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Intersectionality and women's Resistance in *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi

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Abstract

This dissertation aims to study and analyze intersectionality and woman's resistance in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* through shedding light on the experiences of black female characters. It examines the various forms of oppression and discrimination, based on race, gender, and class, that black women face in society. This dissertation uses black feminism and postcolonial feminism as theoretical frameworks to analyze the experiences of marginalized black women across generations. The intersecting identities and intergenerational trauma play a crucial role in shaping the experiences of the female characters, leading to multiple strategies and responses for resistance and resilience. Consequently, these female characters change their circumstances across several generations which reflect their ability to achieve justice and equality, and their efforts to make their voices heard.

Keywords: Intersectionality, race, gender, class, Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*, black female characters, oppression, discrimination, resistance.

Résumé

Cette thèse vise à étudier et analyser l'intersectionnalité et la résistance des femmes dans *Homegoing* de Yaa Gyasi en mettant en lumière les expériences des personnages féminins noirs. Elle examine les diverses formes d'oppression et de discrimination fondées sur la race, le sexe et la classe sociale auxquelles les femmes noires sont confrontées dans la société. Cette thèse utilise le féminisme noir et le féminisme postcolonial comme cadres théoriques pour analyser les expériences des femmes noires marginalisées à travers les générations. Les identités croisées et les traumatismes intergénérationnels jouent un rôle crucial dans le façonnement des expériences des personnages féminins, conduisant à de multiples stratégies et réponses de résistance et de résilience. Par conséquent, ces personnages féminins changent de situation au fil de plusieurs générations, ce qui reflète leur capacité à parvenir à la justice et à l'égalité, ainsi que leurs efforts pour faire entendre leur voix.

Mots clés: Intersectionnalité, race, genre, classe, *Homegoing* de Yaa Gyasi, personnages féminins noirs, oppression, discrimination, résistance.

الملخص

تهدف هذه المذكرة إلى دراسة وتحليل التقاطعية ومقاومة المرأة في رواية العودة للوطن للكاتبة يا جياسي وذلك من خلال تسليط الضوء على تجارب الشخصيات النسائية السوداء. كما تدرس مختلف أشكال الاضطهاد والتمييز، على أساس العرق والجنس والطبقة، التي تواجهها النساء السود في المجتمع. تستخدم هذه المذكرة النسوية السوداء والنسوية ما بعد الاستعمارية كأطر نظرية لتحليل تجارب النساء السود المهمشات عبر الأجيال. تلعب الهويات المتقاطعة والصدمات بين الأجيال دورًا حاسمًا في تشكيل تجارب الشخصيات النسائية، مما يؤدي إلى استراتيجيات واستجابات متعددة للمقاومة والمرونة. ونتيجة لذلك، تغيّر هؤلاء الشخصيات النسائية ظروفهن عبر عدة أجيال، مما يعكس قدرتهن على تحقيق العدالة والمساواة، وجهودهن لجعل أصواتهن مسموعة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التقاطعية، العرق، الجنس، الطبقة، رواية العودة إلى الوطن للكاتبة يا جياسي، الشخصيات النسائية السوداء، القمع، التمييز، المقاومة.

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General Introduction

In the context of contemporary debates about black feminist movement, colonialism, and women's issues, intersectionality and black women's resistance are considered among the crucial issues. In the context of feminist and racial struggles, the term intersectionality was coined in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a writer and activist in the fields of civil rights and racial issues, and a professor of law at the University of California. This concept highlights the nature of social classifications such as race, gender, class, and sexual identity, and how these factors intersect and interlock to form multiple individual identities, and thus, describes the forms of bias, discrimination, and marginalization, experienced by Black women. Accordingly, black women's resistance, including their efforts to challenge all forms of injustice, discrimination and persecution that they face, is very significant to understand their role in society and secure their rights.

In this dissertation, the central argument reveals the complexities of intersectionality by focusing on the ways in which race, gender, and class intersect, and how black women resist discrimination, power, and oppression, especially in marginalized communities. This is done by analyzing the identities of the female characters in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*, from diverse backgrounds and generations, and by exploring the restrictions imposed on them through highlighting their intersectional identity, their exposure to persecution, and their ability to confront colonial legacies and challenge systems of discrimination and oppression.

The main questions, in this dissertation, are as follows: Firstly, how do black women's experiences in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* become influenced by the intersecting identities of race, gender, and class? Secondly, what kinds of discrimination and oppression do the female characters face in the novel? Thirdly, how does intergenerational trauma shape the experiences and resistance strategies of the female characters?

This study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of how race, gender, and class intersect, through the forms of persecution, discrimination, and repression faced by female characters in the novel, by focusing on the voices of black women and their intersecting identities in shaping their strategies and effectiveness to challenge Systems of power. In addition, this research seeks to examine women's role and resilience in the face of colonial violence and injustice and patriarchal structures, highlighting the ways in which black women move across generations to achieve liberation.

In this dissertation, it is hypothesized that the female characters, in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*, face various forms of oppression, suppression, and discrimination based on race, gender, and class. Additionally, it is hypothesized that the intersecting identities and intergenerational trauma play a crucial role in shaping the experiences of the female characters, leading to multiple strategies and responses for resistance and resilience. Lastly, it is hypothesized that by understanding and exploring societal expectations, colonial legacies, and power dynamics faced by black women, the importance of intersectionality in the context of black feminism and postcolonial feminism can be highlighted.

This dissertation relies on Black feminism and postcolonial feminism as theoretical frameworks for analyzing the experiences of marginalized African-descended women across generations. Black feminism offers a critical perspective that focuses on the voices and experiences of Black women within feminist discourse, emphasizing the unique challenges and forms of oppression they face. On the other hand, post-colonial feminism delves into the impacts of colonization and slavery on the lives of Black women, by uncovering the complex dynamics of power, resistance, and agency among the female characters, and shedding light on how colonial history shapes their experiences in empowerment and overcoming colonial legacies.

Several researchers offer their insights by writing critical analyses about Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*. In his book, *Black Feminism and Traumatic Legacies in Contemporary African American Literature,* April Lewis analyzes the novel by focusing on the experiences of African and African American women, as well as the complexities of identity and power dynamics.

In the other hand, Gallego's article, titled "Sexuality and Healing in the African Diaspora: A Transnational Approach to Toni Morrison and Gyasi," represents many themes of bondage, healing, and empowerment in the literary works of Toni Morrison and Yaa Gyasi. He emphasizes how these writers present narratives that contradict traditional historical narratives and enslavement, while paying attention to studying black characters. He also indicates how Gyasi challenges stereotypes and advocates for reclaiming the violated black female body.

While Abu Jweid and Abdalhadi Nimer Abdalqader's article, titled "The Mind of Darkness: Social Equality and Self-Autonomy as Feminist Premises to the Concept of the Courageous Code in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*," the authors focus on the importance of social equality and autonomy in developing the Courageous Code within the text, and their importance in shaping the novel's narrative and characters, and their analysis shed light on how Gyasi weaves feminist principles into the themes and characters.

Examining intersectionality and women's resistance in Gyasi's *Homegoing* reveals the complex interplay of race, gender, and class in female characters experiences with oppression, injustice, and empowerment. However, there is a gap in a detailed analysis of how women characters navigate and resist oppression at the intersection of race, gender, and class. More in-depth exploration of these specific cases, and the impact of these intersections on the characters' experiences and responses to oppression, can shed light on intersectionality and women's resistance in the context of the novel.

The significance of examining intersectionality and resistance among female characters in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* stems from its contribution to understanding how race, gender, and class intersect to influence women's experiences of oppression and resistance. This study focuses on the complexity of identity and power dynamics for women's, especially of African descent. This study not only encourages understanding of the challenges women face across generations, but also focuses on the strength and resilience during encounter with prejudice and inequality. The study demonstrates the importance of women's resistance in the face of oppression, and highlights their role in questioning traditional standards. Ultimately, this research attempts to highlight marginalized voices and increase additional explorations of intersectionality and women's resistance in literature.

This dissertation uses qualitative research method to study intersectionality and women's resistance and analyze themes of race, gender, and class in characters' experiences with oppression and resistance. It includes a deep reading and textual analysis of the novel to identify instances in which intersecting identities influence the characters' responses to and resistance to discrimination and trauma.

This research is divided into three chapters: The first chapter is a theoretical part entitled: Theoretical and Contextual Frameworks: Intersectionality and Feminist Perspectives. The chapter provides a comprehensive overview of intersectionality, as a theoretical and contextual framework, by examining the origin of the term and its importance in understanding the complexities of social identities, identifying power structures, and recognizing marginalized voices, especially black women, by challenging prevailing narratives. This chapter also sheds light on the theories of black feminism and postcolonial feminism, and focuses on the forms of discrimination and inequality that black women face.

The second chapter, entitled Analysis of Female Characters in Light of Race, Gender, and Class, provides a detailed analysis of the oppression faced by the female characters in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* across generations, such as racial discrimination, marginalization, and trauma in the context of slavery and exploitation. It also sheds light on how these women's experiences are affected by the traditional roles and expectations imposed on them in society and the lasting effects of historical injustices and the physical, sexual, and emotional violence that they are exposed to in patriarchal societies.

The third chapter, entitled Black Women's Agency and Resilience, focuses on the challenges faced by the female characters and the steadfastness that these women demonstrate in the face of discrimination and marginalization and their ability to challenge societal norms, stereotypes, and oppressive systems, for the sake of independence and equality.

Chapter one

Theoretical and Contextual Framework: Intersectionality and Feminist Perspectives

Introduction

Intersectionality and feminist perspectives are important frameworks for understanding the complexities of social identities and power dynamics in contemporary society. The concept of intersectionality, coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late 1980s, is rooted in the complex interplay of race, class, gender, and other identity structures, which create intersecting systems of discrimination and oppression. This theoretical chapter explores the concept and origins of intersectionality, and the idea of interlocking systems of oppression, where individuals may experience multiple forms of discrimination simultaneously, leading to complex and intersecting identities. It discusses the importance of intersectionality in terms of identifying power structures, recognizing marginalized voices, and challenging dominant narratives that support systems of oppression, inequality, and subjugation. Furthermore, this chapter presents feminist theories, as critical analytical tools for understanding the complexities of intersectionality, such as black feminism and postcolonial feminism, highlighting their contributions to addressing issues of colonialism, race, and gender, and providing a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between power dynamics, and social identities, in shaping the experiences of individuals within society.

1. Concept of Intersectionality

1.1. Understanding Intersectionality

"The concept of "intersectionality" refers to the interactivity of social identity structures such as race, class, and gender in fostering life experiences, especially experiences of privilege and oppression" (Gopaldas 90).

United Nations argues that intersectionality is a concept and conceptual structure that assists to understand the complex ways in which social identities intersect and increase experiences of oppression and discrimination based on two or more grounds, that include gender identity or expression, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, descent or inherited status, age, class, disability, or health status. Intersectionality emphasizes on the socio-structural nature of discrimination, marginalization, and inequalities; diversity within each category, group, or community (different experiences and requires); and the narratives, empowerment, and agency of people of all kinds that faced intersectional discrimination (11).

The concept of Intersectionality is important, because it provides a comprehensive understanding of systems of oppression and power as well as the complexities of discrimination and inequality. As McCall argues that the concept of intersectionality, developed within the field of women's studies and related disciplines, stands out as the most significant theoretical contribution thus far (1).

According to Karmakar, Black feminist researchers, activists, and intellectuals introduced the idea of intersectionality in the United States. It looks at how women's lives are affected by the rights and privileges of other social groups that they are a part of. Iintersectionality challenges the homogenous notion that all women have the same experiences. It hhighlights the significance of power dynamics and systemic structural inequalities resulting from various identities and orientations, such as gender, race, and class, which overlap and have an impact on women's issues and experiences (388).

Gopaldas claims that in modern social science, the term "intersectionality" is used in various ways. At a macro-level of analysis, it refers to the complexity and interconnectedness of social identities such as race, class, and gender. At a micro-level of analysis, it highlights that each

person exists at the intersection of multiple social identity factors and experiences (i.e. both advantages and disadvantages as a result). “Intersectionality” also refers to an interdisciplinary field of study that seeks to analyze social phenomena from multiple identity perspectives, integrating various disciplines such as African American studies, disability studies, queer studies, and men’s and women’s studies (91).

1.2. Origins of the Term

Sigle-Rushton states that in 1989, Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced the concept of intersectionality in her groundbreaking analysis of US anti-discrimination laws, pointing out that these laws neglected to recognize Black women’s particular experiences of sexism and racism as occurring simultaneously and intertwined. As Crenshaw contends, it is absurd to approach racism and sexism as different issues that can be studied and addressed independently if there is not a single group of women who all suffer gender discrimination in the same ways. This kind of legislation falls short of giving Black women equal protection. Although the idea does not introduce a novel perspective, its articulation gives voice to numerous theoretical concerns and serves as a crucial framework for comparing and negotiating a variety of activities, creating a place for critical discussion (1-2).

Rodó-Zárate suggests that intersectionality emerged in American Black feminism to understand the structural discrimination and inequality faced by Black women. It emphasized the interconnectedness of gender, race, social class, sexual orientation, functional diversity, and age. Today, the term is used to demonstrate how these axes of inequality are related and form concrete forms of discrimination. It is a fundamental concept in academia, social movements, and institutions to address issues related to inequalities, discrimination, and violence (1).

