

Kaisa Ilmonen

INTERSECTIONALITY

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In her oft-quoted essay “Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference” Audre Lorde describes ethos of intersectionality by writing that “as a Black lesbian feminist comfortable with the many different ingredients of my identity [---] I find I am constantly being encouraged to pluck out some one aspect of myself and present this as the meaningful whole” (Lorde 1984, 120). Lorde is one of those African American feminist writers whose texts often represent the genealogy of intersectionality in their efforts to express cumulative oppressive practices hidden at the intersections of identity categories. Intersectionality combines a variety of ideas already articulated by Black and Third World Feminists of the 1980s. Lorde, for one, described her dis/identification with African American, feminist and lesbian identity political milieus in *Sister Outsider* (1984), while Alice Walker outlined *womanism* (1983) to articulate the particularity of African American feminism, Angela Davis connected Marxism to African American feminist resistance, and Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) defined the New Mestiza consciousness to describe the act of negotiating the simultaneous ambivalences of everyday life for those who do not fit into cultural norms.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, a wide corpus of fiction – essays, novels, manifestos, short stories, and poetry – began to emerge in an effort to address the forms of multiple oppression experienced by women of color (see e.g. Ilmonen 2017b;²; Lutz 2014;³; Nash 2008), and the term intersectionality arose. Originating in legal discourse, the term was first coined by law scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in her 1989 article “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics” published in *University of Chicago Legal Forum*. However, Avtar Brah and Ann Phoenix (2004) connect intersectionality to famous “Ain’t I a Woman” speeches by Sojourner Truth given as early as the late nineteenth century. The plethora of Third World feminist fiction articulated the experience of simultaneous oppressions neglected by feminist theory of the time, uttering “what so far has remained unnamed, but not for this reason non-existent” (Covi 1997: 26) in order to express the ethos of intersectionality.

The *unnamed, but not for that reason non-existent* is what I try to capture in this chapter by defining intersectional trauma. Intersectional trauma gives an academic name to something that Anzaldúa described as *a/the? Coatlicue state*, a paralysis caused by a contradictory third perspective, “something more than mere duality or a synthesis of duality” (Anzaldúa 1987: 46-48), or that Erna Brodber in her novel *Jane and Louisa will Soon Come Home* (1980) called *Kumbla*, a metaphor utilized a lot in Caribbean feminism. Kumbla is a calabash used to protect precious items, but since Brodber, “Out of the Kumbla” has referred to movement towards one’s own voice and self-definition; a self that is not protected, or dominated anymore. By definition, intersectionality explores injustices caused by the co-conditional, discriminatory effects of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, social status, geographical location, bodily experience, disability, or any such factor that are crucial to our social and psychic experiences. Intersectional experience should not be considered solely in terms of individual identity but also as socially structured and in terms of a historically constituted sense of self, regulated and organized by larger institutional frames which themselves are imbued with racial, sexual, or class related bias. Nira Yuval-Davies (2006: 199) talks about intersectionality as an outlook for “different kinds of differences” having organizational, intersubjective, experiential and representational forms. Racism, for example, appears differently on individual, social, psychic, institutional, or representational levels of society, and it coincides differently with sexism, for example, on each of these levels. Intersectionality studies the combined effects of these different kinds of differences which may not be detected by single-axis analyses, such as feminist or queer studies. Intersectionality throws a cross-light on the blind spots in between single-axis logic; it tries to reach the extra-friction, or co-effects, created by the simultaneous operation of multiple axes of power. I suggest that the intensified effect of oppression and unbelonging occurring at the intersection of identity categories – the unspeakable, but not for that reason non-existing – is potentially a traumatizing experience. Thus, in this chapter I seek an intersectional understanding of trauma in two novels by authors of Caribbean origin, Caryl Phillips’ *The Lost Child* (2015) and Michelle Cliff’s *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987).

