

**The Chronotopic Image of the Cape Coast Castle in
Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing***

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Abstract:

This research paper explores the inseparability of time and space in relation to 300 years of slave trade and slavery in America fictionalized in *Homegoing* (2016), by the Ghanaian American novelist Yaa Gyasi. Set within the context of eighteenth-century Ghana throughout present-day America, the novel aims at investigating how the American novelist Yaa Gyasi in her novel *Homegoing* (2016) brings both time and space together into one literary crucible through holding a historical panorama that spans about 300 years of slave trade, colonialism in Africa, and slavery in America. All events in the novel take place in The Cape Coast Castle, a real place which was used as a terminal for exporting slaves from Ghana in Africa to America. The Castle narrates a long history of pain, brutality and suffering of the colonized Africans along with the inhumane practices of the British colonizers. This is done with Bakhtin's 'chronotope' forming a pivotal point of reference, serving as a tool to analyze how the Cape Coast Castle, representing place, is held to denote time represented in the history of slavery and colonialism. Held in Bakhtin's chronotope is the assumption that there is an intrinsic relationship between time and place; something that comes clear in the portrayal of the Castle in the novel. As time changes in the novel, the perception of The Cape Coast Castle changes, as it shifts from being a place of practicing oppression and degradation to a place that documents for such practices not only to the African people, but also to the whole world. Inside the castle is held a dialogue between the past in which the African people were unwillingly dragged backwards, the present where they are now facing their true identity, and the future where they will be evolving and more powerfully growing more powerful in reconstructing their countries. They will go to combine the place they are in with the place they originally come from to create the 'third place' for a new identity.

Key Words:

Bakhtin's Chronotope- *Homegoing*- Cape Coast Castle- African slavery- Third place

الصورة الكرونوتوبية (الزماكانية) في رواية الذهاب الى الوطن للكاتبة يا جياسي

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يهدف البحث إلى التحقيق في كيفية قيام الروائية الأمريكية يا جياسي في روايتها الذهاب للوطن Homegoing (2016) بجمع كل من الزمان والمكان معًا في بوتقة أدبية واحدة من خلال إقامة بانوراما تاريخية تمتد لحوالي 300 عام من تجارة الرقيق ، والاستعمار في إفريقيا ، والعبودية في أمريكا. تتبع جميع الأحداث في الرواية من قلعة كيب كوست ، وهي مكان حقيقي كان يستخدم كمحطة لتصدير العبيد من غانا في إفريقيا إلى أمريكا. يتتبع البحث كيف قدمت الكاتبة القلعة لتكون مكانًا يروي التاريخ ، ويقف على مر العصور ليكون صرحًا لمعاناة الأفارقة المستعمرين والممارسات اللاإنسانية للمستعمرين البريطانيين. هنا ، يشكل مصطلح "الكرونوتوب" (الزماكانية) لبأختين نقطة مرجعية محورية ، حيث يخدم كأداة لتحليل كيفية تقديم قلعة كيب كوست ، التي تمثل المكان ، للإشارة إلى الوقت الذي يمثله تاريخ العبودية والاستعمار. في كرونوتوب بأختين هناك افتراض بأن هناك علاقة جوهرية بين الزمان والمكان؛ الفكرة التي تنتضح في تصوير القلعة في الرواية. مع تغير الوقت في الرواية ، يتغير مفهوم قلعة كيب كوست ، حيث تتحول من مكان لممارسة الاضطهاد والانحطاط إلى مكان يوثق لمثل هذه الممارسات ليس فقط للشعب الأفريقي ، ولكن للعالم اجمع. داخل القلعة يقام حوار بين الماضي حيث تم جر الأفارقة إلى الوراء عن قصد ، والحاضر حيث يواجهون الآن هويتهم الحقيقية ، والمستقبل حيث سيتطورون ويزدادون قوة في إعادة بناء بلدانهم عن طريق خلقهم للمكان الثالث الذي يناسبهم عندما يذهبون لوطنهم الام و يخلقون هويتهم الجديدة.

كلمات مفتاحية:

كرونوتوب بأختين- الذهاب الى الوطن- قلعة كيب كوست-العبودية في افريقيا- المكان الثالث

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NOTHING COULD be simpler:
History simplified as a castle
The wind stands mouthing
Nothing can be heard
Except the rainroar of the past
KWADWO OroKu-AGYEMAN--- "Eclipse"

Slavery has been a recurrent topic in African American literature, and it occupies one distinct trajectory in American literature since there are a plethora of resources and reference books written by many freed slaves and their descendants. However, the subject has not taken its due right in West African literature, as the link seems missing between the far past and the present. The twin part of the slavery process back in Africa i.e. the trans-slave trade, needs to be spoken out since "Africa Itself becomes doggedly silent on the issue of slavery" (Argenti 33). However, The Continental African scholars preferred silence than narration. Actually, African critics have expressed this fact and call for the necessity of knocking hard on the issue. One of those critics is Achille Mbembe who states that "there is a shadowy zone that conceals a deep silence: the silence of guilt and the refusal of Africans to face up to the troubling aspect of the crime that directly engages their own responsibility" (20). Consequently, the issue of slavery was kept hidden deep into their collective consciousness. Unlike them are the African Americans who sought vividly to bring forth all the oral tradition and language remains that kept them tied to a past they do not know. Actually, they do not feel the shame and guilt of the Africans just because they hold no responsibility for what happened to themselves in the first place.