As outlined by Frasquet Aira and Ruiz Pascua, Black feminist criticisms emphasized women as an undifferentiated social category reflecting the needs and concerns of white, middle-class women, were curated and articulated by Kimberlé W. Crenshaw, ultimately leading to the development of the term intersectionality. Feeling demoted by white feminists' lack of awareness to their specific oppression, the African-American feminist group Combahee River Collective drew emphasis early on to the necessity to confront the inequalities among women. The lack of global representation of women has led to a shift in focus towards women, who were previously the central political focus of feminism. This shift has prompted a reevaluation of the feminist movement's approach in recognizing and addressing the diversity and differences among women across different social and cultural contexts. The organization's manifesto emphasized intersectionality as a commitment to the liberation of Black women (8). Gopaldas further explain, throughout the twentieth century, several of supporters of black feminism a social movement founded on the notion that the interests of black women were underrepresented in American women's and black movements developed the concept of intersectionality (90).

According to hooks as quoted in Gopaldas, Black movements led by black men placed a higher priority on achieving equality with white men, often exhibiting sexist tendencies by pushing black woman's concerns to the margins. On the other hand, white women's leadership of women's movements revealed racist tendencies by emphasizing white women's pursuit of equality with white men while disregarding the needs and perspectives of women of color (90).

"Alienated by both Black men's and white women's movements, Black women developed their own ways of conceptualizing social identity structures, not as independent axes of demographic classification but as interlocking matrices of privilege and oppression" (Collins qtd. in Gopaldas 90).

Gopaldas claims, in their fight against sexism, racism, and classism as concurrent forms of oppression, black women understand the need to advance the conditions of all Black people and women in their advocacy efforts. This understanding is reflected in their resistance against not only racial and gender discrimination, but also class disparities originating from historical enslavement within the framework of the United States. Black women recognize that, despite the unique aspects of their situation, they also share a common experience with other oppressed groups whose lives are molded by overlapping forms of disadvantage across two or more categories (e.g., Asian immigrants, blind Spanish-speaking elders). The intersectionality theoretical framework is developed by black feminist scholars in their attempts to clarify the particulars and universality of their societal circumstances (90).

1.3. Interlocking system of oppression

The term "interlocking system of oppression" describes how social, political, and economic power systems are complicated and linked together. It also shows how the aforementioned power systems interact to marginalize and discriminate against specific social groups. Shaw and Champeau give an example of Marilyn Frye's birdcage analogy illustrates oppression as a network of interconnected barriers that restrict and diminish women's lives. However, this analogy has limitations as each barrier can be separated from the others. In reality, when gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, ability, and religion intersect in women's lives, they establish and shape social relations of domination where each oppressive system depends on and influences all others (208).

McCall asserts that Intersectionality originated as response to the limitations of gender- and race-based research, which neglected to consider the lived experiences of people who held many marginalized identities. Previous studies focused on white women and black men separately,

ignoring the particular challenges faced that black woman. For instance, while black women may have attained greater equality with men of their race due to historical conditions, they were also more vulnerable to sexual abuse as a result of being disregarded by white society. This highlighted the need for a new method to understand the complex and often conflicting dynamic that shape the experiences of individuals in many marginalized social positions (1780). However, a single dimension of each category is articulated to create the intersection of identities. In other words, the term "multiple" in these intersectional analyses refers to dimensions that cross categories rather than dimensions that are included within them. Although it only represents one aspect of each category race and ethnicity, class, gender, and sexual orientation, an Arab American middle-class heterosexual woman is situated at the intersection of several categories. While personal narratives aim to place subjects in the complete web of relationships that define their social locations, in most cases, this is only feasible from the perspective of the specific social group that the subject of the study is researching. (For example, if the subject of the analysis is an Arab woman, then issues of race and nationality are more fully examined from the perspective of Arab women than from the perspective of Arab men) (1781).

McCall emphasizes that unlike single-group studies, which analyze the intersection of a subset of dimensions of multiple categories, multi-group studies analyze the intersection of the full set of dimensions of multiple categories and, thus, examine both advantage and disadvantage explicitly and simultaneously. It is not the intersection of race, class, and gender in a single social group that is of interest but the relationships among the social groups defined by the entire set of groups constituting each category. The categorical approach formally compares say, in terms of income or education each of the groups constituting a category: men and women, Blacks and whites, working and middle classes, and so on. Moreover, the categorical approach takes as its

point of departure that these categories form more detailed social groups: white women and Black women, working- and middle-class men, and so on (1787).

Crenshaw argues that how mainstream ideas of discrimination lead us to interpret subordination as disadvantage occurring along a single categorical axis when Black women are the starting point. She wants to propose further that by restricting the scope of the investigation to the experiences of the group's otherwise privileged members, this one-axis paradigm erases Black women from the conceptualization, identification, and remediation of racial and sexual discrimination. To put it another way, in cases of race discrimination, the focus is typically on Black people who are disadvantaged in terms of sex or class, whereas in cases of sex discrimination, the focus is on women who are disadvantaged in terms of both race and class (140). However, this emphasis on the most advantaged individuals of the group marginalizes those who are overburdened and hides accusations that are not consistent with distinct forms of discrimination. Furthermore, she contends that by emphasizing members of disadvantaged groups, racism and sexism are analyzed erroneously since prevailing ideas about race and sex are based on experiences that are, in reality, a small portion of a much larger, more nuanced issue. She explains that because both feminist theory and the language around antiracist policies are based on a limited set of experiences that frequently do not accurately reflect the relationship of race and gender, Black women have been allowed out of these discussions. Black women's marginalization cannot be resolved by merely incorporating them to an existing analytical framework (140). The court came to the conclusion that Congress either did not think that Black women may face prejudice just because they are "Black women" or did not intend to stand up for them if it did. to admit that Black women face both racial and sexual discrimination suggests that the experiences of White women and Black males define the respective limitations of the sex and race

discrimination doctrines. According to this perspective, Black women's rights are only upheld in as much as their experiences align with those of the two groups. Black women should not anticipate much protection in areas where their experiences are unique, as long as methods which obfuscate intersectionality issues remain in place (142-143).

Crenshaw asserts that the perspective on discrimination derived from this foundation assumes that racial privilege is unavoidable. Therefore, the typical sex discrimination accusation is one that alleges discrimination against a white female; charges that deviate from these criteria typically offer a hybrid claim. Significantly, Black females ' claims are sometimes unable to represent others who may have "pure" claims of sex discrimination because they are perceived as hybrid (145). Moreover, Black women often encounter discrimination in ways that are comparable to those faced by white women, and occasionally they have experiences that are strikingly similar to those of Black men. However, individuals frequently encounter double discrimination the result of actions that discriminate against people based on both their sex and ethnicity. Additionally, they occasionally encounter discrimination on the basis of their race that is, not the combination of sex and race as Black women. (149).

Crenshaw emphasizes that race, gender, and other identity categories are most often treated in mainstream liberal discourse as vestiges of bias or domination-that is, as intrinsically negative frameworks in which social power works to exclude or marginalize those who are different. (1241). Although sexism and racism frequently intersect in the lives of actual people, it is not always the case in feminist and antiracist actions. They confine the identity of women of color to a place that is difficult to articulate when practices define identity as a woman or a person of color as an either/or proposition (1242). By examining the racial and gender aspects of violence against women of color, Crenshaw hopes to broaden the narrative about the area in this work. Women of

color are among the intersecting identities that contemporary feminist and antiracist discourses have neglected to consider. With a focus on two aspects of male violence against women rape and battering she examines how sexism and racism frequently intersect to produce the experiences of women of color, and how these experiences are typically underrepresented in feminism and antiracism discourses. Women of color are marginalized because of their intersecting identities as women and people of color within discourses that are structured to respond to one or the other (1242-1244).

Crenshaw presents the concept of intersectionality to describe the ways that gender and race interact to influence the different aspects of Black women's work experiences. Her objective was to highlight how many of the experiences that Black women encounter are not totally encompassed by the conventional notions of race or gender discrimination, and how the intersection of racism and sexism influences Black women's lives in ways that cannot be fully understood by looking at the racial and gender dimensions of those experiences separately. Here, she expands on previous findings by examining the several ways that gender and race interact to shape the structural, political, and representational dimensions of violence against women of color (1244), For instance, the burden of poverty, child care obligations, and a lack of employment skills fall heavily on many women of color. The racially discriminatory employment and housing practices that women of color frequently experience, along with the disproportionately high unemployment rate among people of color that reduces their ability to rely on friends and relatives for temporary shelter, further exacerbate these burdens, which are largely the result of gender and class oppression (Crenshaw 1245-1246).

Crenshaw claims that racism and sexism, written into the social construction of rape, are merely contemporary manifestations of rape narratives emanating from a historical period when

race and sex hierarchies were more explicitly policed. Yet another is the devaluation of Black women and the marginalization of their sexual victimizations (1268). Because Black women confront subordination based on both race and gender, rape law reforms and judicial procedures based on narrow definitions of gender subordination may fail to address the devaluation of Black women. Much of the difficulty stems from how certain gender expectations for women mix with sexualized views of race, which are strongly embedded in American culture. Sexualized depictions of African Americans have existed since European contact with them. Blacks have long been stereotyped as more sexual, earthy, and gratification-oriented. These sexualized images of race collide with conventions of women's sexuality, which are used to separate good women from bad and madonnas from whores. Thus, Black women are effectively stereotyped as bad women in cultural narratives about good women who can be raped and bad women who cannot. The discrediting of Black women's accusations is the result of a complicated confluence of a gendered sexual system that creates standards for good and bad women, as well as a race code that gives pictures defining Black women's vital characteristics (1271). Next, in regards to Black women being raped, gender and race collide, causing minority women's concerns to occupy the space between racism and women's issues. However, the power dynamics that each discourse seeks to question are reinforced when the other is not given due credit. For instance, feminism contributes to the forces that result in disproportionate punishment for Black men who rape White women when they fail to acknowledge the role that race played in the public response to the rape of. Similarly, when antiracists frame the issue exclusively in terms of racial domination, they minimize the fact that women in particular and all people in general. The case reflects gender-based violence, which should infuriate us (1282).

Nash discusses that McCall's analytic frameworks indicate a significant gap between conceptualizations of intersectional methodology and practices of intersectional research. While intersectionality has works to interfere with cumulative approaches to identity (e.g., race + gender + sexuality + class = complex identity) and problematize social categorization processes through strategic implementations of marginalized subject's experiences, intersectional projects frequently replicate the approaches that they criticize (6). Crenshaw attempts to use Black women's inability to conform to race/gender categories to illustrate how inadequate the categories are, her argument reinforces the idea that Black women's identities are constituted, exclusively, by race and gender. In other words, although she focuses on Black women because they are" multiply burdened," her analysis prevents an investigation of forms of "multiple burdens" (or the intersections of privileges and burdens). outside of race and gender. She pays little attention to the potential role that sexuality, nationality, or class, for example, may play in mediating or entrenching Black women's experiences of "burdens," and Black women serve only as sites that highlight the significance of race-and-gender, making Black women's experiences the aggravating factor. Moreover, Crenshaw provides minimal consideration to the manner in which race and gender operate as social processes for specific Black women at different points in history. In other words, gender and ethnicity of Black women are viewed as trans-historical constants that uniquely identify all Black women. (7). Although intersectionality presents itself as a theoretical development of Black feminism, it is really just a new term for the same kind of work that identifies how identities function. Intersectionality's theoretical contribution to identity theorizing may benefit from a clearer discussion of its nature and distinctiveness, particularly if it truly aims to supplement or diverge from Black feminism (9).

2. Relevance of Intersectionality

2.1. Identifying Power Structures

Crenshaw demonstrates that the embrace of identity politics has clashed with prevalent notions of social justice. In mainstream liberal discourse, race, gender, and other identity categories are frequently portrayed as legacies of bias or domination in which social authority attempts to exclude or marginalize individuals who are different. According to this interpretation, the liberatory goal should be to deprive such categories of all social meaning. However, certain strands of feminist and racial liberation movements, for example, hold that social power in designating difference does not have to be the power of domination; rather, it can be the source of social empowerment and reconstruction (1242).

According to Crenshaw, antiracist discourse often views violence against women of color as stemming from racism, but it is important to recognize that gender domination within communities is not exclusively a result of discrimination against men. While racism may contribute to the cycle of violence, the issue is more complex and extends beyond this single factor. Racism intersects with patriarchy in that it denies men of color the power and privilege that dominant men possess. Re-framing violence as a reaction to this denial of power makes it counterproductive to link the solution to domestic violence to the acquisition of greater male power. Instead, it is more effective to challenge the legitimacy of power expectations and expose their harmful impact on families and communities of color (1257-1258).

Crenshaw gives an example of Senator Boren and his colleagues who undoubtedly feel that they have provided legislation and resources that will solve the issues confronting all women victims of domestic violence. Despite their universalizing language about “all” women, they could only identify with female victims of domestic abuse if they looked past the tragedy of “other”

women and recognized their own personal faces. The demand to "protect our women" must be specifically, in terms of race and class. After all, someone's wife, mother, sister, or daughter has always been abused, even when the perpetrators are stereotypically Black or Brown and impoverished. The point here is not that the Violence Against Women Act of 1991, is particularistic in its own right, unless Senators and other policymakers question why violence remains insignificant as long as it was viewed as a minority problem, Women of color are unlikely to share equally in the distribution of resources and concern. It is much less likely that people in authority will be obliged to address this issue (1260).