Traumatic Intersectionality in Caribbean Writing

Caribbean migrant writing has been a worldwide phenomenon since the 1930s. Jean Rhys’ peculiarly intersectional novel *Voyage to the Dark* (1936) pioneered a description of the alienating and traumatizing experiences of Caribbean Creole travellers in the UK, and this

theme reappears in other literary cornerstones such as Sam Selvon's *Lonely Londoners* (1956) and George Lamming's *The Pleasures of Exile* (1960). From the 1980s, a strong front of female migrant authors of Caribbean origin described the multiple intersecting cultural identities of their characters. Carole Boyce Davies uses the term "migratory subjectivity" for describing Caribbean women's identity, which exists in multiple places and positions, even in ambivalent and contradictory ways. Davies connects this sense of subjectivity to Caribbean writing, which should be read as "a series of boundary crossings and not as a fixed, geographical, ethnically or nationally bound category of writing" (Boyce Davies 1994: 4), thereby getting close to intersectional points of view. Born in Kingston, Jamaica, Michelle Cliff (1946–2016) belongs to the aforementioned generation of Caribbean women writing in the 1980s. She has examined the Caribbean migrant experience in her novels, collections of short stories, and prose poems. Her characters struggle with identity borders, and they often refuse to choose a single identity, living in between races, cultural backgrounds, class positions, and even genders. However, transnational solidarities between minorities and Caribbean-Jewish relations are strongly present in her works. In Cliff's most famous novel *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987), the main character, Jamaican-born, upper-class Clare Savage embodies an intersectional identity as a light-skinned Creole, an ambivalently gendered and sexualized migrant, not at home either in Jamaica, the United States, or the United Kingdom.

No Telephone to Heaven is a fragmented and nonlinear story depicting Clare's life from the age of fourteen until her untimely death at the age of 36 from a gunshot wound in Jamaica. The various scenes and flashbacks reflect Clare's split sense of self and search for identity as it evolves through border-crossings and intersections. Her journey towards a rebellious identity committed to resistance as part of a Jamaican Guerrilla-group is juxtaposed with her travels between the USA, Europe, and Jamaica. The novel presents the fluctuating identity of a light-skinned, Creole woman obscuring and undermining positions reserved for either the "self" or the "other" in colonial discourse. She is an inappropriate other, a woman searching for a place she can call "home". The novel's narration leaps from one scene to another, occasionally concentrating on minor characters, such as Clare's best friend, ethnically Creole, transgendered Harry/Harriet, who is both a nurse and a traditional healer. Their gentle character transcends the borders of race, gender, sexuality, and Western and local heritage rendering the binary models of identity obsolete. *No Telephone to Heaven*'s non-linear structure, an intersecting polyphony of voices, recalls the logic of re/membering, which Fiona R. Barnes interprets as

mirroring Jamaican cultural hybridity ([Barnes 1992](#): 29). This structure is a symbol for the impossibility of single-voiced, linear synthesis in a postcolonial condition.

Clare's story begins with her migration to the USA with her family. Clare's father assimilates quickly as he finds employment and friends, finally breaking all ties to Jamaica. He is constantly reminding Clare about the importance of passing: "Through all this – all this new life – he counsels his daughter on invisibility and its secrets. Self-effacement. Blending in. The uses of camouflage" ([Cliff 1996](#)*Telephone*: 100). Clare's mother Kitty, on the other hand, grows alienated and withdrawn in the USA. She finally leaves her daughter and husband and decides to return to Jamaica, taking along only Clare's "darker-skinned" younger sister and dividing the family through internalized color-lines. Clare is traumatically left alone, forced to forget her African-self and her sense of Caribbeanness. She feels like an "albino gorilla [...—] hiding from the poachers who would claim her and crush her" (*Telephone* 91). Clare's in-betweenness, displacement, and sense of unbelonging come to a head in her choice to study at a British university, where she enrolls in the hopes of finding a place to belong, "choosing London with the logic of a Creole. This was the mother country. The country by whose grace her people existed in the first place. Her place could be here" (*Telephone*, 109). However, Clare's sense of displacement is intensified in England, and her sanity is threatened. Sliding more deeply into her traumatizing sense of in-betweenness, she starts to identify with Bertha Mason, the mad woman in the attic in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847). Clare feels herself particularly anxious in situations where her light skin-color and academic records are the only traits that characterize her; her ability to pass makes her disappear. Clare is wounded by the master narratives defining "endorsed" positions; her elite, school-taught British accent separates her from the vital patois of her home country, and she is separated from her mother and sister by her white skin. Kim Robinson-Walcott writes about "the peculiar loneliness of the white Jamaican" ([Robinson-Walcott 2003](#): 98) and explains that "history has burdened the white West Indian with his own peculiar set of baggage: as past oppressor and present threatened minority, saddled with collective guilt but still holding the reins of power" ([2003](#): 96). Clare breaks down because of this guilt and loneliness. After years of aimless wandering around Europe, she decides to travel back to Jamaica with the encouragement of Harry/Harriet who embodies a wide range of deconstructions and intersections envisioned in the novel. Later on, it is Harry/Harriet who guides Clare to educate herself in Caribbean history and to join the little Guerrilla-group. In the end, this is a paradoxical site of radical agency and healing for Clare, that ultimately leads to her death.

