily goes too far in questioning him about Christiania. Mr Brown has clearly had enough of this 'hysterical' woman who charges up to him "as though I had finally taken leave of my senses...I will not tolerate such a perversion of good taste" Emily tells him (*Cam*, 77). She is questioning and challenging his authority in front of his fieldworkers by demanding an explanation from him and then threatening to replace him. She is acting as though she has the power to rule. He cannot let her get away with this, as it would publicly undermine his authority and injure his male pride. Mr Brown quietly nods to his trustee "...at which point the nigger laid his black hands upon my body, at which I screamed and felt my stomach turn in revulsion, at which its contents emptied upon the ground" (*Cam*, 78). Brute force is the language that Emily is forced to understand in placing her back in her position. The same language was of course used to put slaves in their place.

So strong is her distaste for the Other that she throws up and passes out. This kind of weak physical state was fashionable for middle and upper class Victorian women, as was noted in section 2.1. While she is "recovering her senses", Stella defends Mr Brown's "difficult situation, having neither wife, nor children", to which Emily responds only in thought that "What this sooty illiterate could never hope to understand is that by coming to visit I was far exceeding the duties that most

proprietors set for themselves. And without a visit, I could never have discovered that my father's deputed authority was being abused and his property, including dear Stella, exploited." (*Cam*, 79) She still asserts herself as the proprietor and sees herself as doing her 'bit' for the estate in visiting, whereas everyone else just views her as being in the way or a nuisance. She still also blindly refuses to see what the connection between Mr Brown and Christiania is.

She is encased in her own ethnocentric views, and as her racism increases and she forgets her abolitionist cause, simultaneously also her class consciousness and criticism of the white society erode. As Low (1998, 127) argues, her growing support for the planters and her affair with Mr Brown can be seen as a willingness to identify with the slave owners and be identified as one of them herself. This change in her attitude could also be seen as a result of the difference in attitudes towards slavery in the mother country and the colonies. In the colonies support for abolition was resisted far longer than in England. Emily's class consciousness does not erode altogether though, as there are still a class of white people she can look down upon that are even "lower" than the people she has now started to socialise with. "I was startled and horrified to observe that the denizens of this hamlet were white people who had evidently declined financially and morally, having witnessed the estates they worked on sold to meet mortgage debts" (*Cam*, 108). These people had been indentured labourers or even slave owners that had gone bankrupt, and were treated like the "common negro." After such a turn, they lived on the handouts of the slaves. Emily terms these people as "pale-fleshed *niggers*" and "poor white negroes" (*Cam*, 108, 111). Emily connects financial loss to a loss in morals as was common in the Victorian period as was noted earlier. Before she falls to this ungraceful position we need to look at another theme in the book. Here we turn to belonging, or feeling at home, which is the theme of the next subchapter.

## 4.2 Belonging & feeling at home

In this section, I explore belonging and a sense of home from Emily's perspective. Feeling at home somewhere does not entail belonging there, which makes the topic all the more fascinating regarding this study.

On her departure to the Caribbean, Emily is very sentimental about leaving the "beloved shores" (*Cam*, 7) of England behind her. She muses that "with all its faults, [it] 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" (*Cam*, 8). Despite leaving for something totally different and something most English women could only have dreamt to have the possibility to see, she feels sad about leaving all she has known behind her. Onboard the ship as they approach the Caribbean she is still sentimental about leaving her home. "I am not above admitting that if one had looked closely at my visage it might have been possible to have espied a tear of sadness. This first part of my journey was over and I was breaking the last remaining link with a past that I understood. From this moment I would be entering a dark tropical unknown." (*Cam*, 22) Elliott has examined the "overriding constants in the process of Atlantic migration and settlement." He argues that the sea crossing itself created both a physical and psychological feeling of separation from the mother country (1989, 7).

There appears to be no doubt as to where she belongs, but as Calbi (2005, 1) has noted, she simultaneously belongs and does not belong to England. This is due to her gender, where even in her own home, due to the patriarchal nature of society, she has no say over her own life. In this system, women were considered to be the childlike, as the name of this chapter in addition to the following quote indicate: "The truth was she was fleeing the lonely regime which fastened her into backboards, corsets and stays to improve her posture. The same friendless regime which advertised her as an ambassadress of grace." (*Cam*, 4) This quote illustrates the marginal space she had to manoeuvre in England, both from the perspectives of the patriarchal society that allowed women no



room to manoeuvre, except in their own sphere and strict moral boundaries, but also literally, with the image of corsets, Emily being ‘yanked’ into shape, the backboards and corsets constraining her movements.

Hall has interestingly argued that we are in the place where we are, so we can be away from somewhere else. He writes that his personal reason for leaving the Caribbean was to get away from his mother. However, this seemed an inappropriate statement to make so he claims he had to invent “other fictions, which are more authentic, or at least more acceptable” (1999, 10-11). These more acceptable stories are also surprisingly accurate regarding Emily’s reasons for leaving England and extending her stay in the Caribbean. She can not voice her opinions concerning patriarchal family life. She cannot challenge her father’s decision to marry her off to a man she probably does not find appealing in any way. So she invents more acceptable truths, namely carrying out research in the Caribbean for her intended lecture tour in her avoidance of the marriage and the restrictions that English society imposes. What is surprising is that her father allows her to travel as the Caribbean “was no place for the fair sex” (Patterson, 1979, 285).

Gail Low has noted that Emily’s title as mistress of the plantation is nominal as she is both a visitor and a woman. As well as this, her own vague beliefs and later on her newcomer status reinforce her marginality in the planter society (1998, 124). In the beginning she disapproves of slavery and tries to disassociate herself from it by disapproving of what she encounters on her arrival. One of the first things she views is the type of horses the white people use in the Caribbean. “The carriage was light and airy and drawn by English horses. This seemed to me a needless expense, for I knew that in these parts they were blessed with perfectly serviceable horses from New England” (*Cam*, 21) She also disapproves of the lavish eatables on the table “as one of wasteful plenty” (*Cam*, 31)

...her awareness of the slave servants' presence at these excessive displays of wealth and her representation of them as a distinct threat to her peace of mind show how acutely aware she is of the twinned world of masters and slaves, and the parasitic dependence of the former on the latter. Indeed, her attempts at insisting on her distance from planter society, her representation of slaves...as the property of her father, is a direct result of her desire to disassociate herself from the institution of slavery. (Low, 1998, 127)

However, in her desire to fit in with the Caribbean community of white plantation owners and merchants she starts to assimilate her own ideas with theirs, thus giving up her earlier abolitionist mission and any ideas of her own. "...the longer she stays on the island, the more she reveals the racial prejudice that lies behind her mask of liberalism."(Low, 127) In other words, she begins to invent "more acceptable fictions" to fit in better. Being on the island gives her a sense of freedom, being in charge of her own life, and superiority that she most likely did not experience back in England. In the Caribbean, the community was smaller and composed of a less homogenic group than her circles in England would have been. It also attracted the kind of people who were less morally bound, so Emily is also free to sit and socialise with the doctor, the pastor and Mr Brown, whereas she probably would not have had the opportunity to do so un-chaperoned in England. Her being without a chaperone<sup>30</sup> is only questioned once, on her arrival in the Caribbean (*Cam*, 25).

Greene notes that conventional morality was little regarded in the Caribbean (1989, 225). No doubt the white men on the island enjoy this lack of freedom, as there were not that many white women to converse with and Emily experiences joy from the companionship, "...Mr McDonald has taken it upon himself to visit with more frequency, which gives me much pleasure..." (*Cam*, 46) She enjoys the attention. The men normally only had black women around them, and sexual encounters with the black women were common and were not followed by any legal repercussions, even in cases where the encounter was against their will. An example of this is Mr Brown's liaison with Christiania, and her "marriage" to an older man when she was ten years old. The men have more respect for Emily, who despite socialising with them keeps her distance at almost the required moral level of her status. She can not be violated, as she is white and this would have serious

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<sup>30</sup> Emily's maid, Isabella, dies on the voyage over to the Caribbean.

repercussions. She is still seen as a paradigm of virtue, whereas the other women had the opposite image projected on to them.

In one of their frequent discussions, Emily, Mr McDonald, the doctor and Mr Rogers, the minister, the stance towards the term “home” for the French and English is compared.

Mr McDonald contrasted the use of the phrase “at home”, when applied by the English expatriate, with the use by the French. For the former, he always means England, but the Frenchman will determine that his island is his “home”...the English planters look upon these islands as colonies to which they are exiled for a certain period, places containing their properties, and therefore of the greatest consequence to them, but very few expect to die on these tropical estates. Those who have troubled to bestir themselves all look forward to spending their last years in the land of their birth. (*Cam*, 49-50)

This indicates that most English people planned, at least in theory, to go back one day. Alleyne also notes this tendency by the British to see their Caribbean plantations as solely a place to make a profit before returning home to a life of luxury. In contrast, Spaniards, Portuguese and French saw their colonies as “home”<sup>31</sup>. (2005, 98) Emily refers to the Caribbean island as home only once directly. “The great watery weight of the ocean unfurled upon the white sands in a sweet and measured rush, and closer to *home* [sic], and against the purple curtain of the night, active bats of every size and shape flew erratically in search of their prey.”(*Cam*, 46) For many, the reality of their situation meant they could not go back. Emily intends to go back; she has the chance for this until later when she becomes pregnant. Emily also notes the slaves talk of home in her diary

...the negroes generally believe in a life beyond this world which will involve their return to their own country. However, the decline in sable freight has led to fewer of the negroes having any idea of a country beyond these shores, so that some other place not rooted in reality has long since been substituted for the concept of a *home* country. It was surprising for me to note how many of those negroes who claimed to some memory of association with Africa denied any affection for this link...Perhaps the commonest of all the negro airs that I have given ear to, and one of the very few that I have been able to distinguish as *English*, reflects the rootlessness of these people who have been torn from their native soil and thrust into the busy commerce of our civilized world. It is much to be doubted that they will ever again reclaim a true sense of self. (*Cam*, 70-71)

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<sup>31</sup> The French still have “internal” flights to Martinique, which after decolonisation went from a colony to a French *département*.

As is evident from this rather long quotation, the slaves dreamt about some kind of home, but as in many of Phillips's and other post-colonial works, the home they dream of is not the same one they left. Time has caused many to forget what it was like. Instead the notion of home is replaced by a mythical home elevated to great heights in the minds of the rootless people Phillips so often writes about. The issue of a true identity crosses Emily's mind too, and in her manner of speaking it is strikingly obvious that she views the black people to be from another world to the likes of her own kind. Yet, she realises the fracturing effect uprooting has on the identity of the people. She too, has been uprooted from her home, although she was not physically forced to do so. Rather, she was escaping the limited spatial confinement.