Even slave narrative in American literature, as a literary genre, was restricted to male authors, like Olaudah Equiano in his *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano Or Gustavus Vassa the African* (1789). The only famous female accounts among them were Mary Prince's *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave* (1831) and Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861). Still, the painful experiences of the female in all these works are faintly portrayed in comparison to those presented by Yaa Gyasi in *Homegoing*. Actually,

“they did not (like Homegoing does) focalize such experiences as key sites to conceptualize the impact of slavery on black identity (re)formation.” (N. Motahane 5). Yaa Gyasi, on the other hand, traces such experiences from the very beginning, from the moment of capture till modern today grandchildren are brought into the scene. Here springs the significance of *Homegoing* as a novel which brings forth what has been restricted for a long period of time to American literature i.e., slavery. Yaa Gyasi complements what the African American female writers Toni Morrison, Octavia Butler and Alice Walker introduced to the world by getting the scene farther into the African past, language and tradition. With Yaa Gyasi in *Homegoing*, “an African memory is emerging.” (Goyal 50)

Homegoing is a multi-generational African American novel written by the African American female novelist Yaa Gyasi in 2016, where time and place are inseparably connected to create a spatio-temporal paradigm of historical representation of colonialism, on the one hand, and of slavery, on the other. It works on two spatial plateaus; the first one is Ghana in Africa and the second is America. The novel covers a lot of places and time periods, yet there is one place that remains in the center of all actions i.e. The Cape Coast Castle, which is a great white fort built by the white traders on the coast of West Africa. It was originally built to be a trade port for timber and gold before it came to be one of “vivid monuments to the transatlantic slave trade as along the coast of Ghana, where about sixty forts were built, that were used in the trans- Atlantic slave trade” (W. St Clair 1). Once held as the headquarters of that trade in Africa, the Cape Coast Castle is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site with a museum inside. For that reason, being a point of intersection linking place to time and vice versa, *Homegoing* is a literary work that proves typical for Bakhtin’s chronotope to apply since the “chronotope is what determines the unity of every motif and idea in a text, as well as determining the logic by which these images unfold.” (M. Hoy 779). The chronotope speaks of how time goes on relatively to change how people perceive the world and their places in it.

Chronotope is Bakhtin’s term for how time and place are both tied together in a complementary relationship in which each supplements the other’s meaning and identity. He coined the term to refer to the “intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature” (M. Bakhtin 44). In his essay “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel. Notes toward a Historical Poetics”, the third essay in *Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin states what he means by the literary chronotope as he writes, “The chronotope in literature has an

intrinsic generic significance. It can even be said that it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions, for in literature the primary category in the chronotope is time.” (Bakhtin 44). The implication that lies in the core of chronotope is that a certain action is tied to the moment in which it happens, the moment before it and the moment after it. Maybe, this action would not have occurred if it had not been connected to that moment in particular. Consequently, this moment is inevitably part of the structural identity of the action itself. For Bakhtin, narrative forms are not only aesthetic production, but they are mainly what Morson calls "profound forms of thinking"(1077). For that reason, the narrative changes by changing how time is perceived and relocated in space.

Bakhtin admits that his ‘chronotope’ was influenced by both Immanuel Kant and Elbert Einstein. Like Kant, who believed that space and time are inseparable forms of human cognition, Bakhtin sees them as “forms of the most immediate reality” (Bakhtin 85), and not just abstract ideas. Bakhtin re-contextualizes Einstein’s theory of relativity, that is concerned with the physical relationship between space and time, to embody that relationship in fictional literary worlds where chronology, in both cases, cannot be separated from actions and vice versa. Therefore, “the relation of ‘chronotope’ to Einsteinian ‘time-space’ is something weaker than identity, but stronger than mere metaphor or analogy” (Morson and Emerson 367). Bakhtin’s chronotope, then, deals with how people’s considerations of time form their existence and shape their life vision. These visions are converted to narrative forms that show how the latter would “reconstruct experience, how characters' temporality shapes their perceptions, how multiple senses of time can be at play in a single text, and how the process of reading reshapes texts.” (Bakhtin 44). Bakhtin deals with the chronotope as a metaphor that denotes such a relationship of “inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space)” (44). In other words, place and time are held in a mutual relationship in which place is occupied by time and time is endorsed by place. Without time, place would not find these actions and events that give it its own distinctive identity, and on the other hand, time would not find a stage to act on and engrave its existence even after it passes away.

For Bakhtin, it is the chronotope that imposes on people the perspective form which they see the world outside as well as the world that lies inside themselves since it, “as a formally constitutive category determines to a significant degree the image of man in literature as well. The image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic.” (Bakhtin 44)

because it is time that determines his experiences in the world and changes his way of perceiving his own self-image. Man holds in himself the place which is formulated and shaped by time to become himself a site of spacio-temporal intersection. Actually, it is necessary here to explain that the function of time in the novel exceeds that of just determining a setting towards the idea of creating meaning. This brings in the idea of multiple chronotopes which means that time is not only limited to a certain historical period of time, but it extends to cover the different chronotopes that the text itself stimulates as it initiates a dialogue between different representation of time that may change each time the text is read. Here Bakhtin explains,

Chronotopes are mutually inclusive, they co-exist, they may be interwoven with, replace or oppose one another, contradict one another or find themselves in ever more complex interrelationships.... The general characteristic of these interactions is that they are dialogical (in the broadest use of the word)... (this dialogue) enters the world of the author, of the performer, and the world of the listeners and readers. And all these worlds are chronotopic as well. (252)

In brief, it is this dialogue that creates meaning for literary texts and makes a representation possible.