Born in St. Kitts, Caryl Phillips examines questions of cultural identities, alienation, displacements and traumatic histories in his novels that challenge notions of “roots”, “origins”, and “ethnic backgrounds”. Phillips’ novel *The Lost Child* also summons the legacy of the Brontës by returning to Heathcliff’s story from *Wuthering Heights* (1847) by Emily Brontë. Origins, the transatlantic slave trade, alienation, abuse, and fundamental estrangement from society caused by intersecting vectors of class, gender, race, and sexuality are explored on several fictional and historical levels in the novel. Heathcliff’s slave mother is traumatized by enduring sexual and racial violence as she is displaced first from Africa to the Caribbean, and later to England, embodying the trauma of Triangle trade:

The least of the female litter, she mounted a wooden platform and waited until all the others had been taken. [...—]. Soon they were too nauseated to eat, and most were too grief-stricken to cry, and she lay surrounded by the doleful mourning of those who rotted in the darkness (of the slave ship). [...—]. During her second voyage she remained anchored to the splintered floor of the captain’s cabin unless he had business with her. [...—].

{Phillips 2015: ~~Lost~~ 4-5-}

Besides the stories of Heathcliff, his mother and Earnshaw, Emily Brontë’s own story is threaded into the novel. As an upper-class white woman, Emily seems to have no other purpose in life than to marry a man. In *The Lost Child*, Emily is slowly fading with illness in a house on the moors despite her sister’s care.

However, the main story in the novel, taking place from the 1950s to the 1970s, describes the sad life of Monica Johnson, an upper-class daughter of “a schoolmaster in one of the most highly considered grammar schools in the north of England” (Phillips 2015: ~~Lost~~ 15). Monica’s story is framed with seemingly unrelated stories of rewritten *Wuthering Heights* and fictional depiction Emily Brontë’s last days – intersectionalizing the themes of Monica’s story. Monica falls in love with the fiery Caribbean independence activist Julius Wilson in Oxford where she goes to study. They marry, have two boys, and Monica quits her studies, also severing all connections with her family. Monica’s slow decline into madness, alienation, poverty, and depression begins as they separate; Julius moves back to the Caribbean, and she moves to Leeds where she lives in a dismal apartment. Her sons, Ben and Tommy, suffer racism, poverty, harsh bullying and social marginalization, while Monica herself is abused by the man she is dating. Finally the social services take away her sons and Monica becomes distanced from reality altogether, like Heathcliff’s mother earlier. Tommy is the ultimate lost child in the novel as he

disappears on the moors and dies, and the narrator hints that he is also sexually abused by the male friend of his mother. A hint of reconciliation, however, appears in the last pages of the novel as Ben gets acquainted with his schoolmaster grandfather. Phillips' novel links the historical trauma of slavery to the traumatic everyday and displays the intersections of racial, gendered, sexual, and class-based forms of oppression operating co-conditionally, making everyday life unliveable. Thus, the novel contains three story lines, the rewriting of *Wuthering Heights*, the story of (fictional) Emily Brontë, and Monica's story.