At the end of the novel Emily has fallen down the social ladder from an upper-middle class plantation owner's daughter to a "white nigger". She has lost her respectability as a consequence of falling pregnant outside of marriage. It is never stated clearly to the reader, whether the father is Cambridge or Mr Brown. I presume the father to be Mr Brown, as Emily becomes fond of him and they appear to be an item. They were more intimate in the book than she was with Cambridge, whom she ever spoke to once in the narratives. Emily also calls him "aged" (*Cam*, 92), not any term of endearment, and her disgust of the black population has already become apparent. With Mr Brown or Arnold as she has come to call him, she goes to the cottage she later makes her home, and writes as follows (*Cam*, 118-119) of their time there alone.

...we felt able to hold each other. Perhaps the heat has introduced some weakness of my character into my person, but I must confess to not feeling any guilt as a result of this new intimacy. If the truth be told, the single emotion that came rushing into my body was that of happiness; pure, undistilled, happiness at my good fortune to have discovered a man such as Arnold in the tropical backwater of the Americas.

On this occasion Emily and Arnold become "intimate" and after this she stops associating with the other men. When she is approached by Mr MacDonald Emily says (122), "I made it quite clear I already had a companion with whom I was more than satisfied. I indicated that it might make life

difficult for all parties were I to be seen abroad with another man....Men, like polite women, should learn to restrain and control their emotions.”

What has left the confusion in the air about the paternity is Emily never stating who the father is and the following from the epilogue. “The little foreigner now no longer resident in my womb.”(*Cam*, 183) Of course, the little foreigner could refer to the fact that had the baby been born alive, it would have been a Creole, in other words local born. What also points to Arnold, is that after their trip to Hawthorn Cottage, Emily notes in her diary that: “I feel a gulf is forming between myself and Arnold...And, of course, poor me...Surely Arnold will not consider abandoning me now.”(*Cam*, 127) The gulf could have come about as they both know they violated morality, and of the possible effects of the transgression. Emily already seems to be aware of her pregnancy. Cambridge in his narrative (167) also hints at Emily’s pregnancy being the reason for the gulf between Arnold and Emily “A tearful Stella (for it appeared that Mr Brown had taken no interest in her beloved Miss Emily once the details of the latter’s condition had been discovered by the physician)...”

It almost seems that Emily knows she is pregnant because she feels sorry for herself and is wondering if Arnold would leave her now that she has disgraced herself and is pregnant with his child. Despite her own transgression, just after the visit to Hawthorn Cottage with Arnold, she writes disapprovingly in her diary about her father and the likelihood of him spending his time with a romantic liaison: “Does he have no conception of what would claim us all in the tropics were we to slip an inch below the surface of respectability? In these climes all is possible. Perhaps this is why a certain type of man (and woman) longs to settle in these parts.” (*Cam*, 127) This transgression of Emily’s is what makes her stay in the Caribbean. Cambridge can not be ruled out as the father either though, as when the doctor is attending the feverish and abandoned Emily, she writes in her diary that “It would appear that a major scandal may yet break and shatter the reputations of divers persons.” (*Cam*, 128) In the epilogue in her dream like rambling she sees “A

man strung up, mouth agape, tongue protruding. Hercules.<sup>32</sup> Cambridge. With his Bible.

Murderer.... ('Please keep still and stop talking. Stop talking')" (*Cam*, 183) The orders to stop talking are the doctors words, when Emily was in labour but it is interesting to see how Cambridge is connected to the feverish description of the epilogue just before she is shown to be thinking about the birth of her dead child. The baby's body is referred to as a "carcass", (180) which usually refers to dead animals. Could it be that she was unable to see her child as human if Cambridge indeed was the father due to her racist, ethnocentric values? It is also possible that "foreigner" referred to the fact that the baby would have been of mixed ethnicity.

Whoever the father, the pregnancy brings her shame and limits her options. Her father has decided to sell-up. She decides to stay on the island in the derelict Hawthorn Cottage with Stella, and live on the contributions of the former slaves as the other white people who have fallen from grace do. She cannot go back to England as she has bought shame on herself, as well as her father and therefore, would have no prospects for a decent future in England. She feels a stigmatized identity being attached to her. She is seen as immoral. The Caribbean represents her only choice, as there she is among people of her own sort, who are less morally bound. However, even in the Caribbean her behaviour is frowned upon. On the death of her child, the doctor is attending to Emily and she notes "His shame was such that he was unable to meet my eyes, His shame!" (*Cam*, 128) Emily is clearly and painfully aware that she has disgraced herself, so much so that even others are ashamed to look at her, even though the shame is hers alone. Moreover, her being a white middle-class woman makes the shame greater, for she was supposed to be virtuous and pure, a paradigm of virtue. This subverts the stereotypical image imposed on white middle class women.

Before her pregnancy, she still thinks of going home. She even considers taking Stella back with her.

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<sup>32</sup> Before Emily knew the name of Cambridge, she refers to him (*Cam*, 41) as "...a black Hercules of a brute...."

I have been thinking seriously of taking her back with me to England, but my fear is that she may be mocked as an exotic, as are the other blacks who congregate about the parish of St Giles and in divers parts of our kingdom. However, when the time is ripe I will suggest to her that she might wish to meet with her master in his own country, the prospect of which, I am sure, will delight her. I cannot believe that any West Indian negro would spurn the opportunity of serving their master a quart of ale and a tossed tea-cake on a wintery English night. (*Cam*, 78)

What Stella's thoughts are, the reader never finds out. But obviously Emily would like her to accompany her back to England and cannot entertain the possibility of Stella declining. At the merchant's dinner Emily is attending with Arnold, she no longer despises the West Indian plantocracy but feels at home with them. She wonders if her newly acquired taste for Caribbean food will enable her to settle back in England. "I began to wonder if I should ever again adjust to the fare of England. Was I doomed to become an exotic for the rest of my days? This it now seemed to me, would be no bad thing, for I discovered much at this dinner that warmed my heart towards one class of these *creole* people." (114). She has got over her prejudices, at least regarding the class that is at the top of the Caribbean society, and begins to feel at home amongst them now she is with Arnold.

When her pregnancy is discovered and Mr Brown is dead, she writes that she is in no condition to travel; neither does she want to stay on the plantation but wishes to go to Hawthorn Cottage with Stella. It is only in the epilogue that the reader finds out that this is indeed where they have gone to. The doctor is visiting Emily to help deliver the dead child and asks Emily when she will return to their country. Emily replies "Our country?" and we learn from the text of Emily's thoughts that the phrase was delivered "as though this England was a dependable garment that one simply slipped into or out of according to one's whim. Did he not understand that people grow and change? Did he not understand that one day a discovery might be made that this country-garb is no longer of a correct measure?" (*Cam*, 177) Emily seems to be saying several things. First, that England is somewhere you can go back to when you fit the role you are assigned and live it, which Emily has now broken with her immoral conduct and therefore cannot return. She also seems to be

implying that sometimes when you have been away from somewhere long enough you can feel you belong to that new place. But it also seems to suggest that terms, such as “our country” are not that obvious or straightforward as concepts with which to measure belonging somewhere or coming from somewhere in the future. This of course, is how the world is today. It is in the epilogue too, that Emily sounds most modern. Even the language changes from an elevated old English style to a more modern way of speaking.

Emily’s situation has changed and she no longer wants to go, nor can go back. Despite her inner thoughts, we read Emily saying to the doctor “I expect I will soon return to England...After all it is my home” (178) and she wonders if England could be the replacement Stella needs for the child, the “something they might share” (178). She lies in her bed and says a prayer for “those, like herself, whose only journeys were uprootings.” (180). Anthony Pagden & Nicholas Canny have stated that in the Caribbean “there were a set of broadly similar attitudes and a number of similar local conditions...In the first place, for all colonists, there was the inescapable fact of their exile. All were compelled, sooner or later, to come to terms with their continuing absence from a land that they often persisted, even into the third or fourth generation, in regarding as their true ‘home,’ their ‘mother country.’” (1989, 267) In Emily’s case we do not see such an attachment, probably partly as the book has been written in the 1990s but also because Emily is in effect running away from the solitary confinement that England embodied for her. Also her moral and financial downturn leaves her better off, feeling more at home, in the Caribbean than returning to England where her marriage prospects are low and she would also have to face the shame head-on if she returned to her father. The economic loss would also increase her shame in England. By staying in the Caribbean, Emily is taken care of and she has her independence; the freedom to choose what she does and who she associates with.

The reader forms an idea of what happens to Emily from her fever like description in the epilogue “They were kind, they journeyed up the hill and brought her food. Cassava bread and bush



tea mixed with milk. The mistress. Six months, six weeks, six days, it mattered little for her status was secure. The mistress, she had position, but they would never learn to read and understand her strange moods.”(*Cam*, 182 – 183) Emily stays on the island in the cottage, she fights the stigma she has been attached by making herself believe that she has some position as the mistress of the now sold plantation. From the above quote though, it seems she has lost her mind. She is fed and taken care of by the slaves, or ex-slaves and has position, at least in her own mind, due to the past and because of her skin colour. The European value system being in place, she is looked up to. Whether this is through pity or genuine due to the cultural brainwashing of the past is unclear. She wonders if her father will forgive her, but he does not come to the plantation. She wonders if there are any ships going to England saying “Are there no ships that might take me away? But to take me away to what and to whom?” (183). She does not have a home other than the Caribbean; yet she is not sure if she belongs there or not, she feels lost and wishes for death “Quick, come quick, death. Emily understood that the patient ones decentre quietly and with more beauty. I have been patient. Quick, come quick. Quick.”(184) She is lost, left on the outside with a stigmatized identity, not knowing where she belongs, uprooted and shamed.

### **4. 3 The strength of dominant world views**

According to Howard Pactor (1990, 8-10), the first newspaper in the Caribbean was published in 1718 in Jamaica, more than a century after the first English settlement in the area. Greene on the other hand, notes the birth of the first printing press and first newspaper for the British Caribbean in Barbados in 1731 (1989, 251). In Barbados, (and quite probably also in the other colonies), the establishment of their own newspaper alongside other positive developments saw a rise in admiration for the work of earlier settlers and through this an increased local pride (Greene, 1989, 252). “The history of the colonial Caribbean is an exciting tale of discovery, piracy, colonialism and

conflict. The stories have been told by historians, pirates, visitors, residents, and popular writers who have reported fact and fiction, often with little regard to which is which.” (Pactor, 9)

Although Emily’s opinions are vague and ever-changing, she still possesses some rationality on her arrival, for example, regarding the newspapers on the island. She is aware that they are not to be taken seriously, as they pay little attention to what is true and what is false. “These newspapers seemed determined to out-do the other in vulgarity of tone, freely heaping abuse without recourse to the facts...Never before have I witnessed such vicious parade of injustice and intemperance.”(*Cam*, 47) This is true of the newspaper account at the end of *Cambridge*. From both the historical and fictional accounts we can infer the one sidedness and power of the dominant worldviews and their representation. This trait has passed into more recent history also.