Crenshaw highlights the struggle among women about which differences are important and which are neither abstract nor insignificant. Indeed, these disputes present important questions of authority. They are about more than just differences in principle. not only are the women leading the antiviolence movement different from women of color. But they also often hold the authority to decide whether or not the intersectional differences, of women of color will be taken into consideration when formulating basic policy, either through the use of material or rhetorical resources. As a result, the battle to include these distinctions is more than just a small-scale disagreement over who should have the highest seat at the table. When there is violence, it can occasionally be very severe to choose who will live and who will not (1265).

Based on Crenshaw's explanation, the process of categorization, particularly in terms of identity, is not a one-sided exercise of power, but the reality is far more intricate and subtle than that. First, classification or naming, to put it in terms of identity is a collaborative effort. People in lower positions are not excluded from participation, and they occasionally use the naming process to their advantage. To realize that classification is a two-way street, one just needs to consider the historical subversion of the "Black" category or the contemporary evolution of the "queer"

category. Even though it is obvious that power is not distributed equally People have the power to influence and participate in the process of naming in politics. Furthermore, it is crucial to remember that for those who belong to various oppressed groups, identification still serves as a point of resistance. The differences between the statements “I am Black” and “I am a person who happens to be Black” are obvious to all of us. “I am Black” elevates the identification that is imposed by society to the status of a subjectivity anchor. “I am Black” evolves in a positive discourse of self-identification as well as a statement of resistance, closely associated with affirmative phrases such as the Black nationalist “Black is beautiful.” “I am a person who happens to be Black,” nonetheless, succeeds in self-identification by striving for a certain universality (basically, “I am first a person”). and for a congruent rejection of the imposed category (“Black”). as nondeterminate, contingent, and circumstantial. There is, of course, truth to both characterizations, but how they play out depends on the political situation. It is a compelling argument that, in this particular moment in history, occupying and defending a politics of social location as opposed to fleeing and demolishing it is the most crucial resistance tactic for marginalized communities (1297).

Crenshaw argues that Vulgar constructionism distorts the potential for meaningful identity politics by mixing at least two distinct but closely related manifestations of power. There are two types of power: classification itself and the ability to influence social and material outcomes. While the former authority facilitates the latter, the political consequences of opposing one over the other are significant. When we examine disputes over racial subordination throughout history, we can see that there was always the potential of contesting either the formation of identity or the system of subordination based on that identification (1297).

2.2. Recognizing Marginalized Voices

According to Christoffersen, the concept of intersectionality, as pan equality, allows organizations to work on various equality concerns by collaborating, organizing collaborative projects, and pursuing policy change together, which potentially increase their influence. However, when pan equality intersectionality is utilized alone, the distinctive agendas of groups of intersectionality marginalized people may be ignored. Common issues may be watered down, in content, to the lowest common denominator. Julie, director of a refugee organization, suggests that identifying pan-equality themes such as power, structure, antagonism, hate, and abuse might lead to more effective intersectional work The pan-equality initiative promotes inclusivity and bridges gaps between individuals in the workforce by addressing the intersections between seemingly distinct issues. Pan equality intersectionality can obscure the confluence of inequality systems and marginalized groups, even if the issues are shared by multiple groups. Furthermore, without a focus on intersectional marginalization in work and campaigns on broad topics, pan-equality might perpetuate disparities between differently positioned persons and institutions (18).

Crenshaw's articles emphasized the experiences and perspectives of marginalized voices, providing significant insights to ordinary realities. Based on Crenshaw's Socially, culturally, or economically privileged immigrant women who more likely to be able to gather what they need to meet the waiver requirements. Women of color are most likely to be within the immigrant women least equipped to benefit from the waiver those who are the most economically and socially marginalized (1250).

In terms of politics, society, and the economy, women of color are positioned differently. Women of color are less likely than women from racially privileged circumstances to have their needs met when reform initiatives on their behalf overlook this reality. Counselors who offer

women of color rape crisis assistance, for example, indicate that a large amount of the resources given to them must be used to address issues unrelated to rape. Meeting these requirements frequently sets these counselors at odds with funding agencies, which distribute funding based on largely middle-class and white standards of need. These consistent requirements disregard the reality that various needs frequently necessitate different priorities when it comes to the distribution of resources, and as a result, these standards impede Counselors ' ability to satisfy the needs of low-income and non-White women. As an illustration, consider the status of women of color in dominant society. Due to their physical and cultural marginalization, information about them needs to be directed specifically at them (Crenshaw 1250).

In accordance with Crenshaw's perspective, Black women are marginalized in the intersection of antidiscrimination law and race and gender hierarchies. An analogy can be used to illustrate this, comparing a basement filled with disadvantaged individuals based on race, sex, class, sexual preference, age, and physical ability. The upper level is a space where only those who can say "but for" the ceiling can access it. A hatch is created for those below to crawl through, but only those who can do so due to their unique burden. Multiply-burdened individuals are left below unless they can pull themselves into the groups allowed to crawl through. Black women can only receive protection if their experiences are similar to those reflected in antidiscrimination doctrine. If they cannot definitively say "but for" their race or gender, they are not invited to climb through the hatch but are told to wait in the unprotected margin until they can be absorbed into the broader categories of race and sex (152).

Crenshaw argues that when it comes to policies, priorities, or empowerment processes, women who work in the field of domestic violence have occasionally contributed to the subordination and marginalization of women of color by neglecting or completely ignoring the

unique intersectional needs of these women. Although the specific context in which women of color face violence is created by the intersection of gender, race, and class, certain decisions made by "allies" have the potential to reinforce intersectional subordination within the very resistance measures meant to address the issue (1262).

In this instance, the refusal of the shelter to anticipate and satisfy the needs of non-English speaking women was placed on the shoulders of the woman in crisis. According to Campos, "It is unfair to impose more stress on victims by placing them in the position of having to demonstrate their proficiency in English in order to receive services that are readily available to other battered women" (qtd.in Crenshaw 1262). It is difficult to dismiss off the issue as well-meaning ignorance. The particular issue of monolingualism and the monotheistic view of women's lives that led to this catastrophe were not new issues in New York. It is true that a variety of women of color stated they had ongoing issues with the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence about language exclusion and other actions that marginalized women of color 's interests. However, in spite of persistent lobbying, the Coalition did not take any action to include the unique requirements of non-white women in its main organizing principle (Crenshaw 1264).

In Crenshaw's view, A few months later, the women of color withdrew from the Coalition. Instead of fighting for racial and class justice with white middle-class women, many of these women went back to working for women's rights in their own communities. However, as seen by the Latina woman who was unable to secure shelter, the needs of women of color are still marginalized within the shelter community due to the dominance of one particular perspective and set of priorities (1265).

I have used intersectionality to describe or frame various relationships between race and gender. I have used intersectionality as a way to articulate the interaction of racism and

> patriarchy generally. I have also used intersectionality to describe the location of women of color both within overlapping systems of subordination and at the margins of feminism and antiracism. When race and gender factors are examined in the context of rape, intersectionality can be used to map the ways in which racism and patriarchy have shaped conceptualizations of rape, to describe the unique vulnerability of women of color to these converging systems of domination, and to track the marginalization of women of color within antiracist and antirape discourses. (Crenshaw 1265-1266).

2.3. Challenging dominant Narratives

Crenshaw argues that Black women may encounter discrimination in a variety of contexts, and the inconsistency stems from our presumption that their complaints of exclusion can only come from one side. Consider it like this: traffic at a junction, moving in all four directions. Similar to traffic at a crossroads, discrimination can flow in two different directions. Cars travelling in any direction and occasionally all of them can be the cause of an accident that occurs at a junction. In a similar vein, prejudice based on race or sex may be the source of harm suffered by a Black woman simply for being present at the crossing (149).

According to Crenshaw, this method has been considered an effective framework for addressing a variety of issues, despite the narrow reach of the prevalent understanding of discrimination and its propensity to marginalize people whose experiences cannot be adequately captured within its narrow limitations. This framework is mirrored in the concept that sexism and racism may be effectively debated without taking into account the lives of individuals who are not privileged in terms of race, gender, or class in much of feminist theory and, to some extent, in antiracist movements. Consequently, the organization of feminist theory and antiracist politics has revolved, at least in part, around the equating of racism with the experiences of Black middle-class

or Black males, and sexism with the experiences of White women (152). Analysis of sexism and patriarchy must be a part of theories and practices that claim to represent the demands of the Black community if any meaningful attempts are to be made to release Black people from the limitations and conditions that define racial subordination. In the same way, feminism cannot represent the goals of non-white women without incorporating a discussion of race. The intersecting experiences of individuals who the movements identify as their respective constituency cannot be ignored by either feminist theory or Black liberationist politics. Both movements must reject previous theories that held that experiences are only important when they are connected to specific and readily identifiable causes (Black oppression is significant when it is based on race, and women's oppression is significant when it is based on gender, for example). If they are to include Black women, these theories must be discarded (166).

This elimination of diversity in identity politics is problematic in the context of violence against women, primarily because the violence that many women encounter is frequently influenced by other aspects of their identities, such race and class. Ignoring differences within groups also fuels conflict between them, which is another issue with identity politics that affects attempts to politicize violence against women. The politicization of the experiences of women by feminists and the politicization of the experiences of people of color by antiracists have often proceeded as if the concerns and experiences they each discuss occur in territories that are mutually exclusive. While sexism and racism frequently collide in the lives of actual people, this is not always the case in feminist and antiracist actions. Therefore, they confine the identity of women of color to a place that is difficult to articulate when practices define identity as a woman or a person of color as an either/or proposition (1242).

In communities of color, attempts to maintain the community cohesive are frequently at the core of campaigns to stop the politicization of domestic abuse. This viewpoint is expressed in a variety of ways. Some detractors contend that feminism is out of place in communities of color, that the issues it raises are inherently polarizing, and that it is the transfer of white women's concerns into a setting where they are detrimental as well as irrelevant. At its most extreme, this language labels any attempt to politicize gender subordination as a communal problem and denies that gender violence is a problem in the community. In her contentious book *The Blackman 's Guide to Understanding the Blackwoman,* Shahrazad Ali adopts this stance (1253).

Generations of critics and activists have called out mainstream conceptions of rape as racist and sexist. These initiatives have helped to demonstrate how images of rape reflect and reinforce race and gender hierarchies in American culture. Black women, as both women and people of color, belong to both groups, and while each has benefited from challenges to sexism and racism, the specific gender and race dynamics linked to Black women's rape have received less attention. Black women have benefited from antiracist and antisexist attacks on rape, but the focus on antiracist and feminist critiques has resulted in a political discourse that does not adequately represent them (1266).

Crenshaw Encompasses that previously, the prevalent conception of rape as a Black criminal versus a white victim has subjected Black males to legal and extralegal abuse. Rape has long been used to justify efforts to control and discipline the Black community, and the portrayal of all Black men as potential threats to the sanctity of white femininity was a common construct that antiracists challenged and worked to demonstrate over a century ago (1266).

Crenshaw points that antiracist critiques of rape law focus on how the law is predominantly used to condemn the rape of white women by Black men. The focus on shielding white women

from Black men has been denounced as discriminatory, yet it also devalues Black women. This disregard for Black women stems from an overemphasis on the ramifications of the crisis for Black men. Of course, rape accusations have traditionally served as a rationale for white terrorism against the Black community, creating a cloak nearly impermeable to arguments based on either humanity or evidence, while the fear of the Black rapist was used to justify the practice of lynching, rape was rarely mentioned in most cases. The dread of Black sexuality was used by whites to justify racial terrorism and maintain control over Black people. Cases involving race-based charges against Black men have long been associated with racial injustice in the African-American community (1271-1272).

Crenshaw emphasizes that addressing the rape of Black women, gender and race clash, causing minority women's concerns to fall in between those of women's issues as well as of racism. However, the power dynamics that each discourse seeks to question are reinforced when the other is not given due credit. For instance, feminism contributes to the forces that result in Black men receiving disproportionate punishment when they rape White women when they fail to acknowledge the role that race played in the public response to the Central Park jogger 's rape. Similarly, when antiracists frame the issue primarily in terms of racial domination, they minimize the fact that women, in particular, and all people, in general, should be outraged by the gender violence the case represented (1282).

According to Crenshaw, it is possible that the devaluation of women of color is connected to how they are depicted in popular culture. Scholars are recognizing the importance of representation in perpetuating racial and gender inequalities in United States. However, discussions on representation often overlook the intersection of race and gender in shaping stereotypes of women of color in media. An investigation of "representational intersectionality"

would consider how critiques of racist and sexist portrayals further marginalize women of color and explore how these images are constructed through the overlapping narratives of race and gender in popular media (1282-1283).

Crenshaw argues that Black women need to make it known in the African-American's political community that patriarchy is a serious problem that has an adverse effect on both Black men and Black women's lives. By doing this, we could contribute to the transformation of ingrained behaviors. Therefore, the presence of racism would not be adequate excuse for blindly supporting misogynistic policies and patriarchal ideals. While Black interests have always been best served by collectively opposing racist practices, an empowered Black feminist sensibility would demand that the terms of unity no longer reflect goals predicated on Black women's continuous marginalization (1295).

