

THE BRITISH COLONIZERS' SYSTEMATIC OPPRESSION IN AFRICA: AN EXPLORATION OF YAA GYASI'S HOME GOING

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<https://doi.org/10.59009/ijlllc.2023.0045>

ABSTRACT

The enduring legacy of British colonization and the Atlantic slave trade shaped and influenced the physical and psychological experiences of people of African. This paper examines the British colonizers' systematic oppression in Africa. It purports to show how Yaa Gyasi, a Ghanaian novelist portrays shenanigans of slave masters in Africa and particularly in Cape Coast as contextualized in her first novel, Homegoing. It draws its theoretical underpinnings from the New Historicism and the psychological approach. The findings from the exploration of this narrative highlight aspects of the African's victimization such as their inferiority complex towards the white man's race, the shenanigans of the British Slave Masters in Africa and the subsequent psychological trauma this systematic oppression on Africans. As a final assessment, this study positions Yaa Gyasi's Homegoing as an historical novel which bringing the reader back to Africans' experience of rejection and victimization due to the colour of their skin and their origins in their own land by the British colonizers. A way the authoress to promote healing for Africans, unveiling the historical and psychological antecedents of a harsh oppression they had been victims of, the aftermaths of which ineradicably shaped their psyche, and they are still struggling to get rig off.

Keywords: British Colonizer, New Historicism, Mistreatment, Inferiority Complex, Psychological Antecedents, Systematic Oppression.

1. INTRODUCTION

Binod Bihari Satpathy (Historical Theory and Methods, (https://ddceutkal.ac.in/Syllabus/MA_history/Paper_06.pdf)) describes the concept 'history' as the mother of social sciences. It outdates all other social sciences. It is the basis of all subjects of study which are grouped under Humanities or social sciences. We are already in the twenty first century, an expanding new era, thus, the complex meanings, intrinsic qualities, purposes, and value of history require serious attention. For the diverse and rich social foundations of life, whether language, material culture, national identity, or the organization of work and politics, are the palpable inheritance of a resilient human past, and if humanity is to plot a realizable future, we need to understand through history how it has achieved its present. The usefulness of history, therefore, is not only that it constantly offers new ways of viewing and understanding the grip of the past: it is also a means of generating the confidence about, and absorption of, critical knowledge, to produce a changing consciousness. In bringing the potential of human action to the centre of investigation, the dynamics of historical

understanding can contribute actively to the shaping of our future, always emphasizing that it can be one of possibilities and alternatives. This paper examines the British colonizers' systematic oppression in Africa. It purports to show how the Ghanaian novelist portrays shenanigans of slave masters in Africa and particularly in Cape Coast as contextualized in her first novel, *Homegoing*.

This research work is not the first to tackle neither the issue of African women victimization nor to explore Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*. For, we have identified multiple previous studies on both to support this research. Ane Caroline Ribeiro Costa (2023), for instance, working on "The Reconstruction of History from Margin to Center in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* and Eliana Alves Cruz's *Água de Barrela*", depicts generational traumas that pass on family members while simultaneously showing how resistance has always been part of black people's daily lives, primarily through storytelling. She argues that through the act of remembering, uncovering, (re)claiming, and sharing these stories, characters can strengthen bonds with each other and create the basis for historical revision. Using African diáspora as focus of analysis, Amanda Scheuer's "*The struggle of Identity and Belongingness in Homegoing*" (2017) emphasizes on how the main characters who suffers from abuse and exclusion faced by two choices, whether to stay in Africa, or leave their birthplace to find new home by forcefully was traded to America. African-American will continue to face the struggles that come with their identity and with finding a place to belong because of the injustice that has been engraved in their history.

For Clara Bafaluy Avenoz (2020: p.ii), through *Homegoing*, Yaa Gyasi addresses different experiences of migration from Ghana to the United States of America. Characters provide unique perspectives on the workings of racial dynamics in the United States of America, the tensions and different histories of different African diasporas, and the prevalence of white privilege within American society.

As for Sue J. Kim, (Kim, 2013: p. 26), *Homegoing* not only creates a literary space for those marginalized voices "*that have hitherto been evaluated and circumscribed by the authorial narration of white supremacy and patriarchy*" but it also brings to light the ways in which slavery, colonialism, and institutionalized racism are *felt* across time and space.

Mar Gallego (2019), examines the literary production of the writer from the African diaspora, specifically Ghanaian-American Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*. He explores his significance as counter-narrative that defy the "official" historiography of enslavement times in order to set the records straight, as it were. By highlighting this woman writer's project of resistance against normative definitions of black bodies, it is the author's contention that this works effectively mobilize notions of race, gender, and sexuality.

The rationale behind this current study is especially linked to Gyasi's reconstruction of the history of African women's unfair treatments perpetrated by African counterpart and the British people in Africa. It purports to answer the following central question: what are the manifestations of the British colonisers' systematic oppression in African in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*? We hypothesize that the African patriarchal ideology and the British colonizers' systematic oppression might be the causes of those manifestations. Added to that the slavery, the separation of African families, rapes and trade perpetrated on women, and the psychological trauma in the mind of African women could be the main manifestations of victimization in this narrative. Africans' Inferiority Complex towards the White Man's Race and the racial abuses could be the tools used by the British colonizers' and depicted by the young Ghanaian-American authoress.

Therefore, this analysis is conducted through the lenses of two approaches: the New Historicism and the Historicism and Psychoanalytical criticism. According to C. Kar (1995,

76) the New Historicism is “a literary theory which concerns with the analysis of the relationship between the historical circumstances and our own”. This means that the New Historicism consists in showing the relationship between the text and history, and how a writer integrates historical events and facts within a work of fiction. It shows how what is written in a given work of literature is naturally linked to the experience of people in the society they live. This is to say that the New Historicism helps establish the interplay between fiction and history in *Homegoing*. For, a work of literature, whatever it is, is influenced by the author’s life time, circumstances, and environment. For, Yaa Gyasi’s debut-novel traces the history of Africans in Ghana and African-Americans in the United States from the 19th through 21st centuries, resorting to this approach for this research helps to examine historical and social circumstances of both countries in through the prism of a literary text.

However, Psychoanalytic Criticism which informs on characters’ nature thanks to observations, habits and experiences proves helpful. Theorizing on this critical approach, the Ghanaian Kofi Agyekum (2013:30) accordingly infers the importance of it in examining characters’ mind-set and behaviours as follows:

Psychoanalytic critics analyse a work of literature from the point of the author’s mind, personality, mental and emotional characteristics. [...] They employ symbolism to identify, explain and interpret the meaning of some psychological state of minds of writers and characters they create. [...] They use basic and ordinary objects [...] to explain emotions, desires, love, hatred, repressed desires, oppression and suppression, etc. [...] These objects and other literary devices reveal the psychological motivations of the characters, their settings, and the psychological mind-set of the author.

Hence, the psychological approach provides a more precise language with which to discuss the creative process. Its second application goes back to the study of the people’s life as a means of understanding facts and events in relation them. A position in tandem with Amanda Prahll when stressing the psychological dimension of a novel (2019:3):

For the most part, novels are dedicated to narrating individual experiences of characters, creating a closer, more complex portraits of these characters and the world they live in. Inner feelings and thoughts, as well as complex, even conflicting ideas or values are typically explored in novels, more so than in preceding forms of literature. It is not just the stories themselves that are more personal, but the experience of reading them as well.