Writing after decolonisation, Fanon has criticised the way in which black and colonised people are portrayed in a manner that serves to reinforce existing stereotypes. He argues that only one truth, a white truth, is presented (1967, 34-35, 147). In the introduction to *The Empire Writes Back* (Ashcroft & al., 1989) the significant body of writing that emanated from the colonies is discussed noting that

[s]uch texts can never form the basis for an indigenous culture nor can they be integrated in any way with the culture which already exists in the countries invaded. Despite their detailed reportage of landscape, custom, and language, they inevitable privilege the centre, emphasizing the ‘home’ over the ‘native’, the ‘metropolitan’ over the ‘provincial’ or ‘colonial’, and so forth. At a deeper level their claim to objectivity simply serves to hide the imperial discourse within which they are created. (1989, 5)

Clearly in the sensationalistic newspaper report in *Cambridge*, this is exactly the case. It “casts doubts on the very possibility of definitive historical construction” (O’Callaghan, 1993, 46). The subjectivity of truth becomes apparent to the reader, when the events of the book are constructed through the juxtaposed first person narratives, in addition to the prologue, newspaper report and epilogue.

The reader has got acquainted with the characters and is able to detect the one-sided and invented account of the events that are reported in the newspaper. The reader knows that Cambridge is not a “heartless” or an “insane man” as the paper portrays him (*Cam*, 171). It is also obvious that Mr Brown is not as innocent as he is made to look in the newspaper, where he is described as “the Christian Mr Brown” which is followed up by a contradiction of his religiosity with a hint of defensiveness that “Mr Brown, like many other white men in this island, carried on an innocent amour with a woman belonging to the property, named Christiania....” (*Cam*, 171) From Cambridge’s narrative (*Cam*, 163) it becomes apparent that Christiania, Cambridge’s “wife” was mentally ill. He notes that she had “reverted to dirt-eating and other abominations” which Cambridge puts down to “a *sickness* brought on by Mr Brown’s hunger” by which he means his frequent rapes of her. Christiania’s symptoms as mental illness also fit the description in Emily’s account, although she puts Christiania’s behaviour down to witchcraft. Cambridge writes that

[i]t appeared that my *wife* ...had recently taken to conducting herself as though the mistress of the Great House....Perhaps he looked upon my comely *wife* as a visual entertainment...Or was he lonely? Or was he simply humouring her in anticipation of this moment when he might punish both my *wife* and myself with one act of brutal desire?...Mr Brown found a weak pretext to inflict upon me a severe beating in the presence of the English female. Whether this was some customary ritual to ensure easier access next time he should choose to visit my wife, or due punishment for the defiance I had chosen not to hide, I could not tell. (*Cam*, 162)

Emily’s portrayal of Mr Brown before their affair gives us a picture of an obnoxious and self-serving man. These are verified by accounts from Mr Wilson and also by Cambridge. Kuurola (2007, 130) sums it up by bringing to our attention “...the subjectivity of human experience that lies behind documented history.” We often assume that what we read is a fact, even though we only have one take on the issue, and we do not question the subjectivity of what we read. Hall notes that the ‘truth’ is represented in a certain way to fit our existing ideas and European conventions (1999, 111).

The two main narratives of the book, by Emily and Cambridge, give us an idea of who they are as individuals, and what both the English and Caribbean societies were like. The accounts are not identical but we can discern something of the nature of the events from both accounts. At the end of Emily's story Christiania is implicated as one of the causes of Mr Brown's and Cambridge's conflict. "I cannot relate the full details of the event, but the haughty black woman Christiania...was in some way involved." (*Cam*, 128) In Cambridge's account, he tells the reader that he approached Mr Brown to ask him "...that he behave towards myself and my *wife* with the decency that one would have afforded a dog. He struck me once with his crop, and I took it from him, and in the resultant struggle the life left his body." (*Cam*, 167) Cambridge writes his account to explain the truth as he sees it, riddled with guilt for breaking one of the Ten Commandments. It is a desperate attempt by a man doomed to die to have his version of events recorded for an alternative version of the truth. Cambridge must realise that if any record was to survive for any larger public ever to read, it would most likely be the newspaper report.

For this reason and for the fact that his account seems more consistent throughout, it is easier to believe Cambridge, he is not as blind or contradictory as Emily as he has experienced both sides of life. He knows what it is to be a slave in both England and the Caribbean and he knows what it means to be free. Nor is he biased as the newspaper is. Cambridge, despite his Eurocentrism, is still able to see and understand both cultures, having access to the English way of thinking as well as the African way which surrounds him on the plantation. He also knows how he is positioned and what being African means to the white people. Emily accepts the white version of truth without questioning it once despite her observations of the low level of these newsheets on her arrival, although she admits not knowing much about the circumstances. This would appear plausible if she indeed was pregnant for Mr Brown. In addition to being blinded by love, Emily's biased worldview reflects her change towards a similar state of mind as the people she surrounds herself with on the island. It is easy to understand why the newspaper's view becomes conceivable for her. It

reinforced the existing prejudices the white society held and confirms what they already assumed of the slaves.

The strength of these attitudes become evident when one bears in mind Emily's critical views towards the newspapers on her arrival and her subsequent acceptance of them with no hesitation. She cannot free herself from these views, despite her attempts at being liberal. She has also been subjected to cultural brainwashing. By disagreeing with the white people on the island she would be in opposition to them and they are in reality the only group she can identify with or ever really belong to. She does not want to be an outcast and so accepts the limited views she has been brought up with without questioning their objectivity. Fanon has argued that the worldview that colonised people have is limited, because the voice that exists in their societies is the voice of the white coloniser, no black or native voice exists (1967, 152-153). This view, although having being presented in a different time could also be extended to the Caribbean society where Emily and Cambridge lived as they are cut off from any other alternative truth.

A modern day analogy could also be drawn; we in the West do not have so many alternative truths from outside the West readily available despite the Internet and satellite TV. These truths might be 'out there', but require effort to be found and often present difficulties because of the languages that non-Western news channels or papers are available in. The image of Others that we are presented with is often very negative. In today's world, particularly Islam and Islamic countries are portrayed as the evil Other in the West. Hall notes that our values penetrate all descriptions of the social world, thus even the most 'factual' account contains an ideological dimension (1999, 101). We cannot but bring our value systems into the picture. Both Emily and Cambridge are blinded by the dominant world views and have built their social existence and structures on these views. This largely determines the way in which each character sees him or herself. Due to her English middle class background, Emily first views herself above the Caribbean society but feels a

need to integrate for need of social standing and company in addition for the need to belong to a group. Anyone of lower class is Othered and identity is built on this difference.

The journals and newspapers from the Caribbean were reflective of oligarchic opinion and as such are valuable records of British struggle to survive in the region (Pactor, 1990, 8-10)<sup>33</sup>. They represent the struggle for power over ideology and the justification for a way of being that surely must have felt questionable even to the most cold-hearted person on occasion. Cambridge wants to fit the prevailing culture but does not want to be represented in the prevailing cultures stereotyped and warped view. These he knows, will only portray him in a stigmatized way. The only way for him to have his voice heard, to talk back, is the slim chance that someone would read his narrative on the plantation or preserve it for history. Despite resisting the prevailing cultural representations, he too builds his identity through Othering and belonging, to which we turn to next.

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<sup>33</sup> The first newspapers published by and for the black communities appeared by the late 19<sup>th</sup> C (Pactor, 1990, 10).

## 5. Cambridge – “An Englishman, albeit a Little Smudgy of Complexion!”

In the first two subchapters, Cambridge comes under analysis as to how he constructs his identity through Englishness and Othering and secondly, where he feels he belongs and where he feels his home is. In the final subchapter, I analyse some of the reasons why Caryl Phillips may have chosen to write a historical fiction such as *Cambridge*, which correlates with slave autobiographies, travelogues and diaries of Victorian women as well as colonial newspapers in style, yet still has many modern standards of identity and human worth written into it.

### 5.1 Othering & Englishness

Cambridge starts his story knowing he is soon to be executed. It is almost a hope of deliverance, so that his version of the events might somehow miraculously survive, and save him from being seen as the criminal he knows he will be made out to be. The reader witnesses this in the newspaper that covers Mr Brown’s death and the circumstances of it, as well as the hanging of Cambridge. He is fighting back or talking back, in order to present the reader with an alternative truth. bell hooks notes that in her neighbourhood in Kentucky, “‘talking back’ meant speaking as an equal to an authority figure.”(1989, 5) hooks also notes how for black women talking was not encouraged and therefore she wrote “to capture speech, to hold onto it, keep it close.”(1989, 6)

Emily and Cambridge are both in a position where they are not supposed to speak about important issues, only “to talk a talk that was in itself a silence” (hooks, 7). For Emily this is true due to her gender and for Cambridge because he is black. However, both write. hooks claims that writing is often a “resistance struggle in any situation of domination” and continues that writing can be a form of healing for the self (1989, 8). E. Valentine Daniel has also noted the human need for memories that are important to oneself to be brought into a wider existence, in other words rescued

from being forgotten (1996, 121-123). Emily and Cambridge both want their versions to be heard.

Hooks notes that

Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is that act of speech, of ‘talking back,’ that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject – the liberated voice. (1989, 9)

In other words writing and talking back are both liberating and empowering. It is seizing the opportunity to have one’s voice heard and to present an alternative version. Cambridge’s narrative of struggle tells us of the time he was a teenager and captured in Africa. The first impressions of white men are of greedy, tainted people with no heart (*Cam*, 135). The “uncivilized” (137) white people captured him and whisked him away to their ships and stole his gold jewellery, which for Cambridge is the connecting link to his family (135). Just like Emily muses on the ship that she is breaking the last remaining link with her past, so too Cambridge writes about his experience of being robbed of this link in the slave hold of the ship.

His capturers are constructed as the wicked Other. The language he uses of his capturers is also connected to the animal world and to barbarians in parallel to that of Emily’s. He explains that English language “...resembled nothing more civilized than the manic chatter of baboons” and that he constantly thought that “...these men of no colour, with their loose hair and decayed teeth, were not truly intent upon cooking and eating us....” (135) The description of his capturers mirrors the descriptions of Western people (and Emily) meeting the Other, an animal-like being one cannot quite make sense of; yet, the most prominent feeling to come out of the encounter is its inhumanness and Otherness. There has to be a separation between them and us. The unknown other has to be described in terms of something known to get an understanding of what it means and so the analogy is drawn to animals that are considered lower, yet similar.

On his capture, he sees his fellow Africans as pure on the whole, who have become tainted through contact with white people.