Crenshaw suggests that intersectionality serves as a framework for analyzing the different ways that race and gender interact when it comes to violence against women of color. As a means of resolving the conflict between claims of various identities and the continued necessity of group politics, intersectionality may be more generally helpful. In this context, it is useful to differentiate intersectionality from the nearly related viewpoint of ant-essentialism, wherein women of color have criticized white feminism for failing to include enough women of color and for speaking up for them when they do. One interpretation of this antisemitic criticism, which holds that feminism essentializes the category of woman, is heavily influenced by the postmodernist theory, which holds that categories that we take for granted or that are only representational are in fact socially created within a difference-based language economy. Although postmodernism 's descriptive goal of examining the processes by which meaning is socially formed is typically admirable, this

critique occasionally misinterprets the meaning of social construction and distorts its political significance (1296).

3. Feminist Theories for Analysis

3.1. Black feminism

Black feminism is an ideology and method of thought that emphasizes how intertwined and systematic oppression and power are. It focuses on the connections between oppressive systems including capitalism, racial supremacy, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism and offers a paradigm for both individual and group liberation. It addresses the interconnectedness of racism, sexism, class oppression, and other types of discrimination while recognizing the distinct and overlapping identities and experiences of Black people. It is created as a reaction to the difficulties that Black women have experienced in US society. It emphasizes the variety of African-American women's experiences while also recognizing the extra marginalization that results from their social identity. Although Black feminism has different opinions, its key themes intersectionality, empowerment, and social change remain the same.

Over several centuries, Black feminism had a lengthy and rich history. Its origins can be traced to the activism and resistance of African American women who fought against racism, slavery, and the patriarchal systems that oppressed them.

Early feminist movement in 1800s, was associated with the abolition of slavery. This period witnessed the rise of many women defenders about Women's rights, such as: Sojourner Truth, an abolitionist Black woman and abolitionist and women's rights advocate, who addressed racism and sexism in her 1851 speech to a convention for women's rights, when she asked, "Ain't I am Woman?". She says:

> ...Well, children, whar dar is so much racket dar must be something out o'kilter. I tink dat 'twixt de niggers of de Souf and de women at de Norf all a talkin' bout rights, de white men will be in a fix pretty soon. But what's all dis here talkin bout? Dat man ober dar say dat women needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted ober ditches, and to have de best places... and ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm!... I have plowed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me-and ain't I a woman? I could work as much as any man (when I could get it), and bear de lash as well-and ain't I a woman? I have borne five children and I seen'em mos all sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus hear-and ain't I a woman? (Truth qtd. in hooks 160).

By focusing on how racism and sexism combined to generate Black women's social issues and inequalities, Black feminism seeks to empower Black women through creative and critical thought processes. In 1892, Anna Julia Cooper, wrote a book A voice from the south, which focused on the importance of educating and empowering Black women to improve the African American community.

According to hooks, Anna Cooper believed that higher education for women could not only help them fulfill their traditional roles within the home and family, but also allow them to explore new opportunities and contribute more effectively to their country. She rejected the idea that higher education would interfere with marriage (168).

Women have the ability to overcome traditional social roles and expectations, and rely on themselves, focusing on independence and personal growth outside of marriage. Through education and personal development, they can become more connected to the world and empowered in their personal lives. As Cooper highlights in her quote:

> I grant you that intellectual development, with the self-reliance and capacity for earning a livelihood which it gives, renders woman less dependent on the marriage relation for physical support (which, by the way, does not always accompany it). Neither is she compelled to look to sexual love as the one sensation capable of giving tone and relish, movement and vim to the life she lives. Her horizon is extended. Her sympathies are broadened and deepened and multiplied. She is in closer touch with nature (Cooper qtd. in hooks 168).

hooks argues that Anna Julia Cooper was a prominent advocate for social equality for black women, being one of the first to encourage them to speak out about their unique struggles with racism and sexism and how these intersected to impact their societal position (166).

> Cooper states that the current position of women of color in this country is unique. In a time of transition and uncertainty, their status appears to be one of the definitive forces shaping their society. They face challenges related to both their gender and race, and are still not recognized or acknowledged in either issue. (qtd. in hooks 166).

The civil rights movement, particularly its Black feminism element, was a political and social movement that emerged from dissatisfaction with the civil rights and feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s. It centered on advocating for Black women's rights, such as the ability to vote, an end to economic slavery, and the abolition of violence based on race. Black feminists like Ida B. Wells and Anna Julia Cooper utilized their middle-class lives to advocate for poor and workers Black people, bringing attention to issues of inequalities based on race and gender. This movement 's major participants were Angela Davis, bell hooks, and Audre Lorde.

From 1974 until 1980, a group of Black feminists, lesbians, and socialists called the Combahee River Collective was founded in Boston, Massachusetts. It was created as a reaction to

the homophobia and sexism in the civil rights struggle as well as the racism in the feminist movement. The group got its name from Harriet Tubman's successful 1863 Combahee River raid, which set free more than 750 slaves. One of the founders was Barbara Smith. This group published something called "The Combahee River Collective Statement" which described the intersecting oppressions faced by Black women.

Intersectionality has been an important area in Black feminism, with significant figures such as Patricia Hill Collins, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and bell hooks contributing to its growth and development. These perspectives were further emphasized by the founding of the Combahee River Collective in the 1970s, which highlighted the importance of intersectionality in developing Black women's experiences.

According to Bow et al, the CRC statement, written in 1977, is a powerful document of women of color feminism. It originated from the collective struggles of Black lesbians in Boston and has strong relevance in women of color feminist movements in Britain. It is acknowledged as a precursor to contemporary discussions on intersectionality. The statement asserts a commitment to challenging racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression through an integrated analysis acknowledging the interlocking nature of various systems of oppression. It emphasizes the simultaneous experience of different forms of discrimination, such as racism, gender, class, and sexuality, in understanding the impact of power dynamics. This early articulation of these ideas lays the groundwork for later discussions on embodiment and personal experience (170).

3.2. Postcolonial Feminism

Gunjate suggests, the term postcolonial refers to the resistance against colonial power and its lasting influence on different cultures, even after they have gained independence from their colonizers. Postcolonial theory aims to challenge the narratives imposed by the colonizers that

perpetuate a sense of inferiority among the colonized people. It also seeks to promote literature produced by the colonized that reflects their identity and history, reclaiming it from the distorted view imposed by the colonizers. Postcolonial theorists work to include the perspectives of colonized individuals in the dominant discourse in a way that challenges the authority of the colonizer (284).

The 1980s marked the emergence of postcolonial feminism, which challenges standard feminist theories and attempts to decolonize feminist practice by emphasizing the experiences of people oppression or discrimination on the basis of their gender.

Tavassoli and Mirzapour claims that Postcolonial feminism, often known as third-world feminism, presents that third-world women suffer both colonial and patriarchal oppression. It is an examination of colonialism and neocolonialism in relation to gender, nation, class, race, and sexualities in many contexts of women's lives, subjectivity, work, sexuality, and rights. This method emphasizes the collaboration between patriarchy and colonialism. Even so, it is an issue of gender in connection with race and class in the context of the international people, as stated by postcolonial feminism. The primary postcolonial feminism works revolve around topics such as monitory and opposed statements to First World feminists, the rejection of the roles and places routinely designated to women and feminists of the third World, alliance establishing, and providing complexities and depth to feminism's political landscape (69).

According to Tyagi, Postcolonial feminist theory is, particularly, concerned with the depiction of women in former colonial countries and Western places. It addresses the production of gender difference in colonial and anticolonial discourses, as well as the illustration of women in anticolonial and postcolonial discourses, with a special emphasis on the work of female writers.

Postcolonial feminist critics question a number of philosophical, methodological, and political issues related to gender representation research (45).

Based on Tyagi's explanation that postcolonial feminist theory put pressure on conventional postcolonial theory by repeatedly emphasizing the importance of gender considerations. The relationship between postcolonialism and feminism has been strained as some feminist critics highlight how postcolonial theory is a male-centered field that has not only ignored but also taken advantage of women's problems. Postcolonial feminist theorists have charged that postcolonial theorist have misrepresented women in nationalist discourses in addition to erasing their contribution to the struggle for independence (46).

Tyagi argues that in postcolonial feminist theory, the interaction between White feminists and their indigenous counterparts has always been a central topic. White feminists have been ready to highlight the concerns of colonized women, but they have ignored the racial, cultural, and historical distinctions that characterize these women's situation. By doing this, they have oppressed colonial women by imposing White feminist models on them. This section examines two major weaknesses in the work of Western feminists regarding "Third World" women: the rejection of the socio-historical background and the absence of the concept of "race" (47).

Gunjate claims, Postcolonial feminist criticism significantly contributes to literary studies by bringing together various fields, challenging Western bias, and reintroducing diverse perspectives to literary history. The concept of a global sisterhood emerged in academic circles in the 1990s, advocating for the representation of multiple voices to create an inclusive form of feminism. The goal was to make the writings of postcolonial women accessible and understandable to Western audiences. Nevertheless, the term postcolonial women have posed challenges similar to other colonial-related terminology. Some scholars argue that the term has led to

oversimplification and superficial assumptions of oppression, hindering a deeper exploration beyond simplistic notions of good and bad. Furthermore, there is confusion among some theorists who equate the terms racist and sexist, blurring the distinction between the portrayal of postcolonial women within feminist discourse and that of indigenous individuals within the colonial context (284)

Gunjate suggests that Modern postcolonial feminist criticism allows for a variety of methods derived from other fields, rather than emphasizing the works of women from underdeveloped nations. It poses a challenge to Western academia by exposing its propensity to marginalize and ignore the subjectivity and creativity of women in the Third World. By challenging assumptions about what is at the center (the norm). and what is on the peripheral (described as the "other"). in a postcolonial world marked by migration, it considers shifts in the contemporary world. Because Third World writing frequently reacts to various social, regional, and national groups whose aesthetic ideals are quite diverse, postcolonial feminist criticism must be diverse (284-285).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the theoretical concept of intersectionality and feminist perspectives encourage the eliminating oppressive systems. And work for a more inclusive future, eliminating of discrimination, achieving equality, and removing oppression faced by the voices of marginalized societies. Also, the complexities of intersectionality and feminist perspectives are a way to comprehend the invisible ways in which intersecting forms of oppression emerge and how they impact individuals access, opportunities, and social recognition. This theoretical chapter emphasized the importance of recognizing and addressing diversity within identity categories. Moreover, intersectionality is necessary to analyze and challenge systems of discrimination and

inequality. By focusing on the voices and experiences of marginalized individuals, and also using postcolonial feminism and black feminism to explore the ways in which intersecting identities and individuals' experiences of oppression and resistance are shaped by focusing on oppression and marginalized voices in society.

Chapter Two

Analysis of Female Characters in the Light of Race, Gender, and Class

Introduction

The purpose of this analytical chapter is to examine how to portray female characters in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* in terms of race, gender, and class. Through a close examination of characters such as Effia, Esi, Akua, Maame, Abena, and Ness, this chapter aims to analyze the intersectionality of their identities and experiences. From the experiences faced by women of mixed heritage, like Effia to the unique struggles of African women under the foundations of slavery and colonialism represented by Esi, each character's story sheds light on the complexities of race and gender. Additionally, the impact of class on the lives of characters like Ness and Willie further illustrates the intricate structure of factors that contribute to their identities and experiences. This chapter attempts to provide a deeper comprehension of how race, gender, and class intersect in *Homegoing*.

1. Gender

1.1. Effia: Traditional Roles and Responsibilities of Women

Gyasi's *Homegoing* follows the lives of two half-sisters, Effia and Esi, throughout 18th-century Ghana to contemporary America, investigating the influence of race, gender, and class on their experiences and those of their generations. It examines the separate histories of these sisters that followed across seven generations. It exposes the complex legacies of slavery for both those who were captured and those who remain, demonstrating how the trauma of captivity has been imprinted on the spirit of this country. The novel explores the lasting impacts of slavery and racist institutions on the descendants of enslaved individuals, investigating how ancestry shape's identity, the generational effects of trauma, and the true meaning of going home.

Jackson States that Black women's diasporic experiences are influenced by postcolonial displacement, globalization, and mass migration, resulting in a complex identity. Black women confront difficulties in defending themselves against the imperial hegemony, and they must express their own self-representation to challenge stereotypes and highlight the complexities of their experiences. Literary narratives play an important role in exposing racial injustices and shedding light on black women's struggles in postcolonial societies. The formation of new identities during diasporic life is an ongoing theme in these stories, showing the effect of the various countries to which black women have migrated (101).

In *Homegoing*, Effia embodies the traditional roles and responsibilities of women in the Fante village of 18th-century Ghana who had to marry, and have children to continue their lineage. Her responsibilities also include doing household chores, taking care of her husband and children, and maintaining harmonious relationships within the family.

Effia, a beautiful young woman, is pressured by her mother, Baaba, to marry James Collins, a wealthy man who is captivated by her beauty. Despite Effia's reservations, her family convince her to marry him for their benefit. Baaba asks Effia to do not tell anyone when her blood comes, as in their society, she is seen as incomplete and cursed for not menstruating a sign of femininity, readiness for marriage, and motherhood. Without menstruation, she cannot marry.

> Baaba's conversation with husband "She is all but promised to Abeeku!" he yelled at Baaba when Baaba told him that she was considering the offer. "Yes, but Abeeku cannot marry her until her blood comes, and we have been waiting years now. I tell you, husband, I think she was cursed in that fire, a demon who will never become a woman. Think about it. What creature is that beautiful but cannot be touched? All of the signs of womanhood

are there, and yet, still, nothing. The white man will marry her regardless. He does not know what she is" (Gyasi 19).