Structured around three main points, this study provides first the synopsis of the novel under consideration, and focuses on the Africans’ inferiority complex towards the white man’s race, before devoting the last part to the exploration of the psychological trauma engendered by slaves’ conditions in the dungeon on some the main characters.

2. SYNOPSIS OF YAA GYASI’S *HOMEGOING*

Yaa Gyasi is a young Ghanaian-American authoress born in Mampong, Ghana, in 1989, she is the daughter of Kwaku Gyasi, a French professor, and his wife Sophia, a nurse. Her parents travelled a lot with Yaa and her two brothers several times before settling in Huntsville, Alabama, where her father took a professorship at the University of Alabama. In the United States of America, she and her brothers struggled with the reality of ‘being a Ghanaian in Alabama’, which is a very unique position. Shy and reclusive, she felt that books were her best friends. For Gyasi reading and writing went hand in hand. This feeling grew stronger when she was 17 and read *Song of Solomon* by Toni Morrison. It was then she realized that a black

woman could be a successful writer and that this is what she wanted to do with her life. In 2011 she graduated from Stanford with a degree in English. Later she also studied at the Iowa Writing Workshop, considered by many to be the best master of fine arts program in the United States.

Homegoing, her debut-novel received an extremely positive reception from both critics and the public for it won the Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award in 2017, a just a year after its publication.

These novel traces the descendants of two half-sisters Effia and Esi, born into different villages in eighteenth-century Ghana. Effia is married to an Englishman and lives in comfort in the palatial rooms of the Cape Coast Castle where she, with her white husband and other members of her village are involved in slave trade. Unbeknownst to Effia, Esi is imprisoned beneath her in the castle dungeons, captured and sold with other villagers into the Gold Coast booming slave trade, and shipped off to America where, her children and grandchildren are raised in slavery. One thread of *Homegoing* follows Effia's descendants through centuries of warfare in Ghana, the Fante and Asante nations wrestle with the slave trade and the British colonization. The other thread follows Esi and her children into America. From plantations of the south to the civil war and great migration, from the coal mines of the Pratt City, Alabama, to the jazz clubs and dope houses of twentieth-century Harlem, right up through the present day.

3. AFRICANS' INFERIORITY COMPLEX TOWARDS THE WHITE MAN'S RACE

'Inferiority complex' is a feeling of not being as good, as important, as intelligent as others. In *Homegoing*, most of African people feel themselves inferior to British people to the extent that, they are influenced by the skin colour of the colonizers. They are also amazed to see such people who have another skin colour that they judge better than their own skin. This implies that African over-estimate white people and consider them as superior beings. This reality is shown through Effia's first meeting with a white man as follow:

'He is happy to meet you', the translator said as the white man held his hand out to Effia. She didn't accept it. Instead, she hid behind her father's leg and watched him. He wore a coat that had shiny gold buttons down the middle; it strained against his paunch. His face was red, as though his neck were a stump on fire. He was fat all over and sweating huge droplets from his forehead and above his upper lip. Effia started to think of him as a rain cloud: sallow and wet and shapeless. [...] The white man's eyes grew clearer as the translation [about the African marriage customs] was given, and suddenly Effia realized that he was seeing through new eyes. The mud of her hut's walls, the straw of the roof, he could finally see them. [...] Effia forced herself to see things through new eyes, too. (p.5)

This quotation is important, as she not only perceives the white man as foreign and far from superior, but further realises the existence of different ways of living. It further illustrates Effia's individual perception of differences, which result in a complex of inferiority.

'Inferiority complex' is a disorder of mind which causes a person to feel inadequate or deficient when compared with others. In the context of the novel, the inferiority complex is a feeling of inadequacy that African characters have towards the British colonizers' physical appearance. In fact, the inferiority complex is exactly what Yaa Gyasi portrays in *Homegoing* wherein African characters are influenced by the race of the British colonizers. The authoress endeavours to account for such a feeling through Effia, a young African girl living in the Gold Coast, who is amazed to meet for the first time a white man in 1775, when she accompanies

her parents to the marriage of Andowa Aido, an African woman, with a British soldier serving the royal army in the Gold Coast. Effia is so surprised to meet a person with such a physical appearance who, she considers like an angel, for she has never met such a person before as the narrator describes in the passage below:

He wore a coat that had shiny gold buttons down the middle; it strained against his paunch. His face was red, as through his neck were a stump on fire. He was fat all over and sweating huge droplets from his forehead and above his upper lip. Effia started to think of him as a rain cloud: sallow and wet and shapeless. (p.5)

This passage evidences the inferiority complex that African people, especially women have towards the British who, they consider like affluent persons even what they wear can show how they are wealthy, they do not know the meaning of suffering. The sentence “*He wore a coat that had shiny gold buttons down the middle*” means that buttons of his coat is made of gold, precious stone, very expensive and belongs to a given social class, only for important persons. When the authoress adds that “*His face was red, as through his neck were a stump on fire*”, she stresses his fatness through his horrible and strange neck. Something new for Effia who confesses never having met such a white man with a red face. Not surprising that she “*started to think of him as a rain cloud*”, knowing that African people are influenced by the white man’s appearance, for they consider it as a gift given by the Lord. They even perceive the white man’s skin colour like something divine, for they find it similar to that of an angel who directly comes from paradise, living in heaven with the Lord.

In the same context, the authoress relates that the Africans’ inferiority complex of the white man’s physical appearance renders African characters unable to make a correct description of a white man. In fact, for Africans, all whites have the same physical appearance and making a distinction between them is something difficult because they are not frequently. This is the reason why the narrator shows how Quey, a biracial young boy, born from Effia and James Collins, is viewed as a child different from other children of their village. His physical appearance attracts many people in the village so that they wonder whether he is white or not:

Cudjo turned his attention to Quey. Are you white? Cudjo had asked him touching his hair. Quey recoiled at Cudjo’s touch, though many others had done the same thing, asked him the same question. I’m not white, he said softly (...) so you are not white. What are you? I’m like you, Quey said. (p.55)

Through this passage, one notices that African people are unable to make a distinction between a biracial-person and a pure white man. The authoress’ use the sentences “Cudjo had asked him touching his hair” and “others had done the same thing” proves racial influence undergone by African people in this narrative, for they are fascinated by the white man’s appearance. Many Africans want to be given the opportunity to touch the white man’s hair and skin so as to know if the white man’s flesh is the same to theirs’. This beautiful appearance of the white man becomes one of the necessary trumps used by the British colonizers to impose their laws on the African soil, for the inferiority complex of the African people towards the white man’s race makes a white man superior to the black man who shows his weakness before a person he considers like his master in his own land. The word “trumps” means something that gives one an advantage, especially one held in reserve. This advantage is the beautiful appearance of the white man in order to have a command of African’s land thanks to black men as illustrated: His name was James Collins and he was the newly appointed governor of the Cape Coast Castle.” *Within a week, he had come back to the village to ask Baaba for Effia’s hand in marriage*” (p. 8). This complex of African people towards British as the novel reads it, has a great impact on women. In effect, women are deeply victimized by their own counterpart who

expose them to the mercy of whites that they think superior. For, female characters in *Homegoing* undergo the consequences of men's complex in the society as depicted through Abeeku the male character and chief of the village who says: "*if the white man wants her, he may have her*" (p. 9). Despite Abeeku's love for Effia and his desire to marry her, he accepts to let his beloved to a white man as he considers him superior to Black people. This means that, this complex makes black characters lose their self-esteem and authorized certain privileges to British even on matters that could make their happiness.