Intersectional Revisitations to Trauma

In her book *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (2003), Ann Cvetkovich explores new methods for tackling what is sometimes called "trauma culture" - by which she refers to "a quick-fix naming of the zeitgeist that misrecognizes a structural condition as a feeling" (Cvetkovich 2003: 15). Cvetkovich carries on by reading Lauren Berlant who views nation (USA) "as a space of struggle violently separated by racial, sexual, and economic inequalities that cut across every imaginable kind of social location" (Berlant 1997: 4; Cvetkovich 2003: 16), reminding us of the amnesiac force of national culture which constitutes itself around one kind of trauma story to suppress others. For her, new methods are needed in order to reach the "less dramatic terrain of everyday experience" (Cvetkovich 2003: 16) which may also be a site of trauma due to structural, yet collectively unacknowledged, inequalities. "National trauma cultures" may easily turn into near-patriotic sites blurring the mundane mechanisms of hurtful inequalities. I suggest that an intersectional perspective enables the unearthing of these mundane inequalities and the recognition of painful stories lost in the master narrative of national trauma. Cvetkovich adopts Laura Brown's term "insidious trauma" to describe everyday manifestations of trauma, "especially those emerging from systemic forms of oppression" that compel us to move beyond medicalized articulations (Cvetkovich 2003: 32-3). Through intersectional trauma studies I want to emphasize the multiple simultaneous forms of insidiously operating systems that coincide in individual everyday lives.

For Vivian May, intersectionality is about matrix thinking in its focus on how "lived identities, structural systems, sites of marginalization, forms of power and modes of resistance intersect" (May 2015: 21). Intersectionality rejects oppressive legacies, universalities, and politics based on sameness, focusing rather on solidarities. Intersectionality de-homogenises identity political

groupings and captures the dynamics of oppressive structures that are overlooked in monocular vision. It concentrates on convergences and overlaps, exposes interactive energies, and takes a stand against inequality. Intersectionality responds to single-axis identity politics and considers social subject positions as relational and ambivalent. Intersectionality considers the everyday experience as a/the negotiation between several positions that are shaped by social institutions respectively imbued with intersecting powers (see Dhamoon 2011; Lutz 2014; MacKinnon 2013; Nash 2008). These negotiations are embodied in and lived through particular cultural historical situations. May summarizes several views by defining intersectionality as 1. an epistemological practice that interrogates conventional knowledge practices, 2. an ontological project that “accounts for multiplicity and complex subjectivity”, 3. a radical coalitional political orientation, and 4. a resistant imaginary, which is a way of “intervening in historical memory or interrupting the dominant social imagination by thinking ‘otherwise’” (May 2015: 34). In pondering trauma and narrative intersectionally, we should ask: What do we see if we focus on the intersections of everyday living? Whose trauma goes unnoticed if we consider trauma as national, or in terms of “collective memory”? Who belongs to this collective and in what way? As Momin Rahman claims, intersectionality is not interested in questioning who belongs, but *how* one belongs (Rahman 2009: 359).

In a legal context, Kimberlé Crenshaw has pointed out the specific circumstances that black women face when the law only recognizes discrimination based on gender *or* race. One of the court cases Crenshaw analyzes in her groundbreaking article defining intersectionality is DeGraffenreid vs. General Motors that concerned the discrimination suit of five African American female employees of GM. The court stated that “this lawsuit must be examined to see if it states a cause of action for race discrimination, sex discrimination, or alternatively either, but not a combination of both” (see Crenshaw 1989: 141). In later works, Crenshaw’s metaphor of intersecting axes of experience has been greatly disputed. Our social life is much more complex than the separate yet intersecting vectors of race, class, gender etc. However, as a disciplinary system, the law needs clear-cut identity categories in order to trace discrimination; the law does not operate in intersectional terms. The law cannot define complex, co-conditional, or ambivalent systems of inequalities without creating more classificatory categories. In this context Emily Grabham suggests the intertwining of intersectionality and trauma theory. Grabham identifies the near-impossibility of conducting a successful prosecution based on intersectional discrimination, and she suggests that “discrimination claims as expressions/impressions of trauma may, paradoxically give us new

ways of viewing complex inequalities, shifting the focus of intersectionality away from disciplinary identity categories and toward the cultural circulation of emotions” (Grabham 2009: 200). Cvetkovich’s agenda of acknowledging the traumatic, insidious nature of everyday experiences of systemic violence may be captured with intersectional conceptualizations of trauma. Intersectional trauma studies reaches into the multiple simultaneous mechanisms that silence, hurt, and injure a subject, like Cliff’s Clare or Phillips’ Monica.