In our unsullied state we are a simple and unwarlike people. It is only the cursed avidity for wealth, and the consequent cruelty, knavery, and practise of diabolical arts by English navigators that has turned the hearts of my simple people from natural goodness, and honest affection, towards acts of abomination. Many natives in my home country are canting, deceitful people about whom one must exercise great caution. The treachery of some our petty kings, encouraged as they are by so-called Christian customers, leaves one in no doubt that gratitude, that most desecrated of words, has long since fled their crude language. In their dealings my people are great traders and bargainers, having much in common with the Hebrew people in these and other respects. But one should be ever alert and remember from whom my people imbibed the new chicanery. These *Christian* inheritors of the Hebrew tradition have corrupted the virtues of former times. (*Cam*, 133-134)

Cambridge questions the religiosity of the slave traders and is of the opinion that in olden times people were more pure. The cause for this impurity is connected to the idea of wealth and greed. When he is captured the first time, he is understandably terrified and actually believes that he may be on the menu of these white “human flesh merchants” (*Cam*, 137). They are savage cannibals to him. At this point he still identifies with his fellow Africans but after living in England he has succumbed to the English value system or, as Sartre (7) writes in the preface to Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* (2001), he has been “Whitewashed”.

After being ‘civilised’ by English people during his time as a slave in England, Cambridge uses Othering as a method of identity construction. He utilises it to distance himself from the ‘uncivilised’ Africans, and to position himself in the category of English. To the white people, seeing Cambridge as an English man is impossible; he does not fit the profile of what it means to be English when viewed in the framework of the building blocks that Englishness is constructed through (see 3.1). First, people like Cambridge would not have been particularly well represented in the nation’s tale. Black people did not fit into the picture of an unchanged, timeless English national identity or into the myths and rituals that English people had and celebrated. Nor did the black people fit into existing representations of a founding myth, let alone of the pure and original

inhabitants of Britain, although it has to be noted that even regarding white English people this is a myth<sup>34</sup>.

This is particularly true during his time as a slave in the Caribbean where attitudes were more racist. In England, he is treated kindly by some English white people, he even marries one, but there is always reservation or refusal in the air towards him. For example, him and Anna (his white, legal wife) are treated with contempt when working as missionaries (*Cam*, 152) and his owner, although giving them his blessing refers to their union as an “unnatural connection” (*Cam*, 145) due to miscegenation of the two ‘races’. Phillips (in Jaggi, 2001) has stated that “the idea that miscegenation means you go mad is deeply rooted in the British consciousness.” Miscegenation has been seen as pollution, or an illness. Fanon would argue that being with a white English woman is a symptom of wanting to turn your ‘race’ white. By the love of a white woman, the black man can grasp whiteness and feel superior to others; she is the key that unlocks the way to feeling worthy (1967, 8, 63). For Fanon, this is a sickness but we have to keep in mind he writes in a different time to the context in which the narrative of Cambridge takes place in. We also have to bear in mind that in 19<sup>th</sup> century England the number of black men far outweighed the number of black women, not leaving a great deal of choice concerning marriage partners of the same ‘race’.

Miscegenation was high on the agenda in the 19<sup>th</sup> century for reasons of power and control. As Ashcroft & al. point out. “Since the maintenance of absolute difference between Europeans and others, colonizers and colonized, was crucial to military and administrative control, miscegenation raised the constant spectre of ideological (and sometimes external) destabilization of imperial power.” (1998, 142) Cambridge is not the only literary figure in history to marry a white woman, or the only black man who wanted to ignore the colour of his skin. Shakespeare’s *Othello*, written approximately in 1603, charts the life of a black man in Venetian society, a society which “both

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<sup>34</sup> “A True-Born Englishman’s a contradiction, In speech an Irony, In Fact a Fiction.” (Daniel Defoe, 1930, xii quoted in Mullan.) This quote from Defoe exemplifies the mixed heritage of the English which is often glossed over. People with more obviously different ethnic backgrounds are therefore used as an Other despite being British to make white British people feel more like they belong, more like the original people.

enslaved the black and ridiculed the Jew. This black ‘extravagant and wheeling stranger’ must have lived on a knife-edge.” (Phillips, 1987, 45) Like Cambridge, Othello saw himself as belonging to the country he resided in (England and Venice respectively) and like Cambridge, Phillip’s writes that Othello “denied, or at least did not cultivate his past.”(1987, 51) Both stories show the black characters forgetting their past, trying to ignore their blackness and mimicking the ways of the white majority.

Homi Bhaba writes about mimicry, and claims that through the repetition of *partial presence*, which is the basis of mimicry, disturbances of cultural, racial and historical difference that menace the narcissistic demand of colonial authority are articulated. It “reverses ‘in part’ the colonial appropriation by now producing a partial vision of the colonizer’s presence; a gaze of otherness...” (Bhaba, 1994, 88). Therefore, “[t]he question of the representation of difference is...always also a problem of authority.”(Ibid, 89). Miming forms of colonial authority actually ‘deauthorize’ these forms of power (Bhaba, 1994, 89). The ambivalence that the blurred boundaries give rise to feel threatening to the colonisers as it “locates a crack in the certainty of colonial dominance, an uncertainty in its control of the behaviour of the colonized.” (Ashcroft & al., 1998, 139) Mockery is not far from miming and can therefore parody what it appears to mimic (Ashcroft & al., 1998, 139) Othello and Cambridge are only marginally accepted in their societies despite knowing the cultural norms of behaviour. Othello gains some tolerance as he is needed for his military skills and furthers his position by marrying into white society. Cambridge is not as crucial to the white English society which probably explains why he is barely tolerated. His marriage to a white woman does nothing to further his position in the eyes of others. In both stories the closeness of black male bodies to white women is seen as problematic.<sup>35</sup> This of course has remained an almost taboo subject until quite

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<sup>35</sup> In 1833, Ira Aldridge played the lead role in *Othello*. This was the first time in the history of the play that a black actor, and not a white actor in blackface, played the title role. Some people considered black actors playing black characters inappropriate and often the focus was not on the performance but on the proximity of black men to white women. (Green MacDonald, 1994, 231, 235)

recently in films highlighting the strong hold Otherness, the proximity of black bodies to white and hybridity and miscegenation have in Western consciousness.

Cambridge goes through several stages in constructing his identity. In no way does his constant re-naming by the “master race” help his clarity of perception. His original name is Oluamide. After his capture, he is taken to the Americas and from there to London. The captain on the boat insists on calling him Thomas, which if Oluamide refuses to answer to, he is flogged. He eventually submits to his fate and new name. He has gone from proud African to submissive slave. In London his owner refers to him as Black Tom. When he becomes a Christian he becomes David Henderson. It is in the Caribbean that he is named Cambridge by the unceremonial pointing of the finger by Mr Wilson. “Given the important role that the word, and the name in particular, plays in the African world view, this control of personal names was another masterful strategy for psychological control: for control of identity, for control beyond the simple control over life and death.” (Alleyne, 2005, 90-91). A name constitutes part of one’s identity. The power to name highlights the hold that the slave owners had over their slaves and their identities. It could be any name chosen randomly or the owner’s name extended to the slave<sup>36</sup>.

Alleyne highlights the importance of the “prerogative of naming and of symbolization...in understanding the issues of power and identity in the Caribbean.” (2005, 89) Through the naming process, there is the imposition of hierarchy, where positions of master and slave are clearly marked. In effect, the identity is not one’s own. Born with the name his parents gave him he is a proud African, he was then renamed by his captors and beaten into submission into accepting the name Thomas, which his master shortens into Black Tom, then being given a new name with his new found Christianity and becoming a missionary he is named after a Biblical figure David<sup>37</sup>, which he is then forced to give up again in order to become Cambridge the slave. It is almost as his

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<sup>36</sup> Daniel Defoe’s *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is seen as epitomizing the typical ideas of the time; of the superiority of European values over those of the areas being conquered. Robinson Crusoe takes as his servant a native and names him Friday.

<sup>37</sup> The second king of Israel. (www.britannica.com)

whole previous existence is wiped out, without a trace when a new name is enforced upon him involuntarily. He has basically been dictated to regarding what and who he is since the beginning of his capture and he has learnt to accept that. Interestingly though, David Henderson is the only name and identity he accepts and is proud of, which is probably due to his new improved self as a Christian. It is also the identity in which he most fully has succumbed to the English value system.

Religion, English language and his education symbolize the change in attitude towards the Africans he meets, as well as how he sees himself; he is no longer the same as them. "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." (*Cam*, 143) Here, yet again the language of improvement plays a role. Western religion and manners are seen as better than 'barbarian' African ones. He is delighted that his mission of "spiritually reforming [his] former countrymen" is going to be a brief visit, and the fact he rejoices of this short stay embody his Englishness. "Truly I was now an Englishman, albeit a little smudgy of complexion! Africa spoke to me only of a history I had cast aside." (147)

Christianity<sup>38</sup> as the epitome of moral culture, worked as a support system to British imperialism and was synonymous with 'civilization' which made it a useful tool in transplanting values successfully into the culture considered inferior (Rooke, 1990, 23-24). He also clearly does not feel that he belongs to Africa anymore. He is English. He has chosen to abandon any memory of Africa, or who he was in favour of the English values and beliefs he has been filled with and which he mimics. He is a different person. He has been taught to despise his origins and through that, all aspects of his former self.

To overcome this state, he needs to become English. Sadly, he does not see that despite his assimilationist efforts he is still viewed through the old stereotypes and offered a stigmatized identity. He notes that "The phenomenon of my arrival in distant parts of England, sporting a tinted

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<sup>38</sup> The Roman Catholic Church had its hand in slavery too during the early days of Colonial expansion. Slaves were even given as a gift to the Pope. (Alleyne, 2005, 54)

shade and a fair wife, often occasioned surprise and uproar.” (*Cam*, 150) Cambridge tries to veil, or evade his blackness; he considers his black features only “tinted” and continues to consider himself as English despite the uproar his colour and white wife gave rise to. Cambridge’s master connects love for a black man with inferior class status, when he asks Cambridge if he has noticed “how some of the bawds and lower-class women of England” (*Cam*, 145) seem rather fond of Cambridge’s colour. The majority of white English people were unwilling to change their opinions regarding their notions of morality and stereotypes. Low has stated that Cambridge is the anti-thesis to what Emily and her compatriots see as the sons of Ham (1998, 125). Low also argues that “...while Cambridge’s naivety can be critiqued for its assimilationist rhetoric and ideals, his account of his failure to gain acceptance as an equal, his capture and subsequent re-enslavement ironizes and destabilizes the declared very tenets of European civilization. It also shows how much they are linked to racial histories and enforced exclusions.” (Low, 126) So, Cambridge is the complete opposite of what white English people assumed blacks to be like. He is in fact, the same as them despite his colour, which is the only thing standing in the way of acceptance. Therefore, the building blocks of European civilisation are faulty, exclusionist and racist.

On the ship that he is taking to Africa to perform his ‘civilizing mission’ he raises a toast with the captain for “the honour due to merry England for having abolished the trade, while other, less civilized, nations continued to pursue this vile commerce...it was God’s wish that I should return to my old country with the character of a man in upper rank, and a superior *English* mind....” (*Cam*, 155) The same captain later enslaves him and sells him to the Cartwright plantation, so he must have been humouring Cambridge when raising the toast with him. On the ship after his recapture, he distances himself from the other Africans and instead of sympathy he is only hurt that he can be treated the same as the rest in the slave hold.