Another aspect linked to the Africans' inferiority complex is also obvious in *Homegoing* when African parents force their young daughters to marry white people who come from England. Despite the fact they know the cruelty of the British colonizers, they do not hesitate to sacrifice the lives of their children simply because they are fascinated by the colour of the British. For them, having a daughter with a white husband is a kind of blessing from God. Yaa Gyasi demonstrates this colour influence through Baaba, Effia's step-mother, who wants her to marry James Collins, the newly appointed governor of the Cape Coast Castle. Knowing that this man has a family in England, she decides to marry her to this white man while she is only fifteen years old. To reach her goal, she orders her step-daughter not to reveal to people the day she will have her blood as clarified in the following passage:

That night, just two days after her fifteenth birthday, the blood came. It was not the powerful rush of the ocean waves that Effia had expected it to be, but rather a simple trickle, rain dripping, drop by drop, from the same spot of a hut's roof. She cleaned herself off and waited for her father to leave Baaba so that she could tell her. Baaba, she said, showing the palm fronds red. I have gotten my blood. Baaba placed a hand over lips. Who else knows? No one, Effia said. You will keep it that way. Do you understand? When anyone asks you if you have become a woman yet, you answer no. (p.10)

This passage is a perfect illustration of the Africans' inferiority complex towards the white man's race in *Homegoing* for, the indigenous people believe that if an African woman marries a white man, she will have all the wealth of the earth. The sentences "*I have gotten my blood*" and "*when anyone asks you if you have become a woman yet, you answer no*" attests of the Africans' willingness to see their children marry white people, for they do not want people to discover that their daughters become women. This means that in the Africans' mind, their daughters should not be proposed to marriage by African young boys in the same village before being a woman this means before menstruating, for the daughters is unable to get pregnant and give birth to a baby before menstruating if she doesn't give birth, she is useless her husband will find another woman. Since having children is synonymous with possessing wealth, being childless is then a curse, and brings about shame to the whole family. This trick from certain African parents enables them to have the access to marry their daughters to white people, for they believe that the race of a white man is superior to that of a black man. This belief from Africans is without any doubt the racial influence and the inferiority complex that Africans undergo before the physical appearance of the white man.

The novel also reads that Baaba convinces Abeeku, the young chief of their village not to marry her step-daughter Effia. Despite the fact she knows that Effia is in love with Abeeku and Abeeku as well, she does not hesitate to lie to Abeeku by convincing him that her step-daughter is cursed and if he marries her, they will never have children. This lie and trick from Baaba is presented by the narrator in the following passage:

She has the body of a woman, but something evil lurks in her spirit, Baaba said, spiting on the ground for emphasis. "If you marry her, she will never bear your children. If

the white man marries her, he will think of this village fondly, and your trade will prosper from it.” (p.15)

In this passage, as it can be seen, the authoress demonstrates the Africans’ inferiority complex towards the white man’s race. Narrations such as “*but something evil lurks in her spirit*” and “*if you marry her, she will never bear your children*” show to what extent African people are fascinated to see their daughters marry white people. They do not hesitate to besmirch the honour of their children and that of their family so as to discourage black boys to marry their daughters. This gives them the possibility to marry these girls to whites. For example, the sentence “*if the white man marries her*” attests of the willingness of African people to marry their daughters to whites by the link of marriage. Despite the age of these young girls, they are forced to marry white people whatever the behaviour and the age of the latter what counts for their parents is to see their daughters having a union with white men because, for them, having a white man in a family is a kind of blessing from God, for the descendants and for wealth.

Yaa Gyasi’s efforts to tell the reader about racial influence endured by African characters in this narrative becomes so evident when she shows how African young boys are compelled to break their relationships young African young girls when they are loved by Whites. They have no possibility to prevent white people from taking their promised wives because they think that they are powerless before a white man’s physical appearance. This is evident in the novel through Abeeku, the chief of the village, who, despite his position and his power in the village is obliged to abandon Effia, the wife of his life because she is in loved with the British James Collins, the newly appointed governor of the Cape Coast Castle. The illustration is the following passage:

No, she is not my wife, Abeeku said after the man has translated for him. His voice not bothering to hide his annoyance. Effia hung her head, embarrassed that she had done something to cause Abeeku shame, embarrassed he could not call her wife. Embarrassed, too, that he had not called her by name: Effia the Beauty. She wanted desperately then to break her promise to Baaba and announce herself as a woman she was, but before she could speak, the men walked away, and her nerve faded as the white chief looked over his shoulder at her and smiled. (p.14)

This quotation evidences the inferiority complex of African people towards the white man’s race. The authoress’ use of the sentence “she is not my wife” demonstrates to what extent African young boys are ready to break their relationships with their girlfriends when they are seduced by white people. Despite their degree of love, they do not hesitate to leave them to white men because, they think that they are inferior to whites and they have no chance and means to face a white man. In the same context, the expression “*the white chief looked over his shoulder at her and smiled*” in the passage above proves how a white man is interested to the African young girl before her black boyfriend. The latter refuses to tell the truth about their love story so that she gains the confidence of the white man, he decides to leave the girl for him. In short, one realizes that African young boys are really influenced by the colour of the white man who, they dare not face in their own land. This influence of race undergone by Africans is what we call by the Africans’ inferiority complex for the white man’s race.

In the same context, the authoress continues to emphasize the racial influence undergone by Africans who, without any pity sacrifice others in order to benefit from the favours of the white man. They all want to live with the white men because they think that being a white man is synonymous with wealth. This Africans’ fascination to deal business with whites is evident in the novel through the newly chief of the village who decides to sacrifice his love relationship with his promised wife by abandoning her to a white man. This helps him maintain his business

with whites. By doing so, Abeeku thinks that this sacrifice is done for the good of the whole community, as shown in the following passage:

He ran his fingers along the full landscape of her face, the hills of her cheeks, the caves of her nostrils. A more beautiful woman has never been born. He said finally. He turned to Baaba. But I see that you are right. If the white man wants her, he may have her. All the better for our business with them. All the better for the village. (p.15)

This quotation illustrates the extent to which African people undergo racial influence in this novel. The use of the sentence: “if the white man wants her, he may have her” attests of the black man’s inferiority complex towards the white man who, he considers as a person who possesses the secret of the creation of the world. He avoids any kind of conflict with him especially for the matter of love relationship. This means that African people are powerless in their own land before the white men. This influence of colour has negative impacts in the lives of indigenous people who, in the land bequeathed by their ancestors, are dominated by the white man.