Stef Craps’s work in decolonizing trauma theory has been ground breaking. In *Postcolonial Witnessing* (2014) he revises Caruthian trauma theory by focusing on cross-cultural ethical engagements and solidarity beyond Eurocentric, event-based modes of trauma. For Craps, trauma theory must not ignore or marginalize the traumatizing experiences of the Global South. Moreover, trauma theory must not take for granted the recovery and testimonial practices of Western Modernity expressed in art forms created by the same culture and inclined to be seen as “universal”. Craps claims that Eurocentric trauma theory tends not to see “the connections between metropolitan and non-Western or minority traumas” (Craps 2014: 2). Intersectionality multiplies the narratives and interpretative structures attached to nodal types of traumas. As Ananya Kabir proposes, the narrative modes surrounding trauma highlight certain reactions, affects, and responses colonizing other kinds of local, embodied, or untranslatable forms of trauma (Kabir 2013). Kabir refers to “non-narrative works of the imagination” that foreground the void that is not translatable into Western, event-based conceptualizations of trauma. She portrays several non-Western responses to trauma that undo the binary silence-testimony interpretative structures attached to trauma narratives, including embodied practices, lamentations, fragmented teleologies, songs, vernacular mythopoeses, and rhythms (Kabir 2013: 65-66).

In line with recent calls to pluralize and reconceptualize trauma theory (e.g. Craps 2014; Kabir 2013; Rothberg 2013), I suggest the potential usefulness of the concept of intersectionality. Intersectionality recognizes the cumulating effects of unevenly operating axes of everyday life that emerge differently on different social levels. For instance, homophobia is experienced differently by individuals because it operates differently on experiential, institutional, representational, historical, or social levels, and these experiences may be intensified by racism, classism, or ableism. Intersectionality grasps the problematics Laura Brown (2008) introduced into trauma studies, namely that the dominant understanding of trauma is preoccupied with white, middle-class, straight men who are well-educated and able-bodied.

Intersectional trauma theory invests in solidarity rather than sameness, as each traumatic experience is different, experienced in different spatial, temporal, cultural, and social contexts. Intersectionality grasps what remains hidden and undiscernible if trauma is seen as a collective event, rather than reaching towards intra-group differences. Craps, for instance, reads feminist trauma scholars who argue that domestic abuse might echo the trauma of war – or even be caused by those traumatized in wars (see Craps 2014: 22-25). Intersectionality resists psychiatric universalisms, multiplying the levels through which traumatic experiences may be lived. In Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven*, Clare may not be traumatized simply by the cultural dislocation she experiences in England, but rather her sense of displacement becomes an unbearable ordeal when her racial, gendered and sexual identities are shattered.

Intersectionality becomes a decolonizing tool for trauma studies as it considers the particularity of each traumatic experience. Both *No Telephone to Heaven* and *The Lost Child* illustrate the effects of what Craps calls “insidiously cumulative micro-aggressions” resulting in trauma (Craps 2014: 26). I argue that intersectional analysis may capture the interrelated nature of particular cultural, political, and social frames that enable these micro-aggressions. Crenshaw and many others emphasize intersectionality as a heuristic device, a provisional conceptualization focusing on the complexities between single-axis views (Crenshaw 2012; Davis 2008; May 2015). Its heuristic nature might be applied to what is considered as the main cause of trauma. If something is seemingly about class, like in Phillips' *The Lost Child*, an intersectional question would be how racism conditions poverty, or how gender is co-conditional with class and race. Intersectional trauma theory asks *how* traumatic situations take effect, rather than *what* traumatizes an individual.