That I could still make a little sense of my own native language among the many spoken gave me some comfort, but the treachery of these white men, even towards one such as I who esteemed their values, tore at my heart with great passion. That I, a virtual Englishman, was to be treated as base African cargo, caused me such hurtful pain as I was barely able to endure. To lose my dear wife, fair England, and now liberty in such rapid succession! (*Cam*, 156)

He is still able to understand some of what is being said. The slaves are speaking various languages in the hold, which highlights the fact that they were taken from different areas to stop them uniting, giving the masters more control. This was an effective way to isolate any sense of community or belonging within the slave population. Even though Cambridge understands a little, he does not feel compelled to explain to them what is happening despite his first-hand knowledge of the anxiety that the slaves who have been freshly captured feel when they do not know what their fate will be. Nor does he feel connected to them, despite having gone through the anguish and pain before and seeing how evil his capturers are. Instead, he bemoans his own fate and is horrified that he with his ‘improved’ self is now being treated the same as the ‘uncivilised’ Others, he offers them a stigmatised identity. In Cambridge’s view, he is English due to his lack of knowledge of Africa or much of the language, his ability to speak English and his education and Christian beliefs.

Cambridge is Eurocentric and has almost similar attitudes towards his fellow slaves as the whites hold. This is not surprising when one considers the cultural brainwashing that he has been subjected to or what was noted earlier about the attitudes of Creole slaves to new African arrivals. Greene notes that “An identity – the understanding of what, culturally, one is – like ideology, is frequently something imposed.” (1989, 270) Cambridge has what Fanon would call an inferiority complex regarding blackness. The coloniser’s language and cultural values have been embedded in Cambridge who accepts them without questioning; he also sees his blackness as a hindering aspect. He does not despise his colour, as his Christian beliefs will save him and forgive him for this. He also knows he cannot change it, but he is veiling his blackness behind a cloak of European ideals. He has stopped acting like an *actional* person as Fanon (1967, 154) terms it, by which he means that

the black man's behaviour and appearance imitate the white man, and it is only through acting like the white Europeans that he can feel himself to be of any worth. Cambridge is not treated any better by the white English plantocracy despite his mastery of the English language and cultural knowledge. His abilities make no difference as he is a slave and he serves a purpose. Yet he ascribes himself value for his skills in the English language. Fanon states that the colonised who have been to the mother country adopt the language and culture, as well as a critical air towards their compatriots. By adopting European traits and speech, the colonised feel one step closer to being the equal of the European. (Fanon, 1967, 20, 25) This is also true regarding Cambridge and his attitude towards his fellow slaves on board the ship and on the plantation. Cambridge becomes irritated of being treated the same as the other slaves as he considers himself better to them. To him, the English are more 'civilized' than the Africans; he is almost a white man. He almost 'passes' as a white European but his colour hinders the full accomplishment of this end. Cambridge feels he belongs in England, yet he remains an outsider to the white English people. Next, I will endeavour to discuss these aspects of Cambridge's narrative.

## **5.2 An outsider that belongs**

Modern nation states make greater cultural demands on their citizens than the monarchies in Colonial times did. According to Pagden & Canny, prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was no clear relationship between self-perception and political independence that was thought to be sufficiently compelling to persuade people to die for it. Allegiance was felt not to the nation-state but to one's own village, religious group etc. (Pagden & Canny, 1989, 272-273) Today, we tend to associate ourselves with various things, sometimes it is the nation-state, sometimes with what our passport tells us, and at times it can be a mixture of the many components that have shaped our lives. Emily also seemed to be hinting at looking at the world in this way in the epilogue mentioned earlier in the



analysis (see p. 52). In today's world hybrid identities are common and growing fast in number. In post-colonial writing "hybridity in the present is constantly struggling to free itself from a past which stressed ancestry, and which valued the 'pure' over its threatening opposite, the 'composite.'" (Ashcroft & al., 1989, 36) Cambridge in his youth feels African, he knows of nothing else. He writes "[t]he sea saluted our reddened and miserable eyes, and pain assaulted our proud African hearts." (*Cam*, 136) He also refers to his fellow cargo and himself as a collective "[w]e bondaged brethren..." (*Cam*, 137) While glancing at his native land for the last time, he muses that "Whether affection for one's country is real or imagined, it is not an exaggeration to proclaim that at this moment instinct of nature suffused our being with an overwhelming love for our land and family, whom we did not expect to see again. Our history was truly broken." The final line of this quote sounds very modern considering that slaves did not know what was going to become of them or the extent and scale of this broken history. It is only now we know the extent of the severed link. But the quote exemplifies the anxiety and pain that they must have felt on leaving their homes and families behind on their way to the unknown.

When Cambridge meets people who do not care what his complexion is he starts to see goodness in white people. He comes to love his master, whom he first views as a criminal when he realises that slavery has been made illegal in England (*Cam*, 141), and possibly due to his masters kindness or to save himself from a worse fate, Cambridge hopes "...to introduce him to the notion that my sole pleasure in life derived from the great privilege of being able to serve him."(142) Cambridge comes to quite enjoy his freedom to roam London and his ability to speak the language. He discovers there are other blacks in the city "...occupying all ranks of life."(142). He notes how some are in a happier position despite being means to the European ends, when he notes

These *darling* blacks were effectively shielded from the insults of the vulgar, but I was soon to discover that the source of their fortunes often lay in the desire of the Englishman and the Englishwoman to take up a black or brown *companion* as a fashionable appendage. Lower down the ranks were the destitute blacks: harlots, entertainers, assorted vagabonds, a motley congregation of *Jumbo*'s and *Toby*'s, many of whom exhausted what bronze they could beg or pilfer swilling down that most famous national cordial, best gin. The bustling narrow cobbled streets of London were indeed filled with a variety of unfortunate negroes. (*Cam*, 142-143)

He wants to become learned and begs his master to let him have instruction in Christian knowledge, "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." (*Cam*, 143) In this quote the typical language of European expansion and improvement is invoked. In other words then, Cambridge does not want to feel African due to all the negative connotations it carries to the English world that he has learnt to associate himself with. He wishes to be a part of this 'better world' and believes that through education, as well as the host-cultures religion that he is learning he will achieve this end. Ledent (2005, 7-8) argues that "[u]ndoubtedly his conversion to Christianity is a source of personal fulfilment, but it also alienates him from himself..." For Cambridge, it would be a contradiction to identify with both cultures, as a hybrid, as this is a modern concept. Also, as he is continually offered a stigmatized identity there is no will to incorporate African elements into his being. He has struggled with who he is on various occasions.

Cambridge has been forced to give up his identity, and has through an English education and Christian beliefs been taught the values of the coloniser, and thus he has renounced all linkages to his past. Due to this letting go of what he has known, he expects to be treated on an equal footing with his fellow Englishmen with his new identity. He acknowledges the fact that he is a different colour, but at the same time, he feels he is no longer a barbarian. He tries hard to become English and belong, forgetting his original home and roots for the sake of improving himself. He writes in an elevated style, so he has obviously had an education of good quality. In the nineteenth century not many black people would have had that opportunity. Miss Spencer, who teaches Cambridge,

tells him that “with a Christian education [he] would find it possible to behave with reverence to [his] betters, with civility to [his] equals, and to subdue in others the prejudice that [his] colour gives rise to.”(*Cam*, 144)

As he ‘improves’ himself, he feels a change. “My uncivilized African demeanour began to fall from my person, as I resolved to conduct myself along lines that would be agreeable to my God.” He believes that clinging on to who he was as an African is not acceptable to God; that he has to become European to be accepted by God. These white European values are presented to him by his teacher Miss Spencer’s and Cambridge goes on to tell the readers of his story that

[i]t remained for her powerfully to encourage me to drive old Africa clear from my new mind for, as she related, black men were descended from Noah’s son Cham, who was damned by God for his disobedience and shamelessness in having relations with his chosen wife aboard the Ark. This wicked act produced the devilish dark Chus, the father of the black and cursed Africans. (*Cam*, 144)

At no point does Cambridge question if this is in fact how the Bible puts it, what he is being taught or see anything wrong with the European values. If God did create all men, he created them all equal but this is not how the white Europeans saw the issue, despite Jesus being born in the Middle East. After his new found identity, he makes the “unnatural connection” of marrying a white English woman.

When he is given the mission to convert his “former countrymen”, he is happy to hear that his stay in Africa will be brief for Cambridge now feels English. He has been civilized and even has a white English wife, of whom the reader learns surprisingly little. We only know her name is Anna, that she was a maid in the same household and that she too is Christian. Perhaps we know so little of her because it was Black Tom and David Henderson that lived with her; she is not part of Cambridge’s life and these previous identities are barely in existence any longer at the time of his narration. He admits to willingly throwing away and forgetting what he knew of his past and later states he does not want to taint Anna’s memory by talking of her (158). His time with Anna was a time he cherished as it was a time he could be himself, a free English man. He has relinquished this

time to his memory, as his experience as a slave is humiliating to him and he does not wish to associate his past experiences, or important people from the past with the present. It would be bringing them down to his present condition with him, at least in his memory.

Cambridge is very realistic of his condition when he is recaptured. “It appears that these *countrymen* had little interest in recognizing or relishing the negro on terms of equality.”(*Cam*, 151) The colour consciousness of English society also cost Cambridge his wife and child as they were not looked after well on their missionary tour and Anna and the child die almost instantly after the birth. To add insult to injury, the local minister refused to bury the child in “parish soil” (*Cam*, 153) because it had not been baptized. Cambridge is aware of the prevailing attitudes in society; he has felt them and experienced them first hand. He is aware that slavery is forbidden and that the law is not invoked and this “creates in the minds of many true Englishmen a confusion as to the proper standing of the black people in their presence.” (*Cam*, 147) What is interesting in this sentence is his use of the term ‘true Englishmen’. Despite all his efforts in becoming English, he does not feel he belongs; he is not part of the original people with a shared history. Yet, lacking this aspect of his identity does not compare to the hardships he faced in the Caribbean. Cambridge unknowingly contradicts Emily when he writes that “...the poorest in England may labour under great hardship, but not one would willingly exchange their status for the life of a West Indian slave. What freeman would resign his liberty for bondage of the dog or horse?” (*Cam*, 150) He acknowledges that freedom above all is the valued element even if life is hard. He also sees the human value of people, no matter what their colour when he reminds his congregation in a sermon “...we were all made in God’s image, though some of us be cut in ebony.” (*Cam*, 150) A sharp criticism is directed at Clarence de Quincy, who despises his colour and proclaims himself as “ a son of that *over-cooked* race of Adam”( *Cam*, 152) indicating that Cambridge does not hate his colour as much as what it stands for in his chosen society.