The need to account for historical truths inhabits the authoress’ spirit to the extent that she continues to evidence the Africans’ inferiority complex towards the white man’s race when living with them in the same society. In fact, African people are dominated by the western cultures during the wedding ceremony between both races. The wedding is celebrated according to the western culture despite the fact that the ceremony takes place on the African soil, Africans are compelled to obey all the instructions the British give to them because, in their eyes, they are not equal to them. What one finds more shocking is the fact that white people oblige certain members of the African family not to participate to the wedding ceremony. Very often, during the ceremony, all the guests are whites. Here is how the narrator describes the Africans’ inferiority complex of the white man’s race through Effia’s wedding with James:

There was a chapel on the ground level, and she and James Collins were married by a clergyman who had asked Effia to repeat words she didn’t mean in a language she didn’t understand. There was no dancing, no feasting, no bright colours, slicked hair, or old ladies with wrinkled and bare breasts throwing coins and waving handkerchiefs. Not even Effia’s family had come... (p.16)

Through this illustration, one notices how African people are culturally dominated by the Westerners in their own land. They are unable to impose the white man to do things according to the African culture. This goes without saying that African people are powerless before the white man who comes as a foreigner in the African continent. For example, the sentence “*she and James Collins were married by a clergyman*” and “*there was no dancing, feasting, no bright colors*” proves that African people are culturally dominated by whites, for not any element of the African culture is taken into account during their wedding day with the Whites. African culture is flouted, the black man is underestimated and forgotten, they erase the social belonging of the woman, the husband makes his woman his property. During wedding in Africa dancing, food and drink can’t miss because it expresses happiness, joy it is too the way to congratulate a newlywed. As a result, African women do not understand anything during their wedding ceremony, for white people do everything according to the western culture. This way of doing things by whites renders African women unsatisfied during their wedding day, for the ceremony is not done as they are used to seeing it in their villages. This is a great victimization and humiliation not only for African women but, mainly for the African culture that tends to disappear whenever there is a wedding with a white man. In the same vein Takudza Hillary Chiwanza (<https://www.africarebirth.com/how-colonialism-instilled-inferiority-complexes->

[in-africans/](https://www.africarebirth.com/how-colonialism-instilled-inferiority-complexes-in-africans/) 21 October 2023) writes that “*To this day, we are entrapped in this quagmire- we constantly seek the European gaze to be regarded as human, everything that came from the west was glorified and deemed infallible, education, religion, laws*” (Hillary Chiwanza, <https://www.africarebirth.com/how-colonialism-instilled-inferiority-complexes-in-africans/> 21 October 2023) as we can noticed this quotation describes the African thoughts, they think that European gaze is regarded as human that why at Effia’s wedding day, everything happened as the white man wanted because they are better than blacks, they imposed their language.

Consequently, Africans’ inferiority complex towards the white man’s race has a negative impact on African women’s lives who cannot be satisfied at their wedding’s days. The lives of African people because, it enables whites practice racial abuses on the African soil. In a nutshell, one realizes that the Africans’ inferiority complex towards the white man’s race is one of the main causes of the British domination over the African people in their different colonies in Africa. However, this Africans’ complex of inferiority instigates British to ill-treat them mainly women.

4. CONTEXTUALIZING THE SHENANIGANS OF BRITISH SLAVE MASTERS IN AFRICA

The involvement of African people in slavery and the slaves’ conditions in the dungeon of the Cape Coast Castle before their deportation to America have negative impacts in the social life of African people in the African continent. African people are unsafe in their own land they do not only distrust the white man but also their own African fellows who do not hesitate to sacrifice the life of some Africans for their own economic interests. This section analyzes the consequences of slavery, focusing on the separation of the African families in Africa, racial abuses and the subsequent psychological trauma observed in the mind of African people in their own homeland.

4.1 The Splitting of the African Families

The noun ‘splitting’ comes from the verb “to split” which, according to the *New International Webster’s Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language* (2004:1422) means “*to divide or to make a group of people, divide into smaller groups that have very different opinions, generally by force.*” For psychologists such as David Matsumoto, ‘splitting’ carries a harmful connotation for the ‘splitting force’ always affects violently so as to disturb the living of the split group (*Cambridge Dictionary of Psychology* (2009:110). By the way, the phrase ‘the splitting of the African families’ can be understood as the fact of making the African families move apart from different places in their own homeland because of slavery. The exploration of the analyzed novels reveals that after a series of capture of villagers by the chiefs of villages and British colonizers, many Africans families were separated as illustrated in the following passage:

He began walking out of the room, but before he reached the hut’s door, he turned. She is not your mother you know. Baaba. Our father had you with a house girl who ran away into the fire the night you were born. She is the one who left you that stone you wear around your neck. (p. 29)

As it can be seen, this passage demonstrates the separation of African families, the personal pronoun “He” substitutes Fifi, Effia’s little brother he tells him the truth about her mother, Baaba is not her mother. Indeed, Effia’s mother was captured by warriors in her own village to work as a house girl in another village. Her master had got a relationship with her, she gets pregnant but the night when she gives birth to Effia, she flees and lefts Effia her daughter a

stone as a sign of memory. She never knew the truth until the death of her father. Her brother decides to tell her the truth during a talk near the hut.

Another aspect describing the separation of the African families in this novel, *Homegoing*, concerns Afua, a young African female slave who is separated from her baby by the slave traders after being captive in the prisons of the Cape Coast Castle before her deportation to America. They do not worry about the fate of her baby knowing that the latter is still an infant. The baby is brutally plucked from Afua's cradle arms by one of the British soldiers as illustrates the following passage:

The soldier repeated himself, louder this time, as though volume would coax understanding. Irritated, he ventured further into the room. He stepped in feces and cursed. He plucked the baby from Afua's cradled arms, and Afua began to cry. He slapped her, and he stopped a learned reflex. (pp. 31-32)

This quotation is a perfect illustration of how Afua is separated from her baby by the British soldiers using force or brutality. The sentence "He plucked the baby from Afua's cradle arms" evidences how the authoress depicts the violent act which separates African people are from their families without any mercy because of slavery imposed by the British colonizers in the African land. This means that according to Yaa Gyasi, African people are forced to be submitted to a total separation from their families in their own land without their consent. The British people are the only people who dictate the rules in the African land which is not theirs. In the same context, the narrator shows the reader that after being separated from her baby by the British slave traders, Afua is afraid of the fate of her baby because she knows that the slave traders are able to kill him at any time as illustrates the following passage:

"They will kill it I'm sure," she said. The baby was conceived before Afua's marriage ceremony. As punishment, the village chief had sold her to traders. Afua had told Esi this when she first came into the dungeon, when she was still certain that a mistake had had been made, that her parents would return for her. (p. 32)

Through this quotation, one may see how miserable Afua's baby is, for he is not only separated from Afua, her mother, but also its life is in great danger.

The authoress use of the utterance "They will kill it I'm sure" demonstrates that the fate of Afua's baby is in the hands of the British colonizers who consider themselves as the only masters of the African land. Similarly, the novelist shows that Afua is not only separated from her baby, but also from her family. She was sold by the chief of her village after conceiving a baby before the marriage ceremony as depicted in the following sentences from the passage above "The baby was conceived before Afua's ceremony" and "As punishment, the village chief had sold her to traders".