Gallego claims that Baaba draws upon patriarchal views of female bodies as defiled and marginalized, highlighting the traditional association between women and evil. This demonstrates Baaba's compromised position as she goes against the desires of her supposed daughter. Baaba's actions stem from a desire for retribution and bitterness due to her forced responsibility to care for a slave's child. It is also noteworthy how Effia's physical attractiveness is used against her as if it is a transgression, and even being labeled as "The Beauty" provides no benefit to her (8). Effia's story underscores society's expectations of women to conform to traditional roles where marriage and family are above their personal desires and ambitions.

Effia is afraid of motherhood in the context that she will become a bad mother because of her experience with her mother Baaba and this will prevent her to fulfill her role like other mothers. Her fears also reflect her delay in having children, when James asks for that. Mahmoud argues that, traditions, customs, and history of African cultures privilege men over women in numerous aspects of life. Women in many African civilizations are primarily responsible for household tasks as wives and mothers, while men engage in activities outside the home. The impact of colonialism in Africa decreased gender disparities by preferring men in areas such as access to Western education, leadership roles, and economic success (309). Effia worried about her ability to fulfill her desires and also doubts about her ability to became pregnant and her anxiety stems from her previous experience and the pressures imposed on her to comply with societies expectations regarding her femininity and motherhood.

1.2. Maame and Abena: The Impact of Gender Roles and Expectations

Maame who is the biological mother of Effia and Esi. Maame's character demonstrates the impact of social ideals and oppression on individuals, particularly, regarding gender roles and expectations. Maame's experience as a maid in Cobbe Otcher household demonstrates the fear and exploitation that slave women confront, where power dynamics and gender inequalities create settings conducive to attack and violence. Her difficult experience of rape by leader Cobbe Otcher, resulted in the birth of Effia, emphasizes the oppression and limited liberty that women face in a patriarchal environment.

Lewis notes that Maame who appears on the family tree does not have her own chapter and her origins and ultimate fate remain a mystery. She is an Asante woman who is kidnapped in a slave raid and taken to a Fante tribe, where she gives birth to Effia. After Effia's birth, Maame sets a fire that allows her to escape from captivity. This act of liberation triggers a series of tragic events for Effia's descendants. Effia is unable to form a connection with Maame or uncover her story, in part because of Maame's decision to flee her captor (19).

The fire that sweeps through the town, resulting in Maame flight from Fanteland, and separation from Effia, represents a force of disturbance that could change women's lives, Maame starts a new life by marrying the old man Asare of the Asante village and giving birth to her second daughter, Esi.

Maame lives an ordinary life with her husband and daughter, Esi grows up without knowing her mother's past. Lewis asserts that, Maame's shame is profound and pervasive, extending beyond the trauma of rape and captivity to impact her sense of self. Esi discovers details about her mother's past, including Maame's enslavement, assault, and the existence of a half-sister she has yet to meet, through Abronoma, an enslaved house servant for Esi's family. Additionally,

Maame's physical fear responses align with her psychological reactions to shame, as she continues to exhibit a state of fight-or-flight reminiscent of her experiences in captivity despite being physically present in Esi's life (19- 20).

Following the attack on their village, Maame escorts Esi to the forest and gives her a black stone, reminiscent of the one left for Effia. Then, she returns because Maame feels unable to escape once more. According to Lewis, "the trauma from setting the fire and abandoning Effia as a newborn still resonates with Maame, thereby rendering her unable to run away again" (20).

Abena's story highlights the impact of gender roles and expectations on her life and how she is in a society that imposes restrictions based on her gender, while she desires to enjoy her personal freedom and adhere to the traditions and values of her society imposed on her. Abena is the daughter of James, Effia's grandson, and her mother, Akosua, a poor girl from Asante. She is 25 years old and unmarried because she takes the bad luck from her father, who is known as Unlucky because of the failure of his crops. This is reflected in his value as a man and on the status of his daughter Abena in society. She is treated as if she is old, and no one can marry her because she is considered an unlucky daughter. Even Ohene, whom she always waits to marry, does not want to marry her because he thinks she is not worthy of the bride price. This shows that their society is built on the commodification of women. Abena wants to marry Ohene out of love, but their society still deals with buying a bride as a form of ownership.

Abena does not want to say it. Instead, she wants to force the words to stay inside her mouth but she feels them coming up her throat, pressing against her lips.

> "Then why won't you marry me?" Ohene Nyarko sat down next to her. "We've talked about that. I will marry you when I have my next big harvest. My parents always used to say that I shouldn't marry a woman whose clan l didn't know. They said you would bring

> nothing but dishonor to my children, if we had children at all, but they don't speak for me anymore. I don't care what the villagers say. I don't care if your mother was thought barren until she had you. I don't care that you are the daughter of a nameless man. I will marry you as soon as my land tells me that I am ready to marry you (Gyasi 132-133).

Despite society's cruelty to women, Abena is able to break expectations by starting a sexual relationship with Ohene, and they quickly have sex while they were going to Asante city of Kumasi.

Abu Jweid claims that Abena confronts the historical victimization of black women during slavery. They were forcibly taken as slaves and subjected to degrading treatment by their masters, resists her husband Ohene Nyarko's use of the English language, as it represents the colonial power that enforced patriarchy in her tribe. She detests being called darling in English. This colonization has significantly impacted Abena's beliefs in ethical equality between men and women (35).

The story of Abena shows how societal and individual mistakes fall on the woman. The villagers blame Abena for the failure of the crops, and they believe that she brings bad luck to the village because of her relationship with Ohene.

1.3. Esi and Ness: The Double Burden of Oppression Faced by Women

Esi is the daughter of the old man and Maame and Effia's half-sister. Following her capture, Esi is transferred to Cape Coast Castle. hooks asserts that the white slavers had complete control over female slaves on the ships, being able to brutalize and exploit them without fear of retaliation. The slaves were branded with hot irons and lashed with a cat-o'- nine-tails if they cried out or resisted. Women were beaten severely and stripped of their clothing, leading to sexual vulnerability and the threat of rape as a method of torture. This caused great fear and trauma for African women on the ship (18). where she has endured confinement in a terrible cell and exposed

to violence and exploitation of black women during that period. According to Abu jweid, Gyasi's *Homegoing* exposes on the systemic white patriarchy that oppresses black women. This oppression is starkly visible in the confinement of black women in dungeons and compounds, such as in Asante land where they are restricted within the boundaries of Cape Coast Castle. Esi, one of these oppressed women, is held captive in the compound for an extended period before eventually gaining her freedom. The mistreatment of black women is not limited to Esi alone, as Gyasi portrays the brutality inflicted on many others in similar circumstances. The novel exposes the cruelty of white men who mistreat and oppress black women, subjecting them to torment and abuse in the name of patriarchal control (36). Esi observes a terrible event in which a mother loses her child as a result of the soldier's abuse. Furthermore, the soldier takes the baby from his mother Afua and the chief of her village sells him to the British due to her unmarried pregnancy.

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

These depicted situations where women are treated like animals in jail. They do not eat a proper food, as their only other meals is porridge, and they are not allowed to use the bathroom. Women in prisons suffer severe conditions, rape, and a tragic fate because sold into slavery due to an unmarried pregnancy or sexual exploitation, in which women are punished and blamed rather than men. McKinley's analysis delves into how this hatred towards oppressed women is viewed through a colonial perspective. African women are subjected to severe racial mistreatment as a

result of the heteropatriarchal social structures established by colonial powers to assert their dominance over women. Consequently, these women face harsh living conditions due to gender biases and marginalization enforced by men and the systems of colonial oppression. The hatred directed towards African women stems from the oppressive patriarchal system perpetuated by colonial cultures (McKinley qtd in. Abu Jweid 34).

Before her time in the dungeon, Esi has a significant status and an ideal, loving, caring growth from her parents, Maame and the respected man-of-war, Elder. However, the dynamics of power and control within her family are also rooted in oppression due to the violence and abuse imposed out to the little girl who is taken away as a slave. The old man applies severe punishment on Abronuma, and Maame complies with his demands. The violence directed at Abronoma exemplifies patriarchal society's violence toward the enslaved. Esi attempts to obtain more connection and discussion with Abronuma who sympathizes with her. They find shared emotions between them and this demonstrates solidarity and understanding despite the forces that attempt to separate them. Esi feels compassion for her and attempts to be her friend. Lewis contends that Effia has no relationship with Maame, Esi's bond with her mother is loving and strong until their village is attacked. Prior to the raid, Esi knowing about Maame's past trauma from Abronoma and witnesses the effects it has on her. When the village is raided, Maame's decision not to escape with Esi leaves her with a sense of loss and a feeling of incompleteness. The stone Esi receives from Maame is the only reminder she has of her mother and her life before captivity, representing a tangible connection to her past (22).

Esi's final moments with her family are marked by an attack that compels Maame and Esi to run into the unknown. This invasion represents the threat, instability, and disturbances that women confront in the context of colonial violence and oppression. It underlines Maame's anxiety

and inability to flee. She does not want to flee away again because of the duty and sacrifice that woman bear in society. It represents the harsh situations and choices that women like Esi face in a world marked by exploitation and discrimination. She fled into the forest and grabbed a palm tree, but the soldiers captured her. Abu Jweid argues that, oppression of African women is rooted in issues of skin color. White hegemony subject's black women to deprivation and marginalization. The dominance of white males is evident in defining the nature of this marginalization and the white patriarchy plays a significant role in perpetuating it. Post-colonialism, in response, seeks to address the marginalization of women by advocating for societal transformation to improve the plight of women. Through this lens, post-colonialism raises awareness of the challenges faced by women in patriarchal societies and aims to create more inclusive social environments. Gyasi's depiction of the marginalization of African women highlights the negative experiences endured by black women (34). She becomes a friend with a girl who is walking besides. Both of them were transported to a castle and a prison, where women informed each other that they had to face sexual abuse from troops so that others would not have to, while another soldier smiled at Esi and raped her. In accordance with Lewis analyze, during her imprisonment in the Castle dungeon, Esi is sexually assaulted by a white soldier. To cope with the trauma, she mentally transports herself back to a memory of her parents engaging in a sexual act. This memory, one of the last recollections of Maame that is articulated in Esi's, helps her to make sense of the rape and the loss of her innocence (22). Sexual assault damages Esi and other women, but they grow stronger and more patient in order to survive.

hooks states that the sexual exploitation of black women during slavery led to a devaluation of black womanhood that has persisted for centuries. Despite some individuals expressing sympathy towards the plight of exploited black women during and after slavery, they were still

viewed through a patriarchal lens that diminished their value and worth. Records from the time show that even abolitionists who condemned the rape of black women often failed to see them as victims, instead labeling them as complicit in their own exploitation. This demonstrates the deep-seated societal attitudes and biases that have perpetuated the devaluation of black women and their experiences (53).

Ness is the daughter of Esi and she is 25 years old. When she was young, she was captured and sold as a slave, separated from Esi years ago. Ness was born into a society that marginalizes women and diminishes their value, facing the double burden of oppression that African women endure due to colonization.

Ness works at the plantation of Thomas Allan Stockham in the cotton fields as a "nigger" because she is forbidden to work as a house slave due to the scars on her body from the abuse. hooks claims that the white male slavers likely viewed African women, who were taught to follow the rules of their society, as ideal candidates for slavery because of their familiarity with tough field work and diverse household chores. They believed these women would be highly beneficial on American plantations (17). She suffered at the plantation she used to call "the hell" with a master she called "the devil." Motahane States that in that Ness, Esi's daughter and a first-generation African American, embodies the enduring impact of black oppression and how it is used to exert physical and mental control. Her narrative unfolds in America, showcasing the transformation of African identity into a mere commodity. While she does not endure the harrowing journey on the slave ship like her ancestors, she carries the collective trauma experienced by her mother and the first African Americans. In contrast to her mother, whose beauty is erased in the process of transitioning from an African individual to an American object, Ness's beauty on the plantation renders her visible, yet her visibility serves only the interests of

white authority (10). Ness's story sheds light on slavery, brutal labor, lack of freedom, and losing her family and identity. Being biracial, she is subjected to discrimination and societal constraints. The cruelty of slavery intensifies as the slave starts to see their daily needs, which are considered basic rights in society, as luxuries, Allan Stockham the plantation owner was a kind man for them, granting them breaks and water breaks.

Ness, who keeps distance from others, forms a bond with Pinky, the daughter of a former slave on the plantation. When Pinky is unjustly beaten by the farm owner's son, for being black and poor, Ness intervenes. In a fit of arrogance, Allan's son calls his father and asks him to punish Ness for her actions. This incident highlights the deep-rooted racism and injustice in society, particularly among children, and shows how privilege can cause bad behavior. The situation reminds Ness of her own suffering as a slave on the devil's plantation, where he bought an African slave named Sam, strong and muscular. When he is angry, he practices violence against his captors. The devil marries him to Ness, when Sam witnesses Ness's sacrifices towards him. When they give birth to a boy named Kojo, Sam becomes a good worker, and Ness decides to escape with her husband and son. But, they are caught by the Devil, where he hangs Sam, and Ness is flogged almost to death. She witnesses the destruction of her family and community. She is subjected to the expectations and restrictions imposed on her.