In the "Concluding Remarks", which Bakhtin added in 1973 as a tenth chapter, he lists the main common features of chronotopes and distributes them on four different levels: (1) they have narrative, plot-generating significance; (2) they have representational significance; (3) they "provide the basis for distinguishing generic types"; and (4) they have semantic significance (Bakhtin 250-1). He adds that, "It is precisely the chronotope that provides the ground essential for the showing forth, the representability of events. . . All the novel's abstract elements-philosophical and social generalizations, ideas, analyses of cause and effect-gravitate toward the chronotope and through it take on flesh and blood, permitting the imagining power of art to do its work. Such is the representational significance of the chronotope. Bakhtin 250). However, the function of the chronotope is not primarily to denote a representation as much as it creates it, for he believes that "The chronotope is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied" (Bakhtin 250). The chronotope make representation possible uttering out what cannot be directly said, and consequently, it is typical to apply when it comes to ethnic minority works.

Together, colonialism and slavery take the reader chronologically along three hundred years of suffering in *Homegoing* which tells the story

of two half-sisters Effia and Esi in the eighteenth-century colonized Ghana. The two sisters, who are separated by circumstances associated with colonialism and slavery, do not know each other. One of them, Effia, is married to an English man in the Cape Coast Castle, and the other, Esi, is destined to live and belong to another tribe. Esi is once kidnapped in one tribal raid and brought to be imprisoned for a period of time in the Castle's dungeon till delivered and shipped to America within the Gold Coast colonized activity of slave trade. Thus, along the novel, there are two main threads that run concomitantly along the thread of place from Ghana to America and vice versa, and along the time period of 300 years through narrating the lives of the descendants of Effia in Ghana, and Esi's in America. The two lines finally meet at the end of the novel when Marjorie, the youngest granddaughter of Effia, whose father travels to America to study and gets away from the shame of his insane mother, takes Marcus, the grandson of Esi, whose grandfather H was a coal mine worker in America, back to Africa. There, both complement the missing part of their identities. Consequently, the novel is "a fascinating site to encounter narrative dramatizations of time and space vis-à-vis the historical evolutionary trajectory of the African and African American identities." (N. Motahane 4), epitomized in its characters, both who left for America or who stayed in Africa.

Travelling through different places from the Gold Coast of Africa to the cotton plantations in Mississippi; from the Fanteland and Asanteland in Africa to the coal mines in America, Yaa Gyasi has spined an intricate canvas of places through which she narrates a long period of time. This tapestry of places enriches the novel because new "places and new place identities demand certain forms of adaptations that often involve modifications in one's sense and notion of place and its significance in shaping agential capacity for self-identification." (N. Motahane 3). However, there is one spatial-temporal center of equilibrium in *Homegoing* i.e. The Cape Coast Castle. It is first introduced in the novel as the place "The white men live in.... There, they trade goods with our people." (Gyasi 12). It is a lifeless entity that stands high on a rock, a building that used to absorb the lives of Africans to remain a life of its own. It branches into many places, actions and characters that all speak out through its silent walls. It serves as a "sign both of the triumph of others over us and of our seemingly rootless grief: rootless because we are so silent. But the world does not listen to silence." (Agyemang 27).

Evolving from the Cape Coast Castle, all events in *Homegoing* portrays the main themes of the African American experience with an

extra flavor that comes from delving deep into the African history of colonialization and slave trade. European colonialization is brought directly into the novel to branch into shameful trade of slaves in Africa, and the African American suffering in America. Along the novel's fourteen chapters, there are representative narrators of the seven generations for each of the two half-sisters. The author artistically tackles through them the theme of identity conflict when a person finds himself imprisoned in one place and feels belonging to another. Quey, the first-generation representative being the son of Effia and her English husband James Collins, is trapped in such a feeling. He spends his life suffering from his biracial personality as he is sent to be educated in England where "he'd gotten to see the way black people lived in white countries, Indians and Africans who were packed twenty or more to a room, who ate the slop the pigs left behind, who coughed and coughed and coughed endlessly, all together, a symphony of sickness." (Gyasi 61). He returns to the Cape Coast Castle to join his father in his slave trade, goes older and gives his son, James, the key to the same path i.e. slave trade. However, James refuses and chooses a completely different future through pretending to be dead in an accident to go and marry the girl he loves from another tribe with which his family has problems. Through alternating stories, Gyasi succeeded in revealing the fact that although the people who remained in Africa did not become slaves themselves, their lives in Ghana were not much better as the whites keep their hands clean while [they] work" (Gyasi 61). They were affected by slave trade in a relatively negative way. When he was once supervising the Fante boys shuttling slaves to the Castle, Quey smelled the disgusting smell "of shit, but fear was one smell that would stand out forever. It curled his nose and brought tears to his eyes, but he had learned long ago how to keep himself from crying." (Gyasi 61). To cry, for him, is to surrender to the shame he feels and internalizes, being a member of the process undergoing in the Castle.