For Cambridge, the idea of home seems to be an easier question than it is for Emily. When he spies land from the ship when he has been recaptured, he tells us that "...we were able to observe the tropical new world that was now, *home*." (*Cam*, 156) Home is the place where he knows he will be staying a while but this does not mean he belongs there. His life has been marked with what Avtar Brah calls "diasporaic inscriptions" (2005, 1), he has been forced to come to terms with his involuntary migrancy on several occasions. He believes that due to his Christian beliefs his stay on the plantation will be brief and writes that "I faced these white men, with more knowledge of their country than they could possibly imagine, believing that through hard work and faith in the Lord Almighty, my bondage would soon cease. The African world of my sad, dark brethren had been truly abandoned across the waters. They knew this now. For them a new American life was about to commence." (*Cam*, 157.) He truly believes that his faith separates him from the other slaves, and that due to his improved state he will be spared. He is no longer of the African world, he is English but living in the Caribbean; the plantation is his home now, yet he belongs to England. Hall connects identity to the roads we travel, not the idea of our origins, he sees it "[n]ot as a return to our roots so much as a coming to terms with our routes." (Hall, 1996, 4) Cambridge can be seen to have partly accepted his routes, he knows where his origins are, acknowledges England as where he belongs but the Caribbean as his home for now. He also seems to be very clear regarding his identity and whom he sees himself as. A whole coming to terms with his routes however, would entail embracing his past.

When he is on his way to Africa to civilise the masses, he calls it his native land but this is not where he belongs as he sees it as "unChristian" (*Cam*, 154) and his "old country". On the plantation he constantly prays to be able to return to "dear England" (159). He even claims to have a better grasp of the English language than any others, including Mr Brown (161) thus further enforcing his sense of a right to feel English. His identity is deeply rooted in England as David Henderson. At the end of his narrative he writes "Pardon the liberty I take in unburdening myself with these hasty

lines, but the truth as it is understood by David Henderson (known as Cambridge) is all that I have sought to convey. Praise the Lord! He who 'hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth'. ” (*Cam*, 167) He feels at home in England because he admires the culture, language and who he had become, albeit as a result of cultural brainwashing.

Cambridge really wants to be English and belong there. He is respected by the other slaves on the plantation but from his arrival there he resolves to “be a strange figure, quiet and reserved” (*Cam*, 158). He writes that he does not wish to “participate fully in their slave lives” and does not want to “divulge, in this place of unhappiness, anything of my previous felicity and taint my Anna’s memory by association” (*Cam*, 158). He wants to keep who he was, and who he aspires to be from anyone living on the plantation. In his narrative Cambridge has little to do with his fellow slaves, apart from Christiania. To the slaves, he shows himself a quiet figure but to the white people he informs the reader that “I decided that by degrees I would reveal to them my knowledge of *their* language.”(*Cam*, 157) He therefore has a *double consciousness*, one for his fellow slaves, the quiet one and, for the white people on the plantation he wants to show his intelligence. In *The Souls of Black Folk* (1969, 45) W.E.B Du Bois wrote of double consciousness in the American context in the following manner: “One ever feels his two-ness – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.” Cambridge struggles to lose his African side but as it is so visible to and in the white world, he cannot discard it even by passing as white in every other aspect other than his appearance. He cannot lose it despite trying to veil it.

Sadly, he never returns to England as he is “dispatched. To where, [he] know[s] not.” (*Cam*, 133) His beliefs leave him unsure if he will end up in heaven or hell now that he has broken one of the Ten Commandments. To him knowing that he has transgressed his God leaves him fearful of his next place of abode. He feels in his heart that he belonged to England even others were not ready to accept this. Cambridge realises that for many it is just too difficult to accept. This problem has

persisted to some degree to our time. Prejudices and racism still exist.<sup>39</sup> Here I will turn to look at the reasons why Caryl Phillips may have chosen to write a historical fiction such as *Cambridge* and how we might be able to understand today's problems through history.

### **5.3 Historical fiction, fictional history & the high anxiety of belonging**

The historical reasons for the multiple ethnic make-up of British society were long ignored, and there prevailed a lack of facing up to the facts, or admitting any part in building this multiplicity. It seemed that this consequence of imperial conquering was wilfully forgotten and outsiders were viewed as intruders with no right to be in Britain. Hall (2003, 247) notes how in the 1960s the immigration of many former colonised people was viewed with shock and bewilderment backed up by questions of where from and why had these people come to Britain. Phillips grew up during the 60s and 70s witnessing race riots (1987, 2) and cries of “send them back” (2002, 303). Hall argues that the arrival of these peripheral groups in Britain challenged old notions of identity and raised the issue of multiculturalism. However, this only took place after WWII and the decolonisation process. In the 1960s multiculturalism was hailed as a ‘new beginning’ rejecting any historical experiences and masking the reasons in a ‘collective amnesia’ (Hall, 2003, 247). This meant that the process of ‘becoming multicultural’ was not dealt with thoroughly and a country that had previously thought of itself as white was multicultural over night. Meanwhile in the colonies, people were learning how to be black. Hall (1999, 13) has argued that black as an identity had to be learned at a historical time, and for example in Jamaica this could not be done until the 1970s, several years after independence. Hall (2003, 250) has also noted that ‘blackness’ is a relevant source of identity for third generation Afro-Caribbeans, despite not being so for the earliest immigrants.

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<sup>39</sup> Phillips's first novel, *The Final Passage* (1985), which won the Malcom X prize in the year it was published deals with the racism and hardship the Caribbean immigrants had to deal with on their move to the mother country in the 1950s. It tells the story of Leila who moves to England with her family and has to face up to the harsh realities of living in Diaspora.

For Phillips identity has been a source of anxiety since he was a child. In *The European Tribe* (1987) he recounts the event of his school days, when the teacher showing off his knowledge of the origins of surnames, says that Phillips is from Wales and the whole class burst out laughing. "...a joke which made my identity a source of humour...I grew up riddled with the cultural confusions of being black and British." (Phillips, 2) This event from his personal life resonates with the naming process of slaves already discussed. For Phillips, discovering where he belongs has been a journey. When he attended Oxford University, he travelled to London to "'plug into' black life" (Phillips, 1987, 5) and as a young man he travelled extensively in order that "the experience might better define [his] problem" (1987, ix). Phillips writes that at many points he wanted to give up being British but he decided to retain his passport because for as long as "there remain people who are incapable or unwilling to uncouple nationality from race, then my continued presence has virtue in so far as it might serve to confound, or perhaps educate such people." (2002, 303-304)

Identity and belonging, "the cultural or historical dilemma" (ibid, 8) "the conundrum of [his] own existence" (Phillips, 2001, in Jaggi) are questions which have prompted Phillips to write of these problematic notions, to process his thoughts and to educate those who refuse to live up to the facts. *Cambridge* was born as one of many of those missions. Cambridge is almost like the modern black Britons, who struggle against the prejudices and stereotypes in an effort to belong and be full members of society, while some sections of mainstream society continue to cling on to the fictional history of a pure people, or refuse to recognize the historical facts which have constructed Britain as it is. They want to continue viewing Britain through the mythical framework of a white Britain. People of different ethnic backgrounds continue to be seen as outsiders, intruders, the Others. In today's world, many people are not in their place of origin, if they can even be pinned down to one particular place at all and this is increasingly a phenomenon of our time.

Today's Britain is much more aware of these differences than the Britain Phillips grew up in. He says that "I think that Britain has a much more conscious sense of itself as a multicultural, multiracial



country, so a story which involves black faces and white faces seems to be not so much a pioneering thing now. I wouldn't say it's mainstream, but it's certainly not exotic and not on the fringes." (Phillips in Vinuesa, 2007, 7) In the final chapter in *A New World Order* entitled "Conclusion: The 'High Anxiety' of Belonging", Phillips writes that although Britain has progressed since the 60s and 70s, the experience of growing up feeling like an outsider scarred him enough not to be able to feel like he belonged there as much as he would like to (2002, 303-304). As a result of his 'high anxiety' of belonging Phillips, as Swift (1992) notes, "has maintained a keen interest...in Europe's pretensions and delusions about the place of European civilization in the world." The building blocks of European civilisation are also questioned in *Cambridge*, highlighting their hypocrisy and double standards. Not only do Phillips's novels in general, and this one in particular "relentlessly alert their readers to the hidden history of the West, that of the transatlantic slave-trade, for example, but they also underline Britain's inherent, though long negated, heterogeneity." (Ledent, 2005, 4)

For Phillips the key to understanding the present lies in understanding the past and how it has affected the way belonging, otherness and identity are constructed. In *A New World Order* he writes that

For the people of the African diaspora, art, particularly the art of the story, has been of primary importance. The physical and psychological horrors of the middle passage, and the subsequent descent into slavery, were compounded by the attempt of the part of the colonial masters to strip those of African origin of any connection to a remembered past. This accounts for the importance of the theme of memory and remembering in the storytelling tradition of the African diaspora. (2002, 220-221)

The process of writing forgotten, ignored or subverted historical events into fictional form, or fictional histories, is part of the 'healing and dealing with' process of discovering oneself and where one belongs. One reason which has not helped clarify belonging for black people in the past is that they were not able to bring their voices to the forefront for others to hear.

There are so few African accounts of what it was like to go through slavery, because African people were generally denied access to the skills of reading and writing. Reading and writing equals power. Once you have a language, you are dangerous. Cambridge actually makes the effort to acquire a language. He makes the effort to acquire the skills of literacy and uses them to sit in judgment on himself and the societies he passes through. (Phillips in Swift, 1992)

In this sense Cambridge is very different to most black people of his time. He is better educated than many white people were. His ability to read and write empowers him to resist the stigmatized identity he is branded with. Ledent has acknowledged Phillips's way of "focusing on characters who are usually left out of traditional historiography...slavery and the "other" presence in England were either inexistent or at best, figured as side issues in most English novels until the 1990s, (Ledent, 2005, 4)

Both Emily and Cambridge are marginal figures in the context of the book as has become evident from this work. Phillips is of his time, yet in touch with his past and uses his ability to write historical fictions to highlight the fictional histories or one sided truths we have sometimes been presented with in justifications of imperial conquering. These justifications have lived on to pollute present day attitudes and affect the way we view Others and questions of identity. Evelyn O' Callaghan in her article entitled "Fictional History and Historical Fiction" writes about the ambiguous nature of the various accounts in *Cambridge*; they are both menacing in their subjectivity yet for their intertextuality could be historical reconstructions.