Multidirectional Memory, Intersectionality, and Healing

In his oft-quoted study *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (2009) Michael Rothberg challenges a type of remembering he considers as “competitive memory”. For him, competitive memory reflects “a zero-sum struggle over scarce resources” in the commemorative public sphere, where Holocaust memory, for example, would be literally “crowding the memory of African American history” (Rothberg 2009: 2-3). Instead, he envisions multidirectional memory, emphasizing dialogue, interaction, and productive social memory work that has the potential to “create new forms of solidarity and new visions of justice” (2009: 5) out of empathy and a shared sense of trauma. With

multidirectional memory Rothberg seeks to unveil historical relatedness, ethical cross-references between traumatic experiences, commonality with others, and multifaceted struggles, whereas competitive memory emphasizes boundaries of memory which also constitute the boundaries of group identities (2009: 5-6). These kinds of bordered identities compose a foundation for identity politics, highlighting the sameness of a particular group, and a fixed, essential identity. Intersectionality, instead, is always a coalitional political praxis basing its politics on solidarity between, and beyond, identity political groupings. Hence, intersectional considerations on trauma and memory resonate with multidirectional collective memory politics and solidarity. Interestingly enough, Rothberg himself discusses both Michelle Cliff and Caryl Phillips, including the former among those “obviously multidirectional writers” (Rothberg 2009: 27) who connect the Jewish experience to that of the Caribbean. (For more on Caribbean-Jewish relations in literature, see Phillips Casteel, 2016.)

I see an intersectional ethos in Rothberg’s multidirectional memory. Multidirectionality disengages itself from exclusive versions of cultural memory, acknowledging the memory work “across diverse spatial, temporal, and cultural sites” (Rothberg 2009: 11). Memory’s multidirectionality manifests itself in convoluted back-and-forth movement and comparisons; it is not “afraid to traverse sacrosanct borders of ethnicity and era” (Rothberg 2009: 17). This kind of multi-temporal travelling and intersectional sense of trauma is clearly displayed in *The Lost Child*. Heathcliff’s mother is traumatized by transatlantic slavery and sexual abuse while her son’s fundamental sense of displacement is set on a British-imperialist scene, the fictional Emily Brontë suffers from the limited space possible for artistic women, and a modern character such as Monica is paralyzed by her class status, poverty and external prejudice. At the same time, her boys face everyday racism, and their Caribbean father gets lost in the political turbulence of his home island on the verge of independence. In the end, both Heathcliff, Monica’s younger son Tommy, and Emily disappear from the reader’s sight into windy moors – connected by their trauma beyond fictional realms and historical periods. History, colonialism, race, ethnicity, class, wealth, gender, social status and geographical location all create a texture of multidirectional and intersecting traumatic experiences. The alienation felt by Heathcliff in the original *Wuthering Heights* emblemizes an intersectional sense of trauma linking several historical, psychic, social, and individually experienced oppressions.

The Lost Child draws a parallel between Monica and the slave mother which illustrates the ways in which the traumatic fragmentation of identity is often framed by the ur-trauma of slavery and colonialism in Caribbean writing. Their destiny is to fall into numbing sickness while their Creole sons carry on, in spite of their sense of loss and otherness. This temporally multi-levelled trauma is also highlighted in the multi-levelled structure of the novel. Intersectionality, I suggest, illuminates Monica's traumatically fragmented identity and the ontological insecurity, the silencing effect of ambivalent negotiations between race, class, gender, cultural placement, social position, and sexuality, recalling Cvetkovich's definition of trauma as something that challenges "distinctions between the mental and physical, the psychic and social, and the internal external as locations or sources of pain" (Cvetkovich 2003: 18). While Monica's original class status, white skin, and university education give her certain privileges, her brown children, the racism of the social security services, her current poverty, and her fragile gender and sexual identity complicate her precarious everyday life which is difficult to unravel without intersectionality. Without actually referring to intersectionality Cvetkovich herself argues that critical race theory, African American studies, Marxism, queer theory, and feminism must all be drawn from in order to "seize authority over trauma discourses from medical and scientific discourse" (2003: 20). Intersectionality may capture something that, to borrow Cvetkovich's words, "is hidden in the sphere of the personal", not collective and national but operating insidiously, like sexism (cf. 2003: 30, 32). By framing *The Lost Child* with the history of colonialism through references to *Wuthering Heights*, Phillips articulates the dual nature of trauma as both trans-historical and particular, something that must be affectively negotiated in culturally specific ways.