Again, the theme of immigration is wonderfully merged into the fabric of the novel bringing *Homegoing* into the genre of immigration literature which flourished as a prominent avenue in American literature in the twentieth century with Anzia Yizierska's *Bread Givers* (1925), Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906), and Philip Roth's *Goodbye, Columbus* (1959), dealing with white ethnics. This was followed in the middle of the twentieth century by works that focused on the same idea, but from the vantage point of people of color as Paule Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brownstone* (1959), and extended to include works by non-western writers such as Amy Tan's *Joy Luck Club* (1989) and Sandra Cisneros's

House on Mango Street (1984). From Ghana to America, and then back to Ghana, the journey in *Homegoing* spans many generations and many events that come from and get back to The Cape Coast Castle.

This theme is epitomized in *Homegoing* in Marjorie, one of the central characters, who emigrates from Ghana to the United States as a young girl and fights to get a merge between her African identity and her discovered ethnic identity. She refuses to be dealt with as a tourist when she travels to Ghana and finds the taxi-driver speaking to her in English trying to get her on a tour. She represents those people who know that coming “to US society is marked by learning how to balance the pre-migration ethnic identities ... with the post-migration racial identification that they are assigned, especially since that racial identification has been both historically and contemporarily marginalized in the US racial structure. African immigrants mediate this struggle by occupying the status of an ethnicized Other.” (A. Landry 3). Because their immigration was voluntary, they are given an extra otherness. This comes clear when Marjorie engages in a relationship with Graham, a German international student. She feels he is like her, an outsider, but she knows, on the long run, that he is not. Graham chooses to go on a relationship with a white girl, as if surrendering to the option that would keep the racial hierarchy safe and intact. They do not even speak about this or discuss why they broke because this is one of the unspoken about issues in America. They have to pretend that everything is fine and that things happen unnoticed. ‘Marjorie belongs to people who are “African Americans’ not only because they are African descendants born in America but also in the sense that their lives suffer from prejudices shaped by the inherited inferiorization of the place where their kind originate – Africa.” (N. Motahane 4).

Marjorie faces difficulty in dealing with other Blacks. At school, one of her female mates, Tisha, tells her, “You sound like a white girl. White girl. White girl. White girl.” They kept chanting, and it was all Marjorie could do to keep from crying.” (Gyasi 245). She knows that back in Ghana, children are used to shout and laugh at white people, calling them “Obroni! Obroni!” (245), She feels that she does not belong in America even if there are other Blacks around. She has a British accent that makes her different from her colleagues in a way that deepens in her that “In Ghana you could only be what you were, what your skin announced to the world.” (Gyasi 246). For that reason, her mind always resorts to Ghana when she faces a problem making comparisons or searching for an explanation. She refuses this social uniform of blackness that the American society insists that African Americans should wear. In

an event called 'The Waters We Wade In', held in her school after the Black History Month had passed, Marjorie refuses to be regarded Black in such a pre-determined manner. For her, not all Blacks are African Americans. When Mrs. Pinkston asks her to "Talk about what being African American means" to her, Marjorie answers, "But I'm not African American," (249). At that moment, she clings to her Ghanaian sphere of knowledge to explain "that at home, they had a different word for African Americans. Akata. That akata people were different from Ghanaians, too long gone from the mother continent to continue calling it the mother continent. She wanted to tell Mrs. Pinkston that she could feel herself being pulled away too, almost akata, too long gone from Ghana to be Ghanaian." (249). Marjorie does not want to be an 'akata' because this means that she surrenders and gives up her own history and true identity. She is not African American; she is not an 'akata', but she is a Ghanaian.

In an attempt to get Marjorie into the circle of conformity, Mrs. Pinkston, tries to convince her that being black in America is directly proportional to the sense of degradation and inferiority, no matter from where people had originally come or why they came in the first place. It does not matter whether such black people came involuntarily as slaves, or they came to study and work. She tells Marjorie, "In this country, it doesn't matter where you came from first to the white people running things. You're here now, and here black is black is black." (249). The teacher goes and prepares two cups of coffee, of which Marjorie finds hers very bitter as it "clung to the back of her throat, like it couldn't decide whether it wanted to enter her body or be breathed out of her mouth." (249), unlike her teacher's coffee. Marjorie does not like the coffee as she finds her black face mirrored in its color. The coffee becomes a reminder of a truth she finds problematic to adapt with, i.e., the split of her people's identity in America into two noncomplementary parts, the American and the Ghanaian.

This feeling of fragmentation is extensively portrayed in Gyasi's later novel *The Transcendent Kingdom* (2020), which deals with the life of the Ghanaian twenty-eight-year-old girl, Gift, in America. When one reads *Transcendent Kingdom*, s/he feels that Gyasi has clicked on Marjorie's life and maximized it to introduce the full dilemma through the life of Gift. Gift is a neuroscientist PhD student whose parents had immigrated from Ghana to America many years ago before her birth, to give her brother, Nana, a better chance for living. Gift, like Marjorie, does not know why she is inferior. She tries to keep a prestigious self - image in front of her fellow students, saying that her grandfather was a warrior and a lion tamer, and that she is a princess. Only then, one of her colleagues,

Geoffrey, answers, “Black people can’t be princesses.” (Gyassi, *Transcendent* 28). However, unlike *Homegoing*, which is full of characters, *Transcendent Kingdom* breaks the web of characters to focus only on Gift. The father returns to Ghana for good, the brother dies of addiction and the mother suffers from recurrent sates of depression that leaves her “coloniz[ing] that bed like a virus” ((Gyassi, *Transcendent* 10). The trauma crystalized in *Transcendent Kingdom* was skipped powerfully by Marjorie and Marcus when they go back to Ghana.