The hardships of slavery, injustice, and persecution are passed down from mother to daughter through generations, as Ness experiences the same injustices of her mother Esi, falls under the so-called patriarchal system and the British colonizers control over African women, subjecting them to various forms of violence, including physical and emotional abuse, enduring dehumanization and cruelty.

According to Motahane, the scars that Ness carries from her time at the oppressive plantation are profoundly imprinted on her body and memory, intertwining personal and collective histories that contribute to what she perceives as her ugly nakedness. This feeling of ugliness and nakedness, stemming from the scars of her enslavement, layers her identity with trauma that transcends through generations via inherited memories of slavery. Thus, the motifs of beauty deteriorating into ugly nakedness and the lasting scars of bondage illustrate the African and African American identities embodied by Esi and her daughter Ness, respectively, as products of the African peoples evolving journey from prettiness to ugliness in the American context (10).

2. Race

2.1. Effia: Experiences as a Woman of Mixed Heritage

Effia is the first daughter of Maame and her rapist, Cobbe Otcher. On the night Effia was born, a fire broke out in her father's compound in Fante. Maame manages to escape but Effia's father instructs his wife, Baaba, to raise and care for Effia, and never speak of what has happened that night. They believe the fire is a sign of a curse that will haunt them for generations, and Effia was born from that fire. That is why Baaba has no milk to feed her. Effia grows up believing that Baaba is her biological mother. Baaba treats her very poorly which is an evidence of violence against women by men and women alike. Effia grows up as a beautiful young woman. Many men in the village desire to marry her, but Baaba asks her not to tell anyone when her blood comes, as they believe a woman's role in society is only to bear children, and no one will accept to marry her until she is sexually mature.

Baaba plans to make rid of Effia by marrying her off to the British colonizer James Collins, who is the appointed governor of Cape Coast Castle. She convinces everyone that Effia has an evil spirit residing within her and that she cannot bear children. The goal is to enhance trade and

establish good relations with the British. They sell their women and marry them off to leaders and white merchants to enhance trade, especially in the slave trade and gain power. Abu Jweid states that, Effia's experiences shed light on the struggles faced by black women, particularly those of African descent, throughout history. The narrative focuses on the oppression and mistreatment of these women, who often encounter each other as they are captured and sold into slavery. Effia is taken aback by the mistreatment of her fellow African woman, Millicent, whose physical appearance and personality reflect their shared African heritage. This portrayal emphasizes the harsh reality of how black women have been marginalized and exploited for profit based on their race and ethnicity. Gyasi effectively highlights the systemic oppression faced by black women, underscoring the commercial exploitation of their identities in a racially segregated society (33). Baaba gives Effia a black stone, telling her it is a piece from her mother. Even though she does not know her, the black stone will be passed down to her descendants one by one as a sign of one's connection to her/his heritage and culture.

Effia moves to live in Cape Coast Castle with her husband. While walking around the castle, she notices how white men view black women as sexual objects, marrying them to fulfill their physical needs and referring to them as "wenches" instead of "wife" (Gyasi 23). which is extremely racist.

Over time, when Effia lives in the castle, she discovers that there are women in the dungeons, being traded as slaves, as her half-sister, Esi, is among the women imprisoned there, where James called them "cargo" (Gyasi 21). However, Effia feels powerless to change the situation of this wrongdoing, she did not have enough strength and authority to do anything. She only does what her husband demands, and stays silent. This shows that women are considered property of men, and women slack of power and voice. This is the first instance of colonialism

that Effia has faced. Lewis argues that Effia's central role in the narrative is overshadowed by her inadvertent role as an oppressor, demonstrated by her marriage to James Collins, the governor responsible for the Atlantic slave trade. Despite her dismay upon discovering the captive women beneath the Castle, Effia never considers their post-dungeon destinies, highlighting her lack of awareness of their fates. Effia's unintentional oppression is further emphasized by her passive acceptance of her role as James's wife and her lack of consideration for the dehumanization of the captives. Effia's narrative complexity lies in her dual role as both a victim and an unintentional oppressor in the narrative (28-29). Effia's mixed heritage affects her relationship with her half-sister, Esi, who is a slave, she is confined in a dungeon in the same castle where Effia is, and she is exposed to the brutality of the transatlantic slave trade, while Effia enjoys a comfortable life as the wife of a British man. Their experiences highlight how race, gender, class, power and heritage intersect in shaping their identity. Over time, Effia becomes worried about her inability to conceive because of the belief, taken from her community, that she has no value if she cannot have children.

Furthermore, since Effia struggles to understand the people in the castle well when they speak, except a girl from her village whose name is Adwoa. This girl is married to a British soldier, and since they are from the same village, they have the same heritage, and share one culture. Adwoa gives some roots to Effia for fertility, so she could put them under her bed during her intercourse with James, without letting him sees these things. In relation to this, Gallego discusses concerns on different levels. Firstly, it may bring up the troubling association between black women and animalistic qualities from a Eurocentric perspective. Secondly, it hints at the sexual connotations that label sexually active women as deviant in a sexist context. However, when viewed through African cultural norms, Adwoa's words celebrate positive representations of femininity and matrilineal heritage, asserting African women's importance in society. This

defiance challenges the established sexist and racist norms, as these women embrace their autonomy and traditional beliefs. By reclaiming their roles as mothers and ancestors, they find empowerment and a sense of healing both individually and within their communities. This alternative perspective offers a way for generational healing to take place (9). When James notices the roots, he tells her that it could not be any "black magic" or "voodoo" and it is "not a Christian" That is "not good" (Gyasi 26). Since Christianity here is a form of colonialism, the image of indigenous religions is distorted in favor of Christian beliefs, as the colonizers impose their authority and culture on the colonized peoples, James's religion is superior to do this magic, or as he describes it, the devil. Based on Lewis's view, there is an instance where race is not a significant factor in the centuries leading up to the slave trade. Effia's husband, James, discovers a fertility root and expresses disapproval by telling Effia he does not want any voodoo or black magic in their home. Effia is puzzled by James's use of basic binaries like "good" and "bad" or "black" and "white", as she does not understand the white men's tendency to categorize things or people from African villages. Despite this, the text emphasizes that Gyasi's inclusion of the eighteenth-century slave trade does not detract from the responsibility of white Europeans in perpetuating the slave trade (18).

When Effia returns to her village, as she sits in her father's deathbed, her brother Fifi tells her that their real mother is Maame, and the black stone belongs to her. Effia values passing it down through generations, as a reminder of their heritage for her descendants.

2.2. Esi: The Unique Experiences of African Women Within the Context of Slavery and Colonialism

Esi's story depicts African women's unique experiences during slavery and colonialism, including kidnapping, sexual assault, and violence. We can observe Esi's terrible experience when

she is raped by a soldier. When he finishes his shameful behave and looks at her with disapproval, as if she is the one who violates him, and then he simply returns her to prison without caring or looking at her.

> When he had finished, he looked horrified, disgusted with her. As though he were the one who had had something taken from him. As though he were the one who had been violated. 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 (Gyasi 48).

Gallego states that Esi's story illuminates the horrific conditions in the dungeons where enslaved women are stacked on top of each other, enduring severe mistreatment and degradation. Esi's experience of being raped in the age of fifteen illustrates the dehumanization she faced, reduced to a mere object for abuse. The white soldiers show no remorse in using and violating these women's bodies, further degrading themselves in the process. Another soldier later rapes Esi in his room and is disgusted by her afterward, placing blame on her instead of himself. Esi's response to this injustice demonstrates her resilience and awareness of the unjust power dynamics at play, highlighting the importance of self-healing and self-protection in the face of such abuse (9).

This is a despicable conduct since white men believe they have the right to abuse and mistreat black women because of their gender and race. Motahane states that, Esi's black body is only noticed when needed to show racial and gender empowerment through violence. Esi's scars are a result of beatings by her slave owners, especially whipping, which are used to display the master's dominance and leave lasting marks on racial identities. Scars have become a symbol of black identity in America (10). This demonstrates how African women are ignored, abused, stripped of their humanity, and considered as things that can be taken and thrown. Esi also

experiences this in her encounter with Commander James where he examines her and other enslaved women, subjecting them to inhuman body examination that devastate their worth.

When the dark portal opens and Governor James emerges, pointing to twenty women, including Esi and another soldier, he holds their wrists and pulls them into a line. James begins to examine everyone and he places his hands between Esi legs. When he observes the blood on his hands, he seeks her with a gaze marked by pity. He is aware of the terrible pain to which she and other women in the area are exposed, and this is evidence of his knowledge and acknowledgment of her suffering and the other women. Esi's reaction also demonstrates her skepticism about the extent of Governor James understanding of the depth of her pain and trauma. Callego emphasizes that, the part where Governor James examines the women is extremely brutal. He checks their private areas without any hesitation. This awful scene further illustrates how these enslaved women are reduced to mere sexual body parts, representing their complete objectification and sexualization. They are viewed solely as "sexual commodities" to be exploited, sold, and profited from. Additionally, it highlights James' highest level of abjection since he is the one in authority and shows no hesitation or disgust in his actions towards the powerless women (9-10). This scene captures the complex dynamics of power and empathy between African women and their colonizers.

The soldier, then, orders them to be taken out of dungeon where Esi desperately tries to dig and find her mother's black stone in the chaos. But, the soldier takes it before she can find it. While women are led to the ocean and before Esi leaves, James Collins provides her a smile. When Esi sees the white man's smile, she realizes that this means evil, oppression, and inhumanity, not kindness.

> "No, my stone!" Esi shouted, remembering. The golden-black stone her mother had given her. She flung herself to the ground and. started to dig and dig and dig, but then the. soldier was lifting her body and soon all that she could feel instead of dirt in her steadily moving hands was air and more air (Gyasi 49).

2.3. Akua Racial Oppression and Identity Struggles

Akua is Abena's daughter and her story is considered an intergenerational shock. Her family's history witnessed trauma. Akua is a girl who struggles with the effects of racial oppression and the complexities of her identity. Her mother, Abena, died shortly after her birth.

Akua is mistreated by the missionary man who scolds her for being heathen. He flogs her every time and forces her to accept the Christian religion. He describes all people on the Black Continent as heathens, who must return to God, and be thankful for the presence of the British there. He orders Akua to repent for her sins and repeat, "God bless the queen," meaning that the British have come to save the heathens. This treatment of the missionary reflects the suffering that Africans were facing at that time, from racist persecution and attempts to impose Western religion and culture on them, as Akua was bearing the burden of persecution because of her religion and identity.

Akua hears a child calling the word "Obroni" she thinks it means "white man" because she basically grows up in a white society. However, the fetish priest tells her that it means "wicked man." Her misunderstanding shows the extent of her influence by colonialism and its changes to her culture and faith. Akua struggles with this misconception for 16 years.

Akua meets Asamoah at a missionary school where he proposes to her after just two weeks. Asamoah promises to free Akua from the restrictions of the missionary lifestyle. But, the missionary ultimately refuses to let her go, convinces her to stay, and tells her about Abena who

has not repented for her sins. He reveals that he accidentally kills her while trying to baptize her, leading to her tragic death. This story highlights the oppression and appropriation of religion by colonial forces, even at the cost of lives and the erasure of cultural identity. Akua's upbringing in the missionary religion further does not distances her from her heritage despite the violent actions of the missionary.

Akua and her husband, Asamoah, live in Edwosa with their two daughters. Akua is troubled by nightmares of a firewoman carrying two children, stemming from a memory of witnessing villagers burning a white man tied to a tree. Despite understanding the man's cries for help in English, no one intervenes due to the arrest of King Asante and the British governor's demand for the golden stool The villagers have no choice but to go to war, including Asamoah. This reflects the unjust circumstances faced by societies in conflicts where violence is used to seize control and destroy communities. This highlights the themes of injustice, persecution, and the harsh realities of colonial oppression. Lewis suggests that part one of *Homegoing*, a fire devastates a Fante village, symbolizes the traumatic experiences faced by Effia's descendants, particularly Akua. This fire motif continues in part two where Akua's dreams of fire mirror Maame's act of starting a fire the night Effia was born. The recurring theme of fire exacerbates both Maame and Akua's grief and trauma. In Akua's dreams, a firewoman carrying two baby girls symbolizes the loss and sorrow associated with the family's history. Although the identities of the girls are implied to be Maame, Effia, and Esi, Akua remains unaware of the connection. The narrative reveals that Akua begins to have these dreams years after her mother's death, highlighting their shared experience of maternal absence due to trauma. Abena's journey to Kumasi and subsequent interaction with missionaries further contextualizes the cycle of suffering passed down through generations (23-24).

Akua's night dreams worsen during the war. Her mother-in-law, Nana Sarwa, notices her odd behavior of staring at the fire and decides that Akua is ill and isolates her in a hut away from her daughters. Akua continues to have disturbing dreams of a firewoman asking for her children. Akua prays to various gods for help and repeatedly utters the word "fire" in a desperation. She spends a week isolated. Through her prayers, Akua conveys feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, reflecting the racial oppression she faces. The symbol of fire represents personal conflicts and her quest for liberation from her struggles. When the Asante have lost the war, Asamoah finally returns and frees Akua from her forced imprisonment caused by her mother-in-law. Akua sees him with only one leg because he has lost the other in the war, and this is evidence of the harm and injustice that the British caused to the Asante people.