Pursuing this further, Yaa Gyasi portrays the separation of the African families due to slavery in the African land by showing how two sisters, Effia and Esi, born from the same mother but different fathers are separated. Esi, the younger sister, is surprised to hear the truth from Abronoma that she has a sister who is the first daughter of her mother. She is in Fante village with Abronoma. In the Fante village, there is a saying about the separated sisters which says that they are doomed to stay on the opposite sides of the pond as demonstrates the passage below:

"Your mother was once a slave for a Fante family. She was raped by her master because he too was a Big Man and big men can do what they please, lest they appear weak, eh?" Esi looked away, and Abronoma continued in a whisper. "You are not your mother's first daughter. There was one before you. And in my village, we have

a saying about separated sisters. They are like a woman and her reflection, doomed to stay on opposite sides of the pond". (p.38)

It goes out from this quotation that Effia and Esi although born from the same mother are separated because of slavery practiced by African people themselves. For example, the reading of the sentences "You are not your mother's first daughter" and "There was one before you" brings evidence how Esi ignores the existence of her elder sister who, separated from her because of slavery in Africa. This separation causes opposition between these two sisters who do not know one another. This means that for the authoress, Esi's mother does not want to tell her that she has another daughter before her because she was raped by her first daughter's father her master when she was a slave in the Fante village. Finally, Esi's mother called Maame decides to tell her daughter the truth about the existence of her other daughter. She left her that she left in the Fante village when she was a slave especially the day when the slave traders from the Fante village decide to attack their village as openly shows the passage below:

"I have been keeping this for you". Maame said. "I wanted to give it to you on your wedding day. I- I left one like this for your sister. I left it with Baaba after I set the fire". "My sister?" Esi asked. So what Abronoma said was true. Maama Babbled nonsense words, words she had never spoken before. Sister, Baaba, fire. Sister, Baaba, fire. Esi wanted to ask more questions, but the noise outside was growing louder... (p.42)

This quotation proves how Maame, Esi's mother, decides to tell Esi, her daughter, the truth concerning the existence of her first daughter that she begot with her master when she was a slave in the Fante village before running away from that village in search of liberty. For instance, the utterance "I-I left one like this for your sister" shows how Maame gives a black stone to her daughter Esi as she did in the past with Effia before leaving the Fante village which she considers as the symbol of their family. Esi is surprised to hear such a truth from her mother. She wants to ask more questions but the situation is too serious that she does not have the possibility to hear correctly her mother because of the noise that is growing outside.

Equivalently, the novelist describes that Afua, Esi and Effia are not the only characters to experience the separation from their families in Africa because of slavery in this novel. There is also Abronoma, the young girl from the Fante village, who is captured in Esi's village as a slave. Despite the fact that she is a daughter of a Big Man in the Fante village, she is victimized and tortured by Esi's father who is her master. As Maame, Abronoma reveals the truth of the ill-treatment that she experienced from Esi's father in Asante village as demonstrated by the authoress in these words:

Abronoma spit onto the clay in front of her. "Your father is Big Man, eh? She asked, and Esi nodded, proud despite what she had just seen her father do. The Dove let out mirthless laugh. My father too is Big Man, and now look at what I am. Look at what your mother was. Why my mother was? Little Dove's eyes shot toward Esi. You don't know? (p.29)

Through this passage, the reader may understand that the character Abronoma is also victim of the family's separation that Yaa Gyasi denounces in this narrative. The sentence "My father too is a Big Man and now look at what I am" in this passage demonstrates the way an innocent young girl is captured and enslaved in one of the African villages of the Gold Coast. Far from her parents, she undergoes a horrible treatment despite the fact her father is a Big Man in their village and she is considered as a princess in front of people they share the same village. In the

development of this part, one can notice psychological trauma as exposes in the following section.

4.2 British's Racial Abuses in the Cape Coast Castle

According to *Oxford Learner's Dictionary*, the word 'race' is defined as one of the main groups that humans can be divided into according to their physical differences. 'Abuse', however, is defined as the unfair, cruel or violent treatment of somebody. By the way, the phrase 'racial abuses' carries connotations of as a cruel and ferocious treatment inflicted upon a group of people because of their race. Racial abuses are one of the psychological manifestations of victimization in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*. African people are tortured by the British colonizers in their own land, they are most of time beaten and insulted by the British who consider them like animals living in the jungle. These heartless practices are dramatized in the novel through the character James Collins, the newly appointed governor of the Cape Coast Castle who, despite the fact he is married to an African young woman, allows himself to qualify black characters by beasts as attests the following passage:

But he spoke to her often about beasts. That was what the Asante trafficked most hear. Beasts. Monkeys and chimpanzees, even few leopards. Birds like the king crowns and parrots that she and Fiifi used to try to catch when they were children (...). She had seen James look at a king crown brought in by one of their Asante traders and declare that it was worth for pound. What about the human beast? How much was he worth? (p.25)

This passage evidences the British cruelty over Blacks who are reduced to nothingness but animals because of their skin colour viewed as an abomination in the eyes of the British colonizers. The narrator's use of the phrase "*Beasts. Monkeys and chimpanzees*" attests of the British inhuman behaviour who do not consider the colonized people as human beings, but as animals like apes living in the forest. If the British considers a black man as an animal living in the jungle, this also means that for colonizers, the African continent is a kind of jungle where dwell apes like chimpanzees, monkeys and gorillas. This means that for the British slaveowners or individuals participating in the trade system, African people have inferior mentality. Their thoughts are similar to that of animals and they are unable to have coherent thoughts like the white people. This is the reason why they compare African people to apes. The fact of considering Africans human as beasts shows how Africans are victims of racism practiced by the British colonizers who, despite the fact they are foreigners in the African continent, they do not hesitate to mistreat them in their own land.

In the same wake, Yaa Gyasi' reveals that Africans, are not only victims of colonizers' invectives; they are also arbitrary arrested copiously rapped. Their fate in the overcrowded dungeon becomes far enviable to that of an animal in the cage for they cease to be masters of their own live. This is evidenced in the novel through Esi and Tansi, who during their stay in prison, are exposed to inflictions and famine. These prisoners are even denied their humanity since they are reduced to eat according to the rhythm imposed by the British soldiers who, most of the time prefer not to feed them. Henceforth, the cycle of food becomes irregular in the slaves' dungeon, for Esi and Tansi spend some days with foods and other days without food, as evidenced in the following passage:

Days went on. The cycle repeated. Food, then no food. Esi could do nothing but replay her time in the light. She had not stopped bleeding since that night. A thin trickle of

red travelled down her leg, and Asi just watched it. She no longer wanted to talk to Tansi. She no longer wanted to listen to stories. (p.48)

Here, narrations such as “*Food, then no food*” and “*She had not stopped bleeding since that night*” help the reader figure out shows how lives of the African people become horrible with the exposure to the British colonizers. It is worth noticing that not only is the cycle of slaves’ feeding irregular in the dungeon of the Cape Coast Castle but the slaves they are exposed to a poor diet since the quantity and the quality of food provided by British soldiers are not adequate. Through this poor diet, one notices that the slaves’ stomachs are empty more days than full. Thus, many slaves prefer staying starved instead of eating the porridge that they poor down on the ground of the dungeon letting bad smell all around the dungeon, as the narrator contends:

The soldiers came in with the same mushy porridge that had been fed to them in the Fante village where Esi was held. Esi had learned to swallow it down without gagging. It was the only food they ever received, and their stomachs were empty more days than full. The porridge passed right through her, it seemed. The ground was littered with their waste, the unbearable smell. (p.29)

The British colonizers consider the indigenous people like wild animals who, they have to keep in cages for they are beasts. They must have a total control over them even if they are in their own land, they qualify as ‘jungle’. These wrongdoings by the British towards the indigenous people are what one can qualify by the horrors of colonization undergone by African people living under the British yoke not only in the Gold Coast but in all the British colonies.