Homegoing ends in a master scene that wraps the two parts of the novel together. Marjorie and Marcus are visiting the Cape Coast Castle, a place that looks shiny white from the outside, but from the inside, the “dirty skeleton of a long-past shame that held the place together began to show itself in blackening concrete, rusty-hinged doors” (Gyasi 271). They get into the Castle with a guide to show and explain more about the Castle now being a tourist site. Actually, in their return to Ghana, there is a reference to the Joseph Project, that initiated in 2006, aiming at getting the Africans in the diaspora connected to Ghana. The program was criticized because there are found a lot of private memorials that are kept in the minds and hearts of people than the public memorials that it aims people to visit. Okudzeto calls for family reunions for people to know more about their pasts from real witnesses as “the journey home need not only be spiritual and educational” (S. Okudzeto 339). For that reason, Marjorie and Marcus leaves the Castle and directs to the coast where Marjorie used to come with her grandmother “since memory requires the active performance of recall; without this, an archive is static and encoded” (Okudzeto *Ghana Must Go* 53). In the water of the ocean, they wade as if they were presenting a performance for the poem Marjorie once read in the school event, ‘The Water We Wade In’. the poem reads, “Split the Castle open, \find me, find you. \We, two, felt sand, \wind, air. One felt whip. Whipped, \once shipped. We, two, black. \Me, you. \One grew from \cocoa’s soil, birthed from nut, \skin uncut, still bleeding. \We, two, wade. \The waters seem different \but are same. \Our same. Sister skin. \Who knew? Not me. Not you.” (Gyasi 257). It is only in the Castle that they can find their true selves and unite. It happens only in the Castle because it holds the seeds of their national and collective identity as Africans. They are different because one of them is Marcus, the descendant of Esi, who was shipped, and the other is Marjorie, the descendant of Effia, who remained in Africa but suffered the split. Both are Black Africans and are “the same”.

Marjorie gives her stone necklace to Marcus, her African American friend who is ironically her distant cousin, being both descendants of the

two half-sisters that the novel starts with, Effia and Esi. This act comes to show how Marjorie now feels safe enough to give up the physical ownership of the stone to Marcus who needs it more in order to be able to attain the self-contained sense of belonging she herself has reached. Marjorie does not need to feel connected to her home anymore because she is already connected. In America, the necklace has been her safe token that creates for her a comfort zone of connectedness and belonging as it reminds her of home back in Ghana. Now that the memories become part of her identity and self-image, she does not need the external physical embodiment symbolized in the stone and the necklace. However, she never gives up her African-ness, as she keeps her family heirloom necklace that was passed down to her through her family. Marjorie succeeds in coming to keep a safe bridge between her black and African identities, as she is finally able to mediate her Blackness and African-ness when she chooses to study African American literature in her graduate school. This act, on Marjorie's part, is artistically employed in the novel to show "how the struggle between pre-migration ethnic identity and post-migration racial identity provides the space for African immigrants to forge new ways to 'do' Blackness." (Landry 19). Without this struggle, the big picture about their being black would be missing. They are to know that they are black in a very special way that the blacks in Africa never knew, and the blacks exported to America never experienced.

Again, Marcus's acceptance of the necklace illustrates his willingness to embrace the collective black identity. The stone Marjorie gives him finds its half in him; in his blood; in his flesh because in the far past, his great grandmother Esi swallowed her own similar stone when she feared it would be taken by the Whites back in the Cape Coast Castle. Before reaching her stomach, the stone rested in her genes and moved on to her children and her grandchildren. When she was kidnapped, Esi kept her stone safe in her wrapper, but when she was smacked on the face by a white soldier in the Castle, the stone fell "and she found it there, on the ground. She cried even harder, trying to distract them now. Then she laid her head against the smooth black stone. The coolness of it soothed her face. And when the men had finally turned their backs and left her there, forgetting for a moment to take off her wrapper, Esi took the stone from against her cheek and swallowed it." (Gyasi 47). The stone here is to symbolize the past. In Marcus is the past implanted and shows physically clear in the color of his black skin.

In the Cape Coast Castle, Gyasi portrays and traces the African-European hierarchical co-existence in the very architecture of the building itself. The Castle is divided into two parts: the underground dungeon

which is presented as a horrible space of dehumanization, death, and blackness, on the one hand, and the European living quarters where whiteness is in full reign, on the other hand. Still, some African girls are brought into this superior part to be wives to the white masters of the Castle, who would change their names to be able to call them in English. These girls come to bear part of the guilt since they know what goes on down in the dungeons of the Castle, but they keep silent because “No one ever mentioned the dungeons” (Gyasi 27). Effia’s father once tells her, that there are some white men who come to the village to take their girls as wives, but he has a higher plan for her by marrying her to a man from the village. However, Effia marries a white master, and is transferred to the Castle and her father feels it that “that the premonition of the dissolution and destruction of the family lineage... would begin here, with his daughter and the white man.” (Gyasi 21). In her first night in the Castle, Effia “felt a breeze hit her feet from small holes in the ground. “What’s below?” she asked James, and the mangled Fante word that came back to her was “cargo.” Then, carried up with the breeze, came a faint crying sound. So faint, Effia thought she was imagining it until she lowered herself down, rested her ear against the grate.” (Gyasi 21). When she realizes what is happening, she cries and asks her husband to take her back home, but she changes her mind when he answers her that her “home is no better” (22). The people back in her village help the British in their slave trade, so they are no better. On the contrary, her villagers are much worse because they betray their own people.