One night, Akua has a dream. She walks on Cape Coast Beach where a fire burns in the ocean and a firewoman appears carrying two children. The firewoman takes Akua to a hut, saying it looks like hers, and tells her she has found her children. Akua is happy until she wakes up to villagers shouting "the crazy woman" (Gyasi 180); her hands and legs are burning. She realizes she has set fire to her hut and burned her daughters. Her husband begs the villagers to forgive Akua as their son Yaw survives. Yaw's survival gives hope for their family's future. The fiery firewoman and the children in Akua's dream symbolize Maame carrying Effia and Esi, and the fire that haunts their descendants.

According to Van Rens, Akua recounts how a fetish priest interprets her nightmares as a reflection of evil in her family's history. She acknowledges the presence of wrongdoing in their lineage, referencing ancestors who were involved in the slave trade. The physical scars on their hands serve as a reminder of the consequences of their actions. This connection between past trauma and present struggles suggests the potential for intergenerational transfer of trauma (18).

Akua's dream of being in the beach or ocean, the water embodies Akua's suffering because of her ancestor's involvement in the slave trade and transporting them across the Atlantic, even though she does not know them and does not even know their history.

3. Class

3.1. Ness: Unveiling the Legacy of Slavery and Class Hierarchy

Ness, Esi's daughter, was born and raised as a slave. This represents the nature of class oppression that exists within society which stems from slavery's historical legacies, Ness's experiences on the plantation depict painful realities such as marginalization and exploitation based on her social class.

Tom Allan Stockham, the plantation owner, exercised his authority in a way that exemplifies the power dynamics within the farm. This hierarchical structure becomes apparent when Ness, a farm worker, is discriminated against based on her appearance and social class. Upon her arrival, Tom initially thinks Ness is too beautiful to work in the fields, and assigns her to work in his house. However, Tom's perception is quickly changed when he notices the scars that covers Ness's body while she is wearing a revealing dress. This disturbing sight promotes Tom and his wife into shock, insisting that Ness must join the other workers in the field. According to hooks, instead of focusing on the de-masculinization of black men in colonial American society, it is more accurate to examine the dynamics of sexist and racist oppression through the lens of the masculinization of black women. Black women were forced to assume a "masculine" role by laboring in the fields alongside black men, while few black women were employed as domestics in white households. This highlights the differential treatment and devaluation of black women during slavery (22).

Although she has previously endured extreme hardships during her time in a different place, Ness adapts to the physical labor required of her on Tom's farm. This incident highlights the extent to which powerful individuals, such as Tom Allan Stockham, are able to exploit their positions of authority to perpetuate prejudices, concerning social class and physical appearance, which influence the treatment and fate of those subjected to slavery.

> And so, Ness did. She walked out to her audience of two, her shoulders bared, as well as the bottom halves of her calves, and when Susan Stockham saw her, she fainted outright. It was all Tom Allan could do to catch his wife while shouting at Margaret to go change Ness at once. Margaret rushed her into the back room, and left in search of field clothes, and Ness stood in the center of that room, running her hands along her body, reveling in her ugly nakedness (Gyasi 71).

Ness faces class oppression and this is evident in her interactions with Pinky, a young girl. When Tom Jr demands an apology from Pinky for his sister and she is unable to speak, he becomes aggressive and brings a stick to hit her. Ness intervenes and tries to stop him, causing his to fall to the ground. Despite the father witnesses the incident and knows the truth, he sides with his son's false accusation that Ness intentionally harms him. This display of unfair power dynamics showcases the threat of violence faced by Pinky and Ness, highlighting the inequality and shared oppression they experience under the control of the plantation master and his family.

Despite the difficulties she encounters, Ness remains trapped in the haunting memories of her past. She recalls her marriage to Sam, an African man who does not speak English, and is forced by the devil for the marriage which was not of their choosing. This serves as a representation of the unequal power dynamics and treatment of enslaved individuals by their master and highlights the brutal control and dehumanization experienced by those subordinates to the ruling

class. This situation underscores deep-seated issues of classism and domination within the society in which they are living.

The story of Ness also confirms the trauma that is transmitted from generation to another, from Maame to Esi to Ness, the lasting impact of slavery and the nature of class oppression to which slaves are exposed.

3.2. Willie: The impact of poverty and class-based discrimination

Willie's story serves as a poignant depiction of the profound impact of poverty and class discrimination on the lives of individuals, and her life in particular. Willie is the daughter of H and Ethe. She is spoiled and loved by her parents. Unlike some of her grandparents, they have no relationship or contact with their fathers. She has a beautiful voice; she used to sing at union meetings as her father is a leader there. She meets Robert who is whitest black man who has ever seen. Their son Carson was born two years after their marriage, and her parents passed away soon after.

Robert becomes tired of his work as a clerk in a store. This why, he and Willie decide to leave Pratt City for New York in order to find a new job, and they are welcomed by Joe Turner, the son of Joecy Lil Joe, in Harlem. Lewis states that, in Pratt City, Alabama, where they reside, limited opportunities beyond coal mining exist. Their relocation to the North aligns with the broader movement called the Great Migration. The economic and racial hardships prevalent in the South, aggravated by Jim Crow laws and the decline of the cotton industry, drove African Americans to seek better prospects and relief. Approximately, 1.6 million African Americans departed the South for opportunities in northern and midwestern states from pre-World War I to 1930. The Great Migration not only provided job prospects but also spurred cultural advancements like the Harlem Renaissance and other entertainment ventures. Willie's dream of becoming a

singer reflects the aspirations shared by many African Americans who migrated to northern cities (33).

On their way to find a job for Robert, Willie realizes that her black skin will prevent her husband from getting a job, as they believe he is a white man. Even when they find a store that places a hiring sign, luck is not on their side because of racism Willie faced as a black woman. The association with blacks is not acceptable to them. The dream of a better life in New York begins to fade as Willie fights against the prejudice and injustice in society.

Robert changes his appearance and he represents himself as a wealthy white person. To obtain a job opportunity, he denies his heritage and black origins. This emphasizes his surrender to prejudices and racism pressures, and the challenges that individuals face in the face of discrimination and poverty.

Willie, finally, finds a job after a long search, as a housekeeper for a wealthy black family. As per Lewis's explanation, this adds another layer of trauma for Willie in addition to the discrimination she faces from employers based on colorism and racism. These biases create an oppressive environment that Willie is trying to break free from. Rather than breaking out of this cycle, Willie's envy towards Robert's ability to pass as white highlights how she conforms to societal norms by settling for menial jobs and seeing her Black identity as a barrier to success (34). This is due to the inequality and lack of opportunities available for people belonging to racial or social minorities, who find themselves working in low-paying jobs due to racial and class discrimination. In black feminism, Collins suggests that an important issue concerning the feminisms of women of African descent is the challenges they face in balancing their roles as mothers with their work and family responsibilities. Black women in the United States, as well as globally, must navigate the challenges of combining their mothering duties with the need to

generate income independently. This struggle is also manifested in the efforts of women transnationally. The intersections of motherhood, work, and family responsibilities are closely tied to the issue of Black women's poverty worldwide (241-242).

Willie faces discrimination in her pursuit of a career as a jazz singer due to her race and social class. The jazz club she works at only belongs to the white audience and prefers white artists, leaving talented black performers like Willie in the shadows. Her relationship with Robert also suffers as he distances himself from his original culture and embraces the white society, causing tension between them. The breaking point comes when two white men mistake Willie for being available for a quick sexual encounter in the club's bathroom. Willie resists their advances, leading to a confrontation where she spits in one of the men's faces. At this moment, Robert intervenes, revealing their connection and causing the men to leave. However, this incident leads to Robert his job, and ultimately decide to leave that night due to the strain on their marriage caused by the racial discrimination and oppression they face. Lewis notes that, Willie and Robert both experience a form of sexual trauma together, similar to the way white slave owners in the past exerted power and dominance over Black individuals. Robert's deceit about his race leads his white colleagues to assert his Black identity (34). Willie is left feeling like a victim man who consider her a sexual object, simply because she is a black woman in a society dominated by whites, and her husband does not stand by her and defend her, due to his weak character. Her husband focuses on preserving his job while neglecting his family and heritage which further exacerbates the situation.

Willie refuses Joe's marriage proposal and leaves his house. She starts going to the church where she meets another man named Eli. Then, Willie becomes pregnant by him and gives birth to a baby girl named Josephine. Eli begins to disappear each time; Willie has no luck in marrying men with strong personalities. Robert betrays her by seeing him with a white woman and their son.

This version of marrying white woman is to protect himself and it is a good thing for his future generations, and Eli's abandonment of her. Willie rents smaller apartments every time she is evicted because the economic pressures arising from poverty have a profound impact on her living circumstances. The need to move to smaller apartments and financial pressures she experiences affect not only her welfare but also the lives of her children.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of female characters in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* through the perspective of intersectionality and examining the stories of characters, has deepened more understanding of the concepts of race, gender, and class in shaping their identities and experiences throughout generations. This chapter has enhanced characters intersections with intergenerational slavery and colonialism, representing the dehumanizing effects of these historical atrocities that mirror their experiences with systemic discrimination, exploitation, and violence that have plagued marginalized and patriarchal communities for centuries, as Effia navigates being as a woman of mixed heritage, while Esi grapples with the horrors of slavery and colonialism, Akua suffers from racial oppression and identity struggles, while Maame and Abena face the impact of gender roles and expectations. Additionally, the character of Willie highlights the difficulties women face in the light of poverty and class discrimination.

Chapter Three

Black Women's Agency and Resilience

Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to the analysis of Black women's resistance who face racism and oppression in different forms in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*. Through these diverse experiences, the complexities of identity, the enduring legacy of historical trauma, and the resilience demonstrated by women facing discrimination and marginalization are revealed. Moreover, black women's resistance on issues of heritage and society is also another part of this analysis. Reflecting the enduring strength and resilience of black women who strive to assert their voices and reclaim their humanity in the face of injustice, social restrictions, and adversity. In this novel, Gyasi focuses on the female characters' experiences in terms of oppression, discrimination, and marginalization within a society entrenched in historical injustice and inequality. Through their stories, this chapter serves to understand how they navigate and resist various forms of oppression, including racism, sexism, and societal expectations, while highlighting resilience and strength. Furthermore, it studies the complexities of identity formation and explores how historical trauma, cultural heritage, and societal pressures shape the characters' experiences and influence their self-actualization. This chapter also seeks to analyze how black women grapple with questions of independence, self-definition, and resistance in a world full of discrimination and inequality.

1. Racial Identity and Resistance

1.1. Marjorie: Confronting Racism in a New World

Marjorie's story in is a powerful exploration of confronting racism in a new world. As an African-American who lives in the United States, she struggles with her identity, and feels caught between two conflicting cultures as a descendant of slaves.

Marjorie struggles with her identity as she does not feel like she is Ghanaian or American. Despite her birth and numerous visits to her grandmother, Akua, in Ghana, she is seen as an American tourist and this angers her. Landry notes that the tension arising from the contrast between the ethnic identity before migration and the racial identity after migration points to the dual insider and outsider position of African immigrants, particularly within the black community. Being considered black grants these immigrants an insider status in the community, but their foreign background also separates them. Consequently, African immigrants are viewed as ethnic "Others," expanding perceptions of Blackness by incorporating various ethnic identities to distinguish themselves (12). However, she finds strength and resilience in her community and heritage especially, as she learns more about her family's history and the shock of slavery from her grandmother, who moved to live near the sea in Cape Coast, to hear the trapped spirits due to oppression.

Marjorie gains a deeper understanding about the roots of racism and the importance of the struggle for justice and equality. Costa notes that Marjorie's sense of identity is complex, as she feels both Ghanaian and American, yet struggles to find acceptance in either culture. She embraces her Blackness as a political identity, resisting a one-dimensional perspective of her heritage. Marjorie's poetic expression allows her to navigate her dual identity and reconcile with her roots, reconnecting with her grandmother and ancestors in the process. Her journey is a testament to the fluidity and complexity of identity, and the power of self-expression in finding one's place in the world (143).

Marjorie's experiences sheds light on the ways in which racism continues to shape the lives of Black people in America. As she enters high school, her Blackness is considered the "the wrong kind" (Gyasi 245). And when she tries to interact with her African American peers, they see her

speaking as completely wrong including the British accent and listening to the music. Despite they share Blackness, they view her as different, and even white students avoid her, believing that whites do not sit or talk to Black people. This reflects the negative effects of institutional racism on the relationships between African Americans and African immigrants in America. As hooks indicates, she is a Black woman who attends all Black public schools. She grew up in the south where racial discrimination, haters, and forces segregation are prevalent. Despite this, her education on the politics of race in American society is similar to that of white female students she encounters in integrated high schools, college, and women's groups. The majority of them view racism as a social evil perpetuates by prejudices of white people, with the belief that it could be overcome through bonding between Blacks and liberal whites, militant protest, changing laws, or racial integration. However, higher educational institutions did not expand their limits understanding of racism as a political ideology. Instead, professors taught them to accept racial polarity in the form of white supremacy and sexual polarity in the form of male dominance (120) as well as how individuals' identities are determined by their culture. However, Marjorie remains true to herself, not leaning towards African American culture but embracing her Ghanaian roots.

Abu Jweid states that Marjorie's reluctance represents the desire of Black women to challenge male dominance and establish their own feminist identity. He refers to this inclination as "courageous code" because women are resisting patriarchy and its stereotypes, demonstrating their own autonomy by standing up to men in their social circles. This concept emphasizes black women's strength in opposing the traditional portrayal of women as weak and submissive, showing their ability to endure patriarchal pressures and assert their independence. Ultimately, it allows women to be equal and self-sufficient in various aspects of life, able to make their own decisions and forge their own paths just like men (36-37).