Another aspect epitomizing the horrors of the British colonization is the way the authoress describes the lives of the African, particularly female characters in the dungeon. In fact, the novel reads that in the dungeon, African people are not only beaten and insulted but as the living conditions worsen, some of them narrowly cohabit with death or finally passed away. This is the case of Esi who, after being raped, beaten, insulted in the dungeon of the Cape Coast Castle, Esi becomes unable to recognize the day from the night because in the dungeon, nobody can see the sunlight, there is darkness all the time, the day or the night. Despite this torture and humiliation, Esi refuses to die. Afua, however, does not survive to the torture and humiliation she endures from her rapist soldiers:

By morning Afua had died. Her skin was purple and blue, and Esi knew that she had held a breath until Nyame took her. They would all be punished for this. The soldiers came in, though Esi was no longer able to tell what time. The mud walls of the dungeon made all time equal, there was no sunlight. Darkness was day and night and everything in between. Sometimes there were so many bodies stacked into the women’s dungeon that they had to lie, stomach down, so that women could be stacked on top of them. (p.30)

Through this textual snippet, one realizes that African people are exposed to the cruelty of the white men in the dungeon. The sentence “*By morning Afua had died*” shows that in the dungeon, African people are not only tortured by the British but they are also killed without any pity. They are killed because of the torture and bad conditions they undergo under the domination of the white man. This line of reasoning is authorized in consideration of the authoress’ depiction imprisonment:

Esi was kicked to the ground by one of the soldiers, his foot at the base of her neck so that she couldn’t turn her head to breathe anything but the dust and detritus from the ground. The new women were brought in, and some were wailing so hard that the

soldiers smacked them unconscious. They were piled on top of the other women, their bodies deadweight. When the smacked ones came to, there were no more tears. Esi could feel the woman on top of her peeing. Urine traveled between both of their legs. (pp.30-31)

As can be seen, such a dungeon is crammed with prisoners even unable to “*turn her head to breathe anything but the dust and detritus from the ground*” when her newcoming co-detained are “*piled on top of the other women, their bodies deadweight*”, “*wailing so hard that the soldiers smacked them unconscious*”. Indeed, as there are not enough places to sit, some women are compelled to have a sit on the top of the other women despite their body deadweight. As a result, these women do not have any possibility to even get up to urinate for they have no place to do their needs. This means that because of the lack of places in the dungeon, one can see some prisoners urinating on other prisoners because they have no choice. This is what happens to Esi who could hardly breathe despite that she makes some movements with her shoulders in order to create some space. All the dungeon becomes full of the urine like water on the floor, for there have never been such a number of slaves in the dungeon of the Cape Coast Castle before. With the waste in the rooms of the dungeon, many women do not stop leaking waste, they have no time to wash their bodies even their clothes. The urine on the dungeon floor reaches slaves’ ankles level, as narrator better puts it:

Now the waste on the dungeon floor was up to Esi’s ankles. There had never been so many women in the dungeon before. Esi could hardly breathe, but she moved her shoulders this way and that, until she had created some space. The woman beside her had not stopped leaking waste since the last time the soldiers fed them. Esi remembered her first day in the dungeon, when the same thing had been true of her. That day, she had found her mother’s stone in the river of shit. She had buried it, making the spot on the wall so that she would remember when the time came. (p. 46)

These such infernal imprisonment conditions could only lead to fatality for the unluckiest among the detainees. Indeed, Afua died because she was severely tortured and sexually abused all the night by the British soldiers, who does not consider this subsequent death as a crime. Indeed, the victimization of African people by the British colonizers is noticeable through the horrors inflicted to women. For the novel particularly describes female characters as victims of the British colonizers’ systematic oppression. African women are badly treated by colonizers who, most of the time, consider them like simple objects of pleasure that they use to satisfy their sexual desires without their agreement. This is evident in the novel through the character Esi, an African young girl and Effia’s half-sister, who is raped by a British soldier when she was captive in the dungeon of the Cape Coast Castle. Indeed, the novel reads that Esi is taken by one of the British soldiers who, after drinking some bottles of alcohol decides to finish his sexual envies. He rushes into the dungeon and decides to take Esi to his apartment where he puts her on a folded tarp, spreads her legs, and enters her:

He put her on the folded tarp, spread her legs and entered her. She screamed, but he placed his hand over her lips, then put his fingers in her mouth. Biting them only seemed to please him, and so she stopped. She closed her eyes forcing herself to listen instead of see, pretending that she was still the little girl in her mother’s hut on a night that her father had come, that she was still looking at the mud walls, wanting to give them privacy, to separate herself. Wanting to understand what kept pleasure from turning into pain. (p. 48)

This quotation epitomizes how black men as well as women are victims of the British colonizers' systematic oppression in this novel. The sentence "*He put her on the folded tarp, spread her legs and entered her*" evidences the British colonizers' rapist attitude towards black women that they use like sexual 'toys' to unleash hunger. As a matter of fact, most of these raped black women become pregnant of the rapist colonizers. They now have a miserable life because, they have children without fathers this is the case of Ness "*Her best guess was twenty-five but each year since the one when she was plucked from her mother's arms had felt like ten years*". The thing that mostly draws the reader's attention is the authoress' way of portraying the victimized's sorrowful emotions but also the victimizers' inhumanity for the latter is senseless to the young girl's contention and screaming for help, as the narrator keeps on:

When he had finished, he looked horrified, disgusted with her. As though he were the one who had something taken from him. [...] Suddenly Esi knew that the soldier had done something that even the other soldiers would find fault with. He looked at her like her body was his shame. (p. 48)

The novel also reads that the evils of the British colonizers in the Gold Coast make African people beware the white man, for they know that the white man comes in Africa not to do business with Africans but to enslave Africans for their profits. An aspect that Yaa Gyasi evidences through the character Esi who, after being raped and beaten by a British soldier in the prison of the Cape Coast Castle, realizes that a white man is very dangerous that any African has to beware. For, more torture and evils are coming to all Africans in dungeon when the governor of the Gold Coast smiles before their deportation:

Before Esi left, the one called governor looked at her and smiled. It was a kind of smile, pitying, yet true. But for the rest of her life Esi would see a smile on a white face and remember the one the soldier gave her before taking her to his quarters, how white men smiling meant more evil was coming with the next wave. (p.49)

From this textual snippet, one easily infers how Africans are victimized. Narrations such as "*white men smiling meant more evil was coming with the next wave*" shows that Africans do not trust the white man, for they know that when a white man smiles before an African it means that he prepares something evil against him.