...[T]he source narratives for *Cambridge* have long been considered the proper domain of West Indian historians and have been read as historical reconstructions. However, the particular nature of most of these documents – the slave narrative and the travel journal/diary, with their first person narrators, their conventions of rhetoric and structure – emphasizes their fictionality...*Cambridge* itself is a "novel" that attempts historical reconstruction in order to interrogate and, possibly, rewrite the European record of the West Indies. In a sense, then, *Cambridge* wears the mask of fiction...but reveals its matrix in historical narratives, which are in turn unmasked by the text's process and shown to be rather insidiously fictional in their claim to "the truth". (O'Callaghan, 1993, 34)

The novel is rich in source texts, and as already mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, Sancho is but one of the voices that Cambridge echoes. Sancho's position in British society was exceptional as is Cambridge's and both characters, along with the rest of the black community harboured a sense of being torn. Phillips (2002, 252) notes that "There was among these pioneering black Britons a sense of both belonging and not belonging. A sense of being part of the nation and

being outside it.” He continues that this was also the case with Ignatius Sancho who “held the key to understanding British society through both his command of the language and his bearing. However, by virtue of his pigmentation and history, he was doomed to occupy a role both ‘central’ and ‘periferial’ (2002, 252). Cambridge is similar to Sancho in that he occupies these positions. He embodies this duality in the book as does Emily. Phillips, Emily and Cambridge all speak from marginalised positions; from the periphery (Swift, 1992) yet they also occupy a central position. They belong and do not belong. Phillips writes of the dilemma in his own life as follows “...If I was going to continue to live in Britain, how was I to reconcile the contradiction of feeling British, while being constantly told in many subtle and unsubtle ways that I did not belong.” (Phillips, 1987, 9)

Ethnicity, which consists of language, religion, manners, traditions and attachment to places, is one of the ways through which national identity has been attempted to be unified. However, this method has proved to be a total myth in the modern world as, for example, there is not one nation in Western Europe in which the population consists of only one people, culture or ethnicity. They are all a combination of several of these aspects. (Hall, 1999, 54-55) Most modern nations consist of peoples that are not of the same origin, class, ethnicity or culture and have been brought together by the violent suppression of other cultures. In addition to this, most countries have varied class systems as well as gender and ethnicity groups. Modern western nations practised cultural hegemony in relation to their colonies, and it was particularly during the days of Empire that the perceived good qualities of Englishness started to be compared with the “negative” aspects of other cultures and peoples. These valued aspects then became the first “typically English” character traits. (Hall, 1999, 53-54) In *Cambridge*, these positive ‘typically English’ and ‘civilized’ traits are measured against that of the Other, the slaves and their negative ‘barbarian’ habits. In *Cambridge* Emily perceives Englishness through this limited and mythical way, even Cambridge possesses these traits she cannot countenance him as English due to his colour, where as Cambridge sees

belonging in a broader manner. To him his colour does not stand in the way of identifying with the English or feeling that he belongs there. Phillips's own parents downplayed their cultural origins in order for their children to fit in better (Ledent, 2002, 2).

Said has noted the division that linking a culture with a nation creates, particularly when there often are more than one ethnic group living within the nation. "In time, culture comes to be associated, often aggressively, with the nation or the state; this differentiates "us" from "them", almost always with some degree of xenophobia. Culture in this sense is a source of identity, and a rather combative one at that...." (1994, xiii) This association of culture with nation is a utopian ideal which breeds racist ideologies and does not help mutual understanding between different groups or promote the acceptance of differences. Hall notes that Victorian ideas of different 'races' as different species have in contemporary discourses been transferred to concepts of cultural differences of 'races', thus insuring the continuity of the importance of race as a potent factor in discourses of nation and national identity. (1999, 55) Religious affiliation has also become prevalent in discussions of belonging in Europe, particularly when the religion in question is Islam.

Phillips recognises that people struggle with these issues and through his narratives makes us aware of the often unconscious cultural knowledge base we carry with us, thus challenging our prejudices and exclusionist idea of Englishness. The varied gender and class angles that we are presented with in *Cambridge*, awaken the reader to the multifaceted levels and differing attitudes in existence within a culture among these subclasses. There is no one view but a prism of attitudes. Identities are formed in these different places and depend on the range of experiences we have. With many of the attitudes of today one can see a clear link with the past, although some major changes have also taken place regarding basic human freedom, tolerance and rights. Tolerance however is not the same as acceptance. Women, at least in the West have managed to secure an almost equal position to men, although there are still inequalities related to pay. Furthermore, discussions as to whether a woman's place is at home or at work when she has small children still

continue. Nead has argued that Victorian women were primarily seen as different and complementary to men, and never inferior (1998, 34). From a contemporary perspective it is hard to view women of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as equal to men when considering their lack of freedom. This lack of freedom is evident from the inheritance laws, the lack of space to manoeuvre for fear of being labelled immoral or deviant, in addition to the social science descriptions and even attitudes of society that considered women as child-like creatures as is also the attitude of Emily's father in *Cambridge*. None of these facts support Nead's argument. Kuurola on the other hand has stated that the "limited self-government of women was part of a system parallel to the one which subjected the slaves, whose cultural identity, and whose descendants' cultural identity, are just as much a modern issue as that of the position of women." (2007, 133) By presenting the narratives of Emily and Cambridge side by side, Phillips portrays the oppressive structures of the West not only towards black people but also towards women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is also evident that they are still relevant today.

Obviously, the situation for people viewed by some as Other has also improved. Structural violence as it was practised in the Victorian era regarding the black population and women no longer exists in Britain in such blatant forms. However, strong notions of them and us between some sections of society live on. "Black people have always been present in a Europe that has chosen either not to see us, or to judge us as an insignificant minority, or as a temporary, but dismissible, mistake." (Phillips, 1987, 128) Pointing to the situation in the 1990's, Bradley shows how the black population and other ethnic groups are also still over-represented in the lower class positions of British society as well as unemployment figures (1996, 118). She also points out that despite the ethnic minorities only forming 4,8% <sup>40</sup> of the British population in the 1990s, against the backdrop of 'race riots' in 1958, the British Government legalised the Immigration Acts of 1962, 1965 and 1971 "which limited the intake of 'coloured' immigrants only." (Bradley, 1996, 177)

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<sup>40</sup> The comparable figure for 2001 (most recent census) was an ethnic minority population of 7.9% (www.statistics.gov.uk)

Although these figures are some 13 years old, they indicate the pervasive resilience of racist structures and attitudes.

In today's world, globalisation can create plural identities with more opportunities and positions, which are based on multiple aspects and are less fixed (Hall, 1999, 69-70) enabling one to choose from many aspects. There are hybrid identities, identities often of those people who have been uprooted and who accept that identities are influenced by history, politics, representation and difference. The individual acknowledges it would be an illusion to return home, to the past. In this situation the individual's identity will always carry traces of the culture, traditions, languages and histories that moulded them, but they have to adjust to the new influences in which they now live without ever actually being "whole" and therefore, belong to many "homes" at once. In the case of such individuals, they have had to give up the dream of some purified or lost culture or ethnic absolutism, and exist in hybrid cultures. Hybrid identities are one of the more prominent new identity types found in late modernity and will be found increasingly in the future. (Hall, 1999, 70-72) Despite wanting to abandon England as his home, Phillips (2002, 304-5) confesses he soon realised he could not achieve this so simply. "...I know my Atlantic 'home' to be triangular in shape with Britain at one apex, the west coast of Africa at another, and the new world of North America (including the Caribbean) forming the third point of the triangle." This forms the exact same triangle that the slave ships navigated when carrying out the 'Triangular Trade'. Phillips notes that

[a]cross the centuries, countless millions have traversed this water, and unlike myself, these people have not always had the luxury of choice. They have felt alienated from, or abandoned by, the societies that they hitherto knew as 'home'... These are the people that I have written about during the course of the past twenty years, and as one book led to another, I have grown to understand that I am, of course, writing about myself in some oblique, though not entirely unpredictable, way. (Phillips, 2002, 305)

Phillips knows he cannot view Britain as his sole home without including the Atlantic world (2002, 309) and Cambridge and Emily would have fared better had they been able to incorporate

this into their being. Hyphenated identities, such as Afro-Caribbean, Asian-British and so forth are a more common form of portraying identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century due to the less fixed, fragmented conceptions of identity. These hybrid identities are still fairly difficult to accept, particularly in places where the population can be viewed as fairly homogenous. In such places the presumption is one should feel the same about one's nationality and look the same as the rest do. Without this ability, one often feels lacking when the feeling of belonging is at stake. In these places plurality is harder to accept. Brah also discusses the subject with an example of when she applied to university in the USA where she was asked if she was Indian or Ugandan. To a person with a hybrid identity, it seems absurd that you should choose one, "name an identity" when you feel both. (Brah, 2005, 2-3)

Phillips gives a voice to people who have landed in various corners of the earth, for example Britain, far from their original homes, who have now found a home amongst their old colonial masters. Some of these 'Other' people were born in Britain. He is also giving a voice to the oppressed histories of people who were forcibly removed from other parts of the world, and whose voices were silenced and whose humanity was deemed non-existent or marginal at best. In this way he also makes us see the subjectivity of some of the 'truths' we have been presented with concerning our histories. By doing so, he explores and states out loud the often hushed up and forgotten part of the history of colonisation which, to a large extent, explains the heterogeneity of Britain.

Phillips is also questioning whiteness as a standard or criterion of being British. His text helps bring to the forefront this question in the character of Cambridge. Up until quite recently but possibly to a lesser degree today, most non-white ethnic groups in Britain identified with the label 'black' which has been prescribed to all other than European peoples in Britain from very early on in history, as became evident in the beginning of this work. This identification is a defence mechanism rather than solidarity between the different ethnic groups, as it is Otherness that unifies these groups; they are different from the white people, they are others. (Hall 1999, 69-70; Brah,

2005, 13) Belonging and Otherness have much to do with how the term ‘home’ is understood.

Sometimes it is used as “an invocation of narratives of *‘the nation’* and sometimes it is used to talk about a group of people living in a place that they are originally not from, they are not “*of it*” as

Brah notes (2005, 3). The first one is more exclusionist, the latter more the reality of today.

*Cambridge* also clearly indicates the lack of understanding that exists between different groups, particularly when we refuse to have contact with or even “see” people who are different for our prejudices. The assumptions of characteristics, in a sense prejudiced stereotypes, stand like a wall between understanding and acceptance. Thus we construe other people as almost a different species, when deep down we could have more in common than we might care to admit. *Cambridge* also points out clearly that our attitudes are a product of the past, and that these are still very much consistent with many a present day attitude. These attitudes can be linked to Classical Antiquity although they strengthened through the Middle Ages and Renaissance (Alleyne, 2005, 61).