The Castle serves, along the novel, as a point of encounter of all what is European with all what is African in Ghana; and it is also a point of departure where African slaves leave forever, and African traders surrender to their greed getting them to load a part of their national identity. However, the Castle is also a place of terror for the Whites who feel the guilt but cannot speak it out. One of the soldiers who are dealing with the slave women kept in the dungeon once looks at Esi “like her body was his shame.” (Gyasi 49). Within the framework of such a chronotopic representation, the Castle ranges into the past and stands in the present as a landmark of atrocities much blacker than the skin of their victims. In an indicative scene, an African woman speaks of her white husband who “comes up from the dungeons stinking like a dying animal... smelling like feces and rot and looking at [her] like he has seen a million ghosts, and he cannot tell if [she is] one of them or not” (Gyasi 28). Effia’s husband never speaks with her about the slaves he is responsible for transacting, “but he spoke to her often about beasts. That was what the Asantes trafficked most Beasts. Monkeys and

chimpanzees, even a few leopards “(Gyasi 28). All this shows how the whites themselves were metaphorically imprisoned in the Castle as if imprisoned in their own fear and guilt.

Cape Coast Castle is a place in which time is bred and grows to devour events and characters and evolve victorious by the end of the novel untouched and intact. The past lies in Cape Coast Castle inhabiting with all shadows of shame and pain. It is typically the spirit that Andrew Apter speaks of when he writes, “THERE IS A SPIRIT IN THE DUNGEON of Cape Coast Castle who greets visitors to what is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site commemorating four centuries of Atlantic slavery and the European presence in West Africa” (1). In his referential article “Cape Coast Castle: The Edifice and the Metaphor”, Kw Adwo Opoku-Agyemang explains the power of the Castle, saying that it belongs to a special world, “the world before naming, form or kinship. Knotty, full of discrepancies and confused codes, it rules by silence. The power of the Castle is the power of silence; silence as the seduction and betrayal of power.” (23). The Castle is full of wounds and scars that still exist and will always remain an edifice of the most horrible and painful crime that the world has ever witnessed i.e. slavery. The Castle stands to witness “straight out to the sea. Cargo ships like black specks of dust in the blue, wet eye of the Atlantic floated so far out that it was difficult to tell how far away from the Castle the ships actually were. Some were maybe three days away, others merely an hour” (Gyasi 22).

Cape Coast Castle is introduced in *Homegoing* as a metaphor of many African countries in general and Ghana, in particular; Ghana ‘the victim society’, which was made to lose a great number of its inhabitants in two ways. The first way was through the tribal raids during which a lot were killed. The second way was through the number of Africans held as slaves and delivered to America through the gateways of the Cape Coast Castle. In addition, they were driven off their own economic resources that were usurped by the European countries. People in Africa were hurt and made to hurt themselves. “Gibberish replaced the wise and healing word, and men talked more to gods than to each other. Out of sheer fear, the industry of growth became the invention of gods and protective amulets. There is no point in denying the fact: the place so savaged becomes a place of savages; it becomes the victim society.” (Agyemang 25). Magic acts as a tool of uttering out oppression and victimization, and lack of communication.

When Effia marries and moves to the Cape Coast Castle to be one of its inhabitants, her husband, James, warns her never to practice any black magic or ‘voodoo’ there because “It’s not Christian.” (Gyasi 26).

Effia tells that her white husband had always spoken about the “voodoo”, which “he thought all Africans participated in” (Gyasi 26). She then asks why the color black is given as an attribute to magic though she knows a witch who “had a son. She’d sung lullabies to him at night and held his hands and kept him fed, same as anyone else. There was nothing dark about her.” (Gyasi 26). The whites, represented in James and his men in the Castle, tried to defame the original African inhabitants in order to rule them. The Cape Coast Castle itself stands powerfully, along ages, to remind the world of what harm the European British colonial tendencies have left on Africa through slave trade. With the coming of the British people to Africa, step by step the sparks of life and education were first turned down and then turned off shocking all facets of civilization with the advent of slave trade as a flourishing business. At that moment, the Africans themselves surrendered and “the scientific knowledge hid its head in the folds of magic; and it died there from lack of air, from the fear of openly observing and testifying to the fact and glory of life.” (Agyemang 25). People found themselves unable to face and explain what happened to them, so they retained magic and exotic practices to adapt and get used to what became inexpressible and unspeakable.

The Castle is both haunted by and is haunting memory. It is haunted by the memory of all the dead bodies that furnished it while being stored to be delivered onto the ships; and is haunting for all the guilty people who participated and shared the experience. Here, memory is brought alongside all the other themes in *Homegoing* to resonate pain. On her fifteenth birthday, Esi, tries to escape her miserable state in the Castle by remembering her fourteenth birthday back at home when she used to receive many presents for her celebration. However, by trying to remember “she did not expect joy. Hell was a place of remembering, each beautiful moment passed through the mind’s eye until it fell to the ground like a rotten mango, perfectly useless, uselessly perfect.” (Gyasi 31). For Esi, her life became a shadow between two stations: what she used to be before the Castle, and what she has been after getting into the Castle. From now on, memory is held back and forgetting is kept forth as a defense mechanism that aims at survival.