As the story unfolds, one comes across horrifying scenes where Black females are sexually abused not only the British soldiers but worse by their own fellows participating in the trade system. As many of these Africans are slaves' owners, they have many slave women working in their houses who they use to get pregnant by raping them. Despite the fact they share the same villages, some Blacks are submitted to slavery in the houses of the notable of their villages. As an illustration, Esi's mother is a prisoner of a black man called Cobbe in the Fante village who most of the time rapes her until she gets the pregnancy of her first daughter Effia, as Esi is being told the unfair story by Abronoma:

"Your mother was once a slave for the Fante family. She was raped by her master because he too was a Big Man and big men do what they please, lest they appear *weak*, eh?" Esi looked away, and Abronoma continued in a whisper. "Your mother's first daughter. There was one before you. And in my village, we have a saying about separated sisters. They are like a woman and her reflection, doomed to stay on opposite sides of the pond". (p38)

Here, when Abronoma says: "*Your mother was once a slave for the Fante family*", clearly unveils that some African slaves belong to other Africans. These slaves call these Africans

'masters' because they are considered like the properties of these Africans. The sentence "she was raped by her master" shows then how these African masters are used to raping their slaves without any pity despite the fact they have the same skin color or they belong to the same villages.

In addition, the novel describes that adult are not the only Africans to endure the horrors of the British colonization, African babies too are excepted, for they are separated from their parents compelled to abandon them. This is the case of Afua who is snatched a baby out of her cradled arms by a British soldier because just because the soldier considers that the baby disturbs and prevents her mother to be more productive and work correctly. An unbearable situation for this African woman is even forbidden to cry when she powerlessly sees the British soldier throw away her baby:

The soldier repeated himself, louder this time, as though volume would coax understanding. Irritated, he ventured further into the room. He stepped in feces and cursed. He plucked the baby from Afua's cradled arms, and Afua began to cry. He slapped her, and she stopped, a learned reflex. [...]

"Where are they taking the baby?" Esi asked.

Tansi spit onto the clay floor and swirled the spittle with her finger, creating a salve. "They will kill it, I'm sure" she said. [...]

Now, hearing Tansi speak, Afua resumed crying, but it was as though on one heard. These tears were a matter of routine. They came for all of the women. They dropped until the clay below them turned to mud. At night, Esi dreamed that if they all cried in unison, the mud would turn to river and they could be washed away into Atlantic. (*Homegoing*, p. 29)

One understands that through this passage Yaa Gyasi denounces the fact that African babies also are victims of the horrors of the British colonization, for they are taken from their mothers' arms by colonizers without breastfeeding. This means that certain African women are compelled to abandon their babies because of the evil conditions they are submitted to the British slaveowners. They know that the resistance against any British soldier will have terrible consequences. As a matter of fact, most of these African babies deprived of their mothers die because they have no person to take care of them. This is to say that Yaa Gyasi criticizes the fact that many African children are separated from their parents who are compelled to leave them undeliberately because of the miserable conditions the colonizers impose them.

What one may find more dreadful is the way African people behave after being imprisoned in the colonizer's dungeon. Indeed, the Cape Coast Castle where slaves are confined before their transatlantic voyage become the 'physical embodiment' of British Shenanigans in Africa. For, the detainees are beaten for almost all the time, full of tears and spend most of their time crying not only because they are beaten, but also because they do not support the conditions that they undergo. Crying becomes a matter of routine to the extent that many of slaves in the dungeon start thinking that if slaves continue to drop such a number of tears on the floor which is already full of urine, all the slaves will drown within the dungeon. This is the reason why when sleeping, some slaves dream that if they all cry in unison, the mud of the dungeon will turn to river and they can be washed away into the Atlantic:

Now, hearing Tansi speak, Afua resumed her crying, but it was as though no one heard. These tears were a matter of routine. They came for all the women. They dropped until the clay below them turned to mud. At night, Esi dreamed that if they all cried in unison, the mud would turn to river and they could be washed away into the Atlantic. (p. 29)

Unfortunately, no matter the way they cry, no one cares about them even the soldiers who are before each room of the dungeon because for them, they are like animals which are making noise. These slaves drop the tears until the clay of the dungeon turns to mud. They suffer from psychological troubles that render many of them mad. Some of them become unable to think as a human being. Others, however, do not want people to recall them the souvenirs of the castle. This is demonstrated in the novel through the character Esi who, after leaving the women's dungeon at Cape Coast Castle, she is unable to forget the two-weeks sufferings she endured in. Ford, when dares close her eyes, the memories of these torture come up in his mind. This prevents her to expect joy in front of her relatives:

When she wanted to forget the castle, she fought of these things, but she did not expect joy. Hell was a place of remembering, each beautiful moment passed through the man's eye until he fell to the ground like a rotten mango, perfectly useless, uselessly perfect. (p.28)

Through this passage, one realizes the painful conditions that African people endure in their own land, spending days in the prisons of colonizers make African people suffer from psychological troubles because of the inhuman conditions they have been inflicted by the British soldiers. The narrator's use of the phrases "*a rotten mango*" and "*perfectly useless*" indicate that an African is useless in the eyes of the white man. Despite the fact he is in his own land, he is regarded as a source of disturbance in the eyes of the British. This means that for Yaa Gyasi, the only importance of an African before a white man is to be submitted to the forced labour so as to develop the economy of the British Empire. To accomplish their mission in Africa, the British use all the methods to maintain the indigenous people under their domination. As a result, African people are beaten, insulted even killed in case of resistance.

4.4 Psychological Trauma of the British Systematic Oppression in Africa

The impacts of slavery are not only limited to the separation of the African families in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*, for the novelist also describes that slavery leaves the psychological trauma in the mind of the African people living in their own continent. In fact, Yaa Gyasi describes in this narrative that many African people distrust the smile of the white man during slavery, for they know that if a white smile before an African it means that he is about to something terrible to that African. This is demonstrated through the character Esi who is raped after receiving a smile from one of the British soldiers. From that smile, she thinks that the British soldier and particularly Governor James and interested to her, but she unfortunately realizes that this one smiles only because he wants to abuse her. This is why when she sees the governor of the Cape Coast Castle smiling in front of slaves before their deportation to America, she foresees horrors and more problems ahead, as the narrator reveals:

The soldier shouted something, but they didn't understand. He grabbed them by their wrists, dragged them from atop or underneath the bodies of other women so that they were standing upright. He stood them next to each other in a row, and the governor checked them. He ran his hands over their breasts and between their thighs. The first girl he checked began to cry, and he slapped her swiftly, knowing her body back to the ground.

Finally, Governor James came to Esi. He looked at her carefully, then blinked his eyes and shook his head. He looked at her again, and then began checking her body as he had the others. When he ran his hands between her legs, his fingers came back red. [...]

Before Esi left, the one called Governor looked at her and smiled. It was a kind smile, pitying yet true. But for the rest of her life Esi would see a smile on a white face and remember the one the soldier gave her before taking her to his quarters, how white men smiling just meant more evil was coming with the next wave. (p, 49)

This quotation highlights the African people's psychological trauma. The sentence "*how white men smiling just meant more evil was coming with the next wave*" shows that in the mind of African people, when a white man's smile before a black man, is far from sincere for the latter expects nothing good from his victimizers. Indeed, Black men are brought to experience a psychological trauma to the point that they distrust the white man's smile for they consider it as a mere hypocrisy.