I believe the reason Phillips named the book *Cambridge* (and not Emily, although her story is over two thirds of the book) is that this draws attention to the names Cambridge was named in the book. He never identifies with most of them. He only refers to himself once by this name and even then it is in brackets to show that he was also known to some by the name of Cambridge but he signs his account as David Henderson (*Cam*, 167). This also highlights the issue of identity and who controls it. By calling the book *Cambridge*, the reader wonders why the man is being called that when that is an imposed name. This again displays the power structures and hold white people had over identities and the inhumanity of the system. Emily’s voice serves as a reminder that women have also been inferior beings in European history. Emily’s narrative shows how little she matters in the grand scale of things while she represents the white world view. Cambridge’s perspective serves as a corrective to Emily’s. His voice is “politically very important because it is only through painful application that he has acquired the skill of literacy.” (Phillips in Swift, 1992)



By calling the book *Cambridge*, Phillips also draws a clearer link to the problematic of belonging particularly for those considered Other. *Cambridge*, furthermore, raises the question of whose prerogative it is to define where we belong. Is it up to each individual or the majority culture and the prevailing stereotypes? National identities in the modern world are one of the central sources of cultural identities. They have not been encoded in our genes, but we think of them as if they were an integral part of our being. (Hall, 1999, 45) Ernest Gellner (1983, 6) has noted that the idea of people without a nation seems to greatly disturb the modern imagination. Hall states that British culture is built on Englishness setting itself above all other British cultures; - Scottish, Welsh, Irish or the old colonial ones, as well as women inhabiting a secondary place in this culture. (Hall, 1999, 53- 54) For rootless people, or people living with the traumatic nature of colonisation, the only way identity can be viewed is through the shared experiences but acknowledging that to find 'who we are' we need to acknowledge 'who we have become'. (Hall 1999, 227) Hall continues to say that "the experience of Diaspora is defined by the recognition of heterogeneity and multiplicity within in this identity, living with and through hybridity." (2003, 241) Many of the 'ethnic minority' groups in Britain have concentrated in certain areas and utilise a cosmopolitan identity that is original as it has formed in Britain. It carries signs of diasporic changes (Hall, 2003, 249-251).

To bring the discussion back to the novel being analysed, Cambridge could not utilise hybridity, as his worldview despised and looked down on blackness. Also hybridity has historically been viewed as a hindering aspect, almost a disability at times. He is left struggling with wanting to be white because he cannot incorporate different aspects of his being into his identity. Emily cannot feel totally whole either, as she is treated as a second class citizen and because of this she cannot belong totally. Neither Emily nor Cambridge can fully participate in British society. For Fanon (1967), racism and inhuman behaviour, in whatever direction they work are equal, and if the structures in a country and society allow racism then that society is racist. Europe has racist

structures and thus supports and allows racism (86-87, 92). The discourse on Others, on them and us does not change very fast. Hall notes that many unconscious ideologies that have passed on in our cultural knowledge base do so without any critical thinking or challenges (1999, 132). These attitudes are often unconscious, which make them all the more powerful.

By telling the two stories side-by-side we get a far broader narrative, far more insight into the Victorian value system and limited social space that both women and blacks had. It also highlights how the past is still present in our attitudes and societal structures. The story cannot be rejected by whites who feel superior, as a story designed to create sympathy for black people because it is based on historical facts. There is also no happy ending, which makes it harder to dismiss after reading without giving it further thought. Also the fact that Emily is so powerless because of her sex, and trapped because of her own attitudes show the reader the frustrating positions these subjects felt trapped in regarding their identities. Moreover, as neither character is without flaws it is easy to see them both as human. The displacement and limited social space of both characters, as well as being issues then, are also very contemporary topics. Hall observes that despite it having existed throughout human history, more and more people today recognise themselves in stories of displacement (1999, 13). Through the displacement in *Cambridge*, contemporary readers can infer why their societies look the way they do. The novel also challenges clear-cut definitions of groups and how they should be defined, highlighting the interconnected elements that construct who we are.

## 6. Conclusion

Even though questions of identity, belonging and being a part of a group or community have always existed, what they embody and signify has also changed over time. These changes have been related to various things, such as the context in which we were born and formed these ideas, outside influences, such as science, religion, and cultural values of the host-culture if one is an outsider, or excluded due to ethnic background or gender from the dominant powerful group. From its two juxtaposed and oppressed subject positions *Cambridge* reveals to its readers how cultural attitudes we have been socialised in can limit our view of whom we are and where we belong, in addition to the cross-cultural encounters we have.

Emily initially constructs herself against the vagabond Caribbean society, and later the black people to achieve a sense of worth and power. In the morally freer climate of the Caribbean she discards the tenets of British society that keep her in her place. It is because of the Others surrounding her in the Caribbean that she feels she has some power. Her Eurocentric attitudes and class consciousness make her feel she gains some position within the heterogeneous society of the Caribbean. However, as she has been socialised to think in a racist and patriarchal way, she is therefore, unable to completely free herself from prejudices and to achieve a satisfactory identity or a sense of belonging from her position. Cambridge constructs his identity against his fellow slaves in the Caribbean after he has been socialised into the European value system. He has a quiet reserved side, an almost indifferent side to his fellow slaves and to his white masters he wants to prove his intellect. He has been whitewashed into feeling like an inferior European and fights for acceptance and to be recognised as an equal from his marginalised position.

The figures in the narratives are strangely familiar to us. Cambridge reminds the reader of the “Uncle Tom” stereotype, as he too is a good Christian, an aged slave willing to serve his master (at least when he was a livery in England). He is psychologically dependant on approval from the white

people he serves. Yet, as Fanon has argued, the only way to be true to oneself and break free from this subservient role is to use violence, which Cambridge does after Mr Brown repeatedly rapes Christiania and treats Cambridge with less respect than an animal. As a consequence of this, Cambridge pays with his life, but at least he can no longer be degraded. He has broken his chains in a manner of speaking. Stella, always in the narrative's background, is a typical mammy figure. Christiania could be seen as a Jezebel, she is sexually attractive and mysterious. Emily, who by virtue of being white is supposed to be sexually pure and innocent is cast as the opposite and competitor for Christiania; yet there is an interesting tension. Christiania is not a willing sexual partner to Mr Brown, whereas Emily is. This tension dislodges the stereotype of the black woman as a temptress and shows the stereotype of the angelic middle class woman to be fictitious. By using these well established stereotypes covertly Phillips challenges our "knowledge base", thus bringing our prejudices into question. The book is not overtly challenging but that may just be its power in awakening our reason.

In this study, I have analysed the affect of history on the present regarding our attitudes and prejudices in forming an idea of who we are and of whom Others are. Regardless of intellectual reflection in light of what science tells us about different people and our origins, there is a need to categorise and Other different groups or sections of society. We do so to construct who we are in relation to the Other. It appears that the cultural knowledge base from which these notions arise is strong and that the stereotypes of the Other are hard to change. We seem to need to have an Other against which we can compare and measure ourselves against in constructing our identities. In *Cambridge*, Caryl Phillips challenges some of the barriers still standing in the way of accepting other people as they are, and shows us clearly that these barriers are not connected to any intellectual difference but to a past of racist discourses and structures that are a residue of the history of colonialism, in addition to 'knowledge' of the Other that goes far back in history. The

need to differentiate between class, 'race' and sometimes gender is such a residue, and it is connected to social power.

The laws and structures of our societies in the West are more equal today than they were in the Victorian era that the novel is set in, although we still have room for improvement, for example, when it comes to equal pay for women and equal opportunities at work for all. Moreover, despite the equality guaranteed by law there is a tendency to discriminate through stereotypes, gender or ethnic background even today. We still tend to construct our 'imagined communities' based on exclusivity and include some at the expense of others. As our communities are not homogenic entities but a colourful footprint of history and the world today, there is a need to update our nation's narratives to include all sides of the story of colonialism and facilitate the Other voices in it in building our identities. We need to understand that identities are not static and that we create them. If we continue to view people through the paradigm of them and us we risk alienating people and this is never beneficial in a world where ideologies readily clash anyway. There is too much to learn and share. There are as many tales as there are tellers and there is a grain of truth in them all. We need to remember that our way of viewing these stories are built on history and sometimes this way is very subjective (if not sometimes fictional). From the newspaper report in *Cambridge* we are able to see how the dominant group gave their version with little regard to the facts or alternative truths. If these are then accepted without questioning we will be living our lives along prejudiced attitudes and subjective truths which is limiting. The juxtaposed accounts in *Cambridge* also make the subjectivity of narratives very plain. In the background there are so many other voices we do not hear from in the book, which surely would have a different view on the events and personalities in question.

There is a persistent belief in a brighter future. This seems preposterous in light of history and the weight that it bears on the present. Women and black people, as well as many other groups are still marginalised in our societies. Our cultural stories, our histories and values are transmitted from

one generation to the next, and although they can change, often it is the traditions of old that we hold dear. Racism is just one of those historically transmitted values, and despite history and the other side of this story, the West still tries to exclude people from different ethnic backgrounds. Exclusion is what creates outside positions and problems with identity and belonging. Today more than ever, populations are a mix of peoples from all over the world, some were born some place else, uprooted and then landed amongst us in Europe, and some were born here, yet still are made to feel they do not belong. Hybrid identities are increasing but in the old frameworks of belonging to only one place, and with the utopian ideas of one nation with one people, it is difficult to feel one belongs when talking from a hybrid perspective. These hybrid positions are still being formed, and such individuals are fighting for their right to belong, embrace differences and compile a whole of the different parts.

Emily Cartwright and Cambridge are unable to form these identities. Emily hints at the future formations of such identities for people like her and Cambridge. She foresees the problematic of viewing belonging when connected to only one place, the place of one's birth, when she contemplates notions such as "our country" as old ways of measuring belonging. She asks: "[a]nd what then?" (*Cam*, 177) Hybridity is what happens then, at least to contemporary women like Emily and men like Cambridge. Just as Caryl Phillips feels at home in the Caribbean of his birth, he also feels at home in the USA and England and fully understands the way each society works, even if he does not feel he belongs exclusively to any of them. Phillips writes (2002, 309) "Whenever I stand on the ramparts of Elmina Castle and gaze out at the Atlantic Ocean, I know exactly where I come from. I can look to the north and to the west and see the different directions in which I have subsequently journeyed. And, on a clear day, I can peer into the distance and see where I will ultimately reside."<sup>41</sup> Cambridge knows he belongs in England; unfortunately the other characters in the book do not let him feel he belongs there as much as they do. For Cambridge, had he been able

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<sup>41</sup> Phillips is referring to where he wishes to be buried, i.e. the point in the Atlantic Ocean that is "equidistant between Britain, Africa and North America." (2002, 304).

to integrate the different aspects of his being into his identity he would have felt more balanced. Emily and Cambridge are both marginal figures. Both Emily and Cambridge were uprooted individuals who wanted some recognition and power over their own lives; they were just born into the wrong time. This of course was Phillips's way of linking the past with today in order for us to see or be reminded of the underlying reasons we still have these obstacles regarding miscegenation of all sorts. By writing about these obstacles, Phillips challenges us in a less direct way than attacking our intellect. Powerful, when it makes us question the very basic ideas of how we think and feel about whom we are, how we construct our identities and who 'others' are.

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