The people taken out to the Castle, to be delivered to America, leave in their people’s hearts a pain that is unhealed. The kidnapped Africans “left behind them graves without bodies in the collective memory of surviving kinsfolk.” (Agyemang 26). This pain is deepened and never wakened by the passage of time. This left agony did not shape the lives of mothers and fathers only; not families; not villages, not countries; but it colored the lives of people in a whole continent. It was

the agony of an unspeakable fear that kept growing till it absorbed life. This calls back Olaudah Equiano, the eighteenth-century African abolitionist, who tells in *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789) how he was kidnapped when he was 11 together with his sister from their Igbo tribe in Nigeria while their parents were away from home, and they were never to see them again. He narrates how being separated from each other was even harder than being kidnapped, saying, “we were soon deprived of even the small comfort of weeping together. The next day proved a day of greater sorrow than I had yet experienced; for my sister and I were then separated, while we lay clasped in each other’s arms.” (51). Memory here drags nothing but pain, and it is the Castle that stands there lurking as the darkest memory.

When the pain exceeds, forgetting comes as a solution for people who have nothing at hand but to surrender. They try to forget, but “when it is forgotten or its lessons are ignored, history has a way of erupting or, with calculated cruelty (as if it had a mind all of its own), it visits in dribblets until it forms a slow flood and sweeps everything away in a sea of madness.” (Agyemang 27). This madness is embodied in *Homegoing* in the character of Crazy Woman, Marjorie’s grandmother. The Crazy Woman is another name for Akua, the woman who is destined to see dreams, to accompany the firewoman and to be accused later with setting fire in her house, killing her own children. Akua, is Effia’s descendant who is linked unwillingly to the Cape Coast Castle, where her father was born. She spends her life dreaming of going back to the Castle. She tells Marjorie, in her final conversation with her,

In my dreams I kept seeing this castle, but I did not know why. One day, I came to these waters and I could feel the spirits of our ancestors calling to me. Some were free, and they spoke to me from the sand, but some others were trapped deep, deep, deep in the water so that I had to wade out to hear their voices. I waded out so far, the water almost took me down to meet those spirits that were trapped so deep in the sea that they would never be free. When they were living they had not known where they came from, and so dead, they did not know how to get to dry land. I put you in here so that if your spirit ever wandered, you would know where home was. (Gyasi 244)

The water that Akua, now known as the Old Lady, came to is the water that bore her kinsmen and fellow Africans; it is the same water in which many were thrown dead during the journey of the Middle Passage to America. The souls that were free are those kidnapped Africans who were

translocated and sold to suffer. Meanwhile, they had a thread to tie them up to the land of their ancestors. The trapped souls, on the other hand, are those who do not find a place to belong to; those who lost the sense of their African identity and are trying to plant themselves in a land that does not embrace their seeds. In the same water is Marjorie and Marcus driven by Gyasi to close up the novel with an invitation for embracing one's true and authentic self.

In Ghana, the Fante and Asante tribes lose their essence of life when they willingly get themselves into the business of slave trade. When Effia goes back to her village after she had married and gone to the Castle, she felt that the “colors of the treetop canopies seemed to have dulled, their vibrant browns and greens now muted. The sounds seemed different too. Everything that once rustled now stood still.” (Gyasi 29). After Abeeku's business of slave trade flourished there, people now are controlled by their leaders to keep silent and go on with their life. They cannot do more than preserve necessities of life for survival. All this takes out life of people and places and leaves Africa contaminated and pathogenic. Agyemang expresses this when he writes, “with an inherited trauma that is passed on from one generation to another. Even after independence and ‘freedom’, the physical pathogenic experience has led to an internal hidden contamination of the soul that keeps it lingering behind. The germs are still implanted into the speaking walls of the Cape Coast Castle.” (27).

The open-endedness of the novel complements the big picture of Gyasi as it implies a call for all Africans in the far land to come back and try, without any imposed utopian vision or idealistic prophecy. Both Marjorie and Marcus gets into the dungeons of the Castle, but emerge triumphantly from the scary door: “It was a wooden door painted black. Above it, there was a sign that read Door of No Return....This door leads out to the beach, where ships waited to take [slaves] away.” They got out, but returned, unlike their ancestors, who never came back. The reader ends the novel with Marjori and Marcus wading the water of the ocean; wading the water of history, with the Cape Coast Castle lying still in the background “to keep the story of slavery and the Slave Trade open-ended and to avoid closure; to clear the way to debate and to perpetually initiate rather than conclude the argument so that every new generation may visit it to quarry its lessons.” (Agyemang 28). It is a story that cannot be simply summed up or reviewed. Still, the water needs to be waded in order to set free more voices and more experiences. Again, the title of the novel is literally indicative of the same meaning. It is not homecoming; it is still home going because for many it has never literally been.

Speaking about the spatio-temporal dimension in *Homegoing*, one could not do without a reference to Bhabha's 'third place' in his *Location of Culture* to mean an in-between state that "does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The past-present becomes part of necessity, not the nostalgia, of living. (p. 7). This place should not be confused with an attempt to pay tribute for a lost past or to flatter a refusing present. It is a place designed by a necessity to find one's self in a shattered world of differences. Actually, it works on defacing the colonial authority by setting an "in-between space of cultural negotiation, which produces hybridity. This hybridity undermines the colonial discourse of essentialist identity on the basis of the binary opposition of the colonizer and the colonized, or the East and the West. Such subversion of colonial enterprises may help for the psychological and spiritual liberation" (N. Bhandari 179). It is a place of getting the past and the present together for a better future self -image. In an interview, Gyasi identifies herself with this 'third place' when she speaks of her legacy of slavery:

And so I think I was kind of constantly interacting, I guess, with really what the legacy of slavery is. You know, coming from a country, Ghana, that had a role in slavery, and then ending up in a place where slavery is still so strongly felt institutionally, as racism is still so strongly felt. The irony of that wasn't lost on me. And I think, had I not grown up in Alabama, I don't know that I would have ever written this book. (NPR, 2016).