Another aspect describing the Africans' psychological trauma in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* is viewed through the character of Ness who becomes quite unable to smile because of the bad memories about victimization caused by slavery in her own continent and her own country, shown in the following passage:

She tried to smile, but she had been born during the years of Esi's unsmiling, and she had never learned how to do it quite right. The corners of her lips always seemed to twitch upward, unwillingly, then fall within milliseconds, as though attached to sadness that once anchored her own mother's heart. (p.72)

This quotation is a perfect illustration of the psychological trauma in the mind of African people due to slavery that they endure in their own continent. The sentences "*She tried to smile*" and "*she had never learned how to do it quite right*" shows that because of slavery, many slaves cannot express the smile because of the unforgettable memories, and life conditions not only in the dungeon of the Cape Coast Castle but also outside of the dungeon. This means that most of the time, these Africans are sad and afraid of the white man. Psychologically, they are influenced by what slave traders are able to do to a person having a black skin color despite the fact he is in his own land. From the foregoing, the reader infers that the slaves' life conditions in his own continent before their deportation to America is not easy. For, before being deported to America, it is impossible for a given slave to smile, for most of the time they think of what they suffer from their masters. This means that the slaves' life becomes a long series of darkness in his own continent for being deported to the United States.

Another character associated with the Africans' psychological trauma is Maame, Esi's mother, is afraid of running away into the woods after the attack of their village by the slave traders coming from the North. In the quest of capturing Africans in order to make them slaves. As a former slave in the Fante village, she already knows what fate is reserved to her after being captured. She trembles with the fear to the extent that she orders her daughter to run away into the bush in order to save her life. She starts rocking back and forth and cradling the fat flap of her stomach in her as though it were a child. As Esi does not know what would become of her life, she decides to run away into the woods as her mother orders her to do when trembling. We can read the novel:

I can't do it again, her mother whispered. No more woods. No more fire. She was rocking back and forth and cradling the fat flap of her stomach in her as though it were a child [...] the girl scurried away, and Esi didn't know what would become of her. Outside, people were screaming and running. Children were crying. (p.42)

As it can be noticed, the novelist describes the psychological trauma of Maame due to slavery. The phrase "*No more fire*" in this passage shows that Maame is shaking with fear after the attack of their village by the slave traders coming from the North of the Gold Coast. As she has

already been victim of slavery when she was young, she does want to see her daughter experience the same sufferings. In addition, the sentence “*She was rocking back and forth and cradling the flat flap of her stomach in her as though it were a child*” shows to what extent Maame is extremely terrified by the attack of her village by becoming like a mad woman. For she does not know how to save her life and that of her daughter. When the authoress writes the “*Outside, people were screaming and running. Children were crying*” she means that Maame is not the only character to be haunted, trauma is also experienced by many others, especially children who are petrified to see such an attack in their village.

Similarly, Esi’s mother is terrified with fire because she knows that the slave traders use fire to attack the villages by burning all their houses. Likewise, she settles the same strategy to run away from the Fante village. Indeed, to rescue from the slavery and prevent her daughter to be victimized, she plans to burn the house of her master, Cobbe, as illustrated in this passage: “*Esi had heard her mother say this or something like it many times before. Maame was terrified of fire. “Be careful of fire. Know when to use It and when to stay cold”, She would often say*”. (p. 21)

In the same wake, many African fathers teach their children to defend themselves in case of they are attacked by the slave traders anywhere. This is the case of Big Man, Esi’s father who urges her daughter to defend herself before the aggressors. That is why, the day of the slave traders attack of their village, Esi remembers of what her father taught her to do if their village is attacked by the warriors from the north capture the Africans, and to make them slaves, as narrator puts tells:

It began while the family was sleeping. It was Big Man’s night in Maame’s hut, so Esi had to sleep on the ground in the corner. [...] that night, once everyone in the hut had fallen asleep, the call went out. Everyone in the village had grown up knowing what each sound signified: two long moans meant the enemy was miles off yet; three quick shouts meant they were upon them. Hearing the three, Big Man jumped from the bed and grabbed the machete he stored under each of his wives’ cots.

“You take Esi and go into the woods!” he screamed at Maame before running from the hut with little time to cover his nakedness. Esi did what her father taught her, grabbing the small knife that her mother used to slice plantains and tucking it into the cloth of her skirt. (p. 41)

Here, Narrations such as “*Hearing the three, Big Man jumped from the bed and grabbed the machete he stored under each of his wives’ cots*” and “*Esi did what her father taught her, grabbing the small knife that her mother used to slice plantains and tucking it into the cloth of her skirt*” help the reader easily infers that a people suffering from the psychological trauma must learn to use all kinds of defense tools at hands. Consequently, many parents teach their children to defend themselves in case of any attack from the slave traders. This means also that African children are taught to fight because their parents fear to see them captive.

From the forgoing, one assumes that through the *Big Man’s family and other heroic actors*, Yaa Gyasi’s empowers African characters, and more specifically the female ones with defensive revolt strategies in order to challenge the unjust colonial rule and change the statu quo. As illustrated earlier, some of them, Maame resorts to fire setting as an ideological weapon, knowing that it is with fire that slave traders built their strategies to assault, disperse the African villages and to sell them to the British.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the British colonizers' systematic oppression in Africa. In other words, it has analysed the way Yaa Gyasi portrays the shenanigans of British slave masters in Africa as contextualized in her debut novel, *Homegoing*. Drawing its theoretical underpinnings from the New Historicism and the psychological approaches, this study has highlighted some aspects of the African's victimization such as their inferiority complex towards the white man's race, the shenanigans of the British Slave Masters in Africa and the subsequent psychological trauma this systematic oppression on Africans. The exploration of the analyzed novel evidences the British cruelty over Blacks who are reduced to nothingness but animals because of their skin colour viewed as an abomination in the eyes of the British colonizers. The narrator's use of the phrase "*Beasts. Monkeys and chimpanzees*" attests of the British inhuman behaviour who do not consider the colonized people as human beings, but as animals like apes living in the forest. If the British considers a black man as an animal living in the jungle, this also means that for colonizers, the African continent is a kind of jungle where dwell apes like chimpanzees, monkeys and gorillas. This means that for the British, African people have inferior mentality. Their thoughts are similar to that of animals and they are unable to have coherent thoughts like the white people. This is the reason why they compare African people to apes. The fact of considering Africans human as beasts shows how Africans are victims of racism practiced by the British colonizers who, despite the fact they are foreigners in the African continent, they do not hesitate to mistreat them in their own land. In the same context, the authoress reveals that African people are not only victims of colonizers' insults. They are also arbitrary arrested and their lives in the dungeon are similar to that of an animal in the cage because they are submitted to a severe treatment. This is proved in the novel through the characters Esi and Tansi, who are exposed to a severe torture and famine in the dungeon by the British. They are exposed to a severe torture by being most of the time beaten, cursed. They eat according to the rhythm imposed by the British. Africans cease to be masters of their own live, their lives do not belong to them. All things considered, Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* can be read as an historical novel which bringing the reader back to Africans' experience of rejection and victimization due to the colour of their skin and their origins in their own land by the British colonizers. Hence, this study has Surreptitiously assumed that the Ghanaian novelist promotes health and healing for Africans, unveiling the historical and psychological antecedents of a harsh oppression they had been victims of, the aftermaths of which ineradicably shaped their psyche, and they are still struggling to get rig off.

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