Trauma narratives have the possibility not only to render intersectional wounds graspable but also to envision healing storytelling and multidirectional places for memories. In postcolonial – and particularly Caribbean – feminist writing the author becomes a healer as she imagines healing stories for a diasporic community. As the feminist scholar Gay Wilentz emphasizes in her influential study *Healing Narrative: Women Writers Curing Cultural Dis-ease* (2000), an author drawing from her cultural storytelling traditions may become a collective healer for her people, curing culturally constituted dis-eases. Wilentz acknowledges that women's storytelling and knowledge of "the secrets of life and death" counter "the patriarchal structures of modern medicine" (Wilentz 2000: 12). Wilentz uses the term "dis-ease" in order to describe the traumatic sense of history in minority groups (2000: 3). Narrative healing differs from what Karen McCarthy-Brown considers as colonial healing. She addresses the problems of Western

medical sciences and their ways of viewing the human body as a passive “physical machine”, healed through the mastery of special discourses and possession of degrees, diplomas, instruments, medications, and white coats. She regards Western medicine as a potential capitalist enterprise within which the “right to heal” is considered a proprietary right (see McCarthy-Brown 1997: 123–24; ~~and~~ Ilmonen 2017a: 168). This view differs radically from postcolonial and intersectional healing narratives which often represent individual healing intertwined with symbolic, collective cures for colonial traumas. Intersectional healing narratives re-negotiate the abject or appropriated body beyond oppressive social borders. In *No Telephone to Heaven* Clare’s and Harry/Harriet’s wounded, subaltern bodies become finally materialized without the social boundaries which categorized them as unwanted when they commit to the resistance movement in Jamaica.

Conclusion

Narratives might heal the wounded memory of the colonized. However, I suggest that intersectional healing narratives create historical and discursive spaces not only for their characters but also for their readers. First, by creating manifold historical narratives and multidirectional memories they enable new kinds of introspective possibilities for those who identify with the protagonists. Second, they widen the historical horizon of the reader who did not know the stories beyond a colonized sense of history, or who felt unconnected to them. And third, by focusing on hidden versions of cultural memory, they “hail” the kinds of readers who are willing to forge new coalitions and solidarities across intersectional boundaries. While there is no healing in *The Lost Child*, Clare in *No Telephone to Heaven* is ready to reconcile her compositional fragments and return to Jamaica to reclaim her grandmother’s heritage. The reconciliation is achieved through re-claimed memory, de-colonized history, rebellion, and the acceptance of her queer sexuality (Ilmonen 2017a.). Thus, intersectional trauma narratives may (re)tell the hidden archives of pain that are not considered to be “national”. The healing, intersectional memory has the ethical potential to grow beyond and in between the dominant master narratives composing the trauma archives of oppressed people.

In his preface to *The Future of Trauma Theory* (2013) Michael Rothberg, following Roger Luckhurst, refers to trauma as an array of problems of modernity – best thought not as a singular object or an event but as knots and assemblages that tangle up modern challenges marked by law, technology, capitalism, politics, or medicine ([Rothberg 2013: xi](#)). These kinds of

assemblages are graspable with/through/in intersectionality and intersectional trauma theory. In envisioning trauma theory's future Rothberg raises the issues of structural violence and globalized scenarios of exploitation that reject the basic categories of victims, perpetrators, and bystanders (2013: xii-xv). Investment in secure subject positions, events, testimonials, and Western psychiatry cannot reach nodal phenomena in the era of the Anthropocene, such as climate trauma, or systemic oppressions such as racism in the nexus of capitalism and heterosexism. For Rothberg, the future of trauma theory lies in developing a trauma theory that exceeds these obsolete categories, and focuses, instead, on implicated subjects such as the beneficiaries of neo-liberal capitalism (cf. Rothberg 2013: xvii). I conclude by stating that trauma narratives should be self-reflexive toward their own master narratives which highlight certain (psychiatric) responses to trauma: testimonials, closures, victims and perpetrators, or overcoming hardship. I suggest that intersectional trauma theory addresses implicated subjects, often negotiating between some privileges and some oppressions. Trauma narratives must not colonize other kinds of expressions of trauma, or insidious, traumatizing structures that operate through body, affect, positionality and the transparent institutions attached to everyday living. I argue that these systems may be rendered comprehensible with the help of/in/through/with intersectional trauma studies. Clare's trauma of displacement, Monica's prolonged fading, or Tommy's mundane suffering become graspable in terms of intersectionality.

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