Here, Gyasi is putting into words her sense of pride in and gratitude for her origin, being a girl who grew in Alabama, a southern USA state that was once famous for being a slave auction, and who has familial roots going deep into Ghana, an African country that helped in flourishing the trade of slaves to America. The mix produced a third place from where she has succeeded in grasping the sense of African-ness in her American-ness. It is the place from which she was able herself to be one of the "free spirits" Crazy Woman once tells Marjorie about.

In the Cape Coast Castle, like "In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope" (Bakhtin 44). The fictional world, thus, cannot be held intact without the factors of time and

space being braided together so as to give a setting without which the literary world, with all its actions, events and characters cannot exist. “Bakhtin’s basic assumption is the idea that narrative texts are not only composed of a sequence of diegetic events and speech acts, but also – and perhaps even primarily – of the construction of a particular fictional world or chronotope.” (N. Bemong 4). The Chronotope, thus, is what gives the narrative its own nucleus that holds its genetic material and makes it unique and distinguished.

In *Homegoing*, one could easily encounter the hero who is not presented ready-made, but is created, with both time and place pushing him along his own process of ‘becoming’. Yaa Gyasi has chosen her hero in *Homegoing* to be the female heroine Marjorie who emerges, within the boundaries of the Castle as a chronotope, as a chronotopic hero as she typically identifies with Bakhtin’s hero who:

emerges along with the world and he reflects the historical emergence of the world itself. He is no longer within an epoch, but on the border between two epochs, at the transition point from one to the other. This transition is accomplished in him and through him. He is forced to become a new, unprecedented type of human being. What is happening here is precisely the emergence of a new man. The organizing force held by the future is therefore extremely great here—and this is not, of course, the private biographical future, but the historical future. It is as though the very foundations of the world are changing, and man must change along with them.... The image of the emerging man begins to surmount its private nature (within certain limits, of course) and enters into a completely new, spatial sphere of historical existence. (pp. 23–24).

Here, Nonki Motahane and others emphasize this in another way when they write in “Rooting routes to trans-Atlantic African identities” that what really distinguishes” *Homegoing*’s treatment of the complex history of black subjectivities in America is not only how far the novel goes, in time and space, to recuperate and re-archive the subjectivities’ trajectories of becoming, but more importantly, how experiences of female descendants across time and space (Africa and America) reflect on complexities of being African and African American in America.” (13). In other words, the chronotopic hero is inseparable from the chronotopic place.

What The Cape Coast Castle stands for is not only a historical time period that witnessed the goings of a crime executed by the British

colonizer in one of their African colonies as in Egypt, for example, as much as it is a historical landmark that documents to a worldwide crime that all people directly or indirectly participated in. In this regard, William St Claire writes, "it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that every person in the Europeanized world who put sugar in their tea or coffee, spread jam on their bread, who ate sweets, cakes, or ice cream, who smoked or chewed tobacco, took snuff, drank rum or corn brandy, or wore colored cotton clothes, also benefited from, and participated in, a globalized economy of tropical plantations worked by slaves forcibly brought from Africa." (14). In 2009, President Barak Obama visited The Cape Coast Castle, with his family, and gave a speech in which he emphasizes the brutality held in the very essence of slavery, epitomized in the Cape Coast Castle, saying:

And I think, as Americans, and as African Americans, obviously there's a special sense that on the one hand this place was a place of profound sadness; on the other hand, it is here where the journey of much of the African American experience began. And symbolically, to be able to come back with my family, with Michelle and our children, and see the portal through which the diaspora began, but also to be able to come back here in celebration with the people of Ghana of the extraordinary progress that we've made because of the courage of so many, black and white, to abolish slavery and ultimately win civil rights for all people, I think is a source of hope. It reminds us that as bad as history can be, it's also possible to overcome. (R. Shumway 232)

This is the same Castle Gyasi portrays in her novel; the same place with a plethora of temporal landmarks that prove its significant role in the process of textualizing history in fiction as well as in history. In a word, the Castle, in *Homegoing*, is chronotopic since it satisfies what Bakhtin means when he writes, "every entry into the sphere of meanings is accomplished only through the gates of the chronotope." ("Forms" 258).

Springing from Bakhtin's assumptions about the chronotope in novel, it is the Cape Coast Castle in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* that functions as a place in which all the necessary dialogues about time take place. As a chronotope, the Castle represents a process more than a static place of reference. It shows how the characters evolved through time into being who they are. It sometimes works to serve colliding or contradictory chronotopes for two different groups, as it represents a time of inferiority for the Africans, and superiority for the British before it moves to represent a chronotope of triumph for the Africans and one of

shame for the British. The chronotopic representation in the novel brings forth many important themes among which are slavery, immigration, victim societies and memory to serve the historical narrative that the novel is intended to present. Yaa Gyasi has excelled in brazing up the two historical time periods of slavery in America, and slave trade in Africa calling for a new sense of African-ness that owes much to Bahabha's 'third-place'. Dealing with African tribes and their tradition and culture, Homegoing is a historical novel of becoming written in a language that brings nature powerfully into the textual fabric calling for an eco-critical reading to proceed.

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