Mrs. Pinkston, one of the Black teachers at the school, works to help and encourage Marjorie to define her identity on her own terms. She asks her to read her poem about being an African-American, but Marjorie denies that, "Listen, Marjorie, I'm going to tell you something that maybe nobody's told you yet. Here, 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" (Gyasi 249).

Then she asks her to participate in a cultural event at school by writing a poem about African-American culture. Marjorie finds her way back to her identity once she meets Graham, who does not act racist even though he is white. Graham believes that there is a possibility to create a relationship based on respect between whites and Blacks. However, everyone tries to stop this relationship, including the school administration, his father, and even her friends. Marjorie also realizes that, despite progress over time, there is still a stigma surrounding interracial relationships, and how white privilege can hinder genuine interactions or relationships across racial divides.

1.2. Willie: Negotiating Identity in a Foreign Land

Collins argues that promoting injustice can also incite resistance. For instance, African American women in the United States have long acknowledged the basic unfairness of a system that consistently places them at the bottom of the social ladder across generations. Confronts with this systematic injustice directs at their group, many African American women have asserted their entitlement to shape their own truths, form their own identities, and recount their history. A notable aspect of research on domestic workers is its documentation of how African American women regularly resist being dehumanized in these circumstances (72).

The story of Willie serves as an example of resistance in a foreign land. As a Black woman from Ghana lives in America, Willie grapples with the intersections of her African identity and

her experiences as a Black woman navigating a society marked by racism and oppression. She moves with her husband Robert to Harlem to create a new life and pursue her talent in singing. According to Abu Jweid, the idea of "courageous code" conflicts with the racial connotations of misogynoir. Gyasi explores the concept of misogynoir by examining the harsh lives conditions which is faced by Black women in Harlem, where the Black community is oppressed by whites. For instance, Robert is deeply affected by witnessing a white man provokes Willie, he could not endure such racial discrimination. Consequently, Willie embodies misogynoir as she is dehumanized by white men in Harlem. However, the concept of "courageous code" suggests that she could challenge gender discrimination and assert her autonomy to alleviate her suffering (38). She and her husband face oppression because of her race. She initially struggles to find works, and eventually finds a job as a maid in a wealthy Black family's home. Despite facing challenges, Willie held onto her dream of becoming a singer. She faces rejection and is offered only a job as a bathroom cleaner, which she accepts.

Willie does not conform to traditional roles even when her husband urges her to stay home and not work. In contrast to the female's characters in the novel who accepts their limit's role at home, she tries to maintain her cultural heritage and background while adapting to the prevalent racial structures in her new environment, Willie resists and refuses to give up on her dream. She remains steadfast in her pursuit of becoming a singer even after her husband abandons her and she had to care for her children on her own, moving from place to place. In the context of women's resistance to oppression and gender equality, hooks argues that any Black men who abandon their families and children are not criticizes, unlike how such behavior from Black women would have been condemned. The notion that Blacks women are matriarchs, originally creates by white men, is embraced by Black individuals. Among the numerous negative stereotypes and myths about

Black women, the matriarchy depiction has had the most significant impact on the perceptions of many in the Black community. The independent roles that Black women are requires to fulfill both in the workforce and at home are often viewed as incompatible with traditional notions of femininity. Negative attitudes towards women in the workforce have always been present in the American society, and Black men are not unique in disapproving of Black women who works (78).

Willie forms a relationship with another man, leading to a repeat of the past as she finds herself responsible for a baby and a young boy on her own. This ultimately leads her to sacrifice her dream of singing as society does not show mercy to a Black single mother. Despite being repeatedly fired from her jobs, this does not make her give up on her children or her identity. As per hooks perspective Black women worked hard to shift the focus away from their sexuality by emphasizing their dedication to motherhood, and their participation in the "cult of true womanhood" that were prominent in early twentieth-century America, they aimed to demonstrate their value and worth as women by highlighting their commitment to their families and their willingness to make sacrifices for their children. Despite their efforts being acknowledged, white society often portrayed these women in a negative light (70). Willie continues to resist until her children grow up, and a chance encounter with Robert in the street with his family leads to a sense of reconciliation within herself.

Lewis claims that after Willie's marriage ends, she raises her son Sonny as a single mother and leaves him alone in their apartment while she is at work. Despite facing challenges such as fails auditions, Willie finds solace in the church where she meets Eli, a fellow churchgoer. Their relationship leads to the birth of a baby girl names Josephine, but Eli often leaves Willie with the children and no financial support. This results in three evictions and Willie loses jobs because she does not have anyone to care for the baby. Seeking support, Willie joins the church choir as a way

to navigate through the difficulties in her life, regardless of Eli's presence. During a walk in the city with Sonny, Willie sees her ex-husband Robert with another woman and a child. This encounter brings back her singing voice, something she has lost after their separation. It ultimately helps Willie in her emotional healing journey, and the church becomes a place where she can express herself through songs (35). She joins the church choir despite her fear of singing in public, but she perseveres. Her chapter ends happily, because she expresses how individuals, through the church and art, had develop a new sense of African American culture and identity, and find the ability to resist the living circumstances.

> Willie looks into the pews. Eli was bouncing Josephine on his knees and the little girl was smiling her gummy smile. Willie's hands tremble still, and in a moment of complete quiet, she dropped the songbook down on the stage with a great thud. And everyone in the sanctuary, the congregants and pastor, Sisters Dora and Bertha and the whole choir, turns to look at her. She stepped forward, trembling still, and she sang (Gyasi 202).

1.3. Akua: Struggles and Resilience in the Face of Racial Oppression

The character of Akwa in *Homegoing* represents a strong portrayal of resilience and flexibility of individuals facing racial oppression. Since Akua's birth, she has been subjected to mistreatment, whether by the missionary, with whom she lives after her mother's death, or by her mother-in-law, who takes her daughters away from her and imprisons her because she believes that she is not mentally capable. She is also mistreated by her community, calling her as a crazy woman due to the nightmares she suffers from. Akua's trauma and nightmares leads her to set fire to her family's hut, symbolizing her internal struggle and the intergenerational consequences of slavery, and how systematic oppression can have deep emotional and psychological effects on individuals and communities. According to Abu Jweid, the concept of "courageous code" in

Gyasi's empowers women to challenge societal norms and restrictions, allowing them to assert their independence and autonomy. Akua's decision to go to the market despite being taunted by both men and women in the compound reflects her defiance against traditional gender roles and her determination to make her own choices. This act of courage not only challenges patriarchal structures but also contributes to women's social equality and empowerment (38). Akua's surviving son Yaw, 50 years old, does not know his mother and has never met her. He rejects her because of the harm she causes to him, despite her numerous letters to him. Eventually, with pressure from Esther, the girl he loves, he is able to meet his mother after many attempts.

Yaw and Akua are forced to confront the brutal realities of slavery, persecution, curses, and evil actions that have imposed on them alongside their ancestors, such as the scars on Yaw's face for which he meets his mother to understand her story. Akua's explanation leads to Yaw understanding his identity as well as his family lineage, especially after her meeting with the fetish priest and reclaiming Effia's necklace. The priest confirms the presence of evil in their lineage and reveals that the firewoman was Maame, the first victim of slavery. The curse of the family is finally broken thanks to Akua's sharing of the family's history and encouraging her son to be free. Akua's struggles and resilience accurately portray the human spirit's ability to endure and overcome hardships, and confront the evil within her family and acknowledge it.

2. Motherhood as a Sites of Resistance and the Notion of Agency

2.1. Esi's Challenges to Traditional Gender Roles and The Notion of Agency

In the light of Black women's efforts to challenge societal norms and stereotypes, hooks asserts that contemporary scholar's reluctance to embrace gender equality results in the emergence of the idea that there is a Black matriarchy within Black family dynamics. Male social scientists develop theories about the matriarchal power held by Black women as a way to offer an unusual

explanation for the independent and influential role these women play in their families. Much like their slave-owning predecessors, racist scholars portray Black women, who fulfill the roles of mothers and providers, as engaging in a distinctive behavior that warrants a new label. However, these scholars label Black women as matriarchs, a term that does not accurately represent the social status of Black women in America. There has never been a matriarchy in the United States. Concurrently, sociologists claim there is a matriarchal structure within Black families (71-72)

The character of Esi represents a challenge to traditional gender roles and the notion of agency. After her village is attacked and she resists being kidnapped by attempting to escape. This shows her willingness to take risks and challenge the traditional roles assigns to women as weak and content with their oppression. According to Mikić, Gyasi exposes the emotional and physical impacts of racism and racialization, as well as illustrates the unpredictable nature of epigenetics. Through Esi's narrative, Gyasi showcases the strength and resilience of African Americans, and highlights their ability to withstand and overcome repeated instances of anti-Black racism. By depicting the lasts bodily effects stems from past encounters with racism, the novel urges readers to question narratives promotes so God post-racial beliefs, and redirects focus towards the ongoing perpetuation of trauma and societal disparities (112).

Then, Esi is taken to America, and her daughter, Ness, born. She becomes a determined and solid woman who endures the persecution and challenges of hardship as a slave. Despite the harsh treatment and brutal punishment from their master for her refusal to speak English, she resists cultural erasure and maintains her cultural and linguistic identity by speaking Twi with her daughter, even when she is exposed to humiliation and violence; she does not give up. This resistance can be seen as acts of strength and empowerment within the oppressive context of slavery, "Esi had spoken to her in Twi until their master caught her. He'd given Esi five lashes for

every Twi word Ness spoke, and when Ness, seeing her batters mother, had become too scares to speak, he gave Esi five lashes for each minute of Ness's silence" (Gyasi 69).

Esi's behavior and strength, her refusal to smile and show weakness, and her insistence on adhering to her African identity, show her as a strong personality who challenges and confronts the expectations and roles places on her by the patriarchal system and slavery. Her insistence on clings to her identity makes her regain strength and resist attempts to strip her of her humanity and thus, destroying her.

Esi shows her love for her daughter through her actions, even if she cannot always express her feels for her. Despite the pain and trauma, she suffers, she protects her daughter, and shares conversations with her about her culture and past to strengthen and develop her self-esteem. Lewis demonstrates that the loss and sense of incompleteness accompany Esi to the slave plantation in America and through her experience of motherhood. Esi's daughter, Ness, reveals that Esi transforms into a strong and serious woman. Instead of showing vulnerability, Esi shares disturbing stories with Ness about the horrors of the Middle Passage, where enslaves individuals are stacked on top of each other till death. Esi also recounts the story of cursed places which results in the loss of her sister. These stories illustrate the deep emotional and psychological impact of the trauma that Esi has endured. Esi's attempt to reconcile with Abronoma in the past may have inadvertently led to the destruction of her village and the death of her parents. Additionally, the loss of a scares stone that connects Esi to her mother further disconnects her from her past. Esi not only suffers the absence of her mother but also experiences the separation from her daughter, Ness, who is forcibly taken away from her. Ness's recalls desperately reach out for her mother during the separation, yet admires Esi's unwavering strength in the face of adversity. This rupture in the mother-daughter relationship reflects a common theme among enslaved Black mothers who are

frequently denied the opportunity to be present in their children's lives, perpetuating a cycle of disrupted families for generations (23).

Through this experience, Esi breaks the traditional roles. These obstacles imposed on Black women slaves, as passive victims without agency, show the opposite as they find ways to resist, preserve their identity, and confront oppression. It reveals the strength and love of motherhood in resisting and confronting the constraints, and Esi is the best example. Even when her daughter is taken from her, she remains steadfast.

2.2. Maame: Patriarchy Struggles and Motherhood

The story of Maame includes struggles of motherhood and resistance against the patriarchal society. She is a housemaid who is raped and enslaved in the village of Fanti. Despite the harsh circumstances, she decides to be strong and confront the constraints of a patriarchal society that devalues and marginalizes women. She fights for freedom and on the night when she gives birth to her daughter Effia, she decides to escape and leaves her daughter behind with a Black stone. She faces the challenge of leaving her child in the midst of slavery and colonization.

Lewis suggests that Maame's struggles with past trauma, particularly the experience of setts the fire and leaving Effia behind, prevent her from being able to flee the village when danger approaches. This inability to run away again symbolizes the lingering impact of her past actions on her present choices. The unspoken understanding between Maame and Esi hints at the deep emotional connection and shares trauma they have as mother and daughter. Maame's decision to stay and face the attack, despite the risks, reflects her attempt to reclaim agency over her life. However, this decision ultimately separates her from Esi, causing further emotional pain and trauma for both of them. The theme of incompleteness and profound loss extends beyond just family relationships to encompass a sense of belongs and identity (20). When she succeeds in

escaping her harsh situation, she builds a new life for herself and becomes a mother once again to Esi. However, she also faces difficulties in her new life when her husband, big man, decides that Maame should choose a slave from among the prisoners to serve them, but she refuses. This shows her resistance to slavery and oppression and her unwillingness to subject others to the same mistreatment she endures. Her hesitation to punish Abronoma shows her compassion and inner struggle with the oppressive system.

Gallego states that Maame establishes a new family and develops a loves mother-daughter bond with her daughter Esi. This signifies Maame's ability to overcome her past traumas and create a meaningful life with her loved ones. She chooses to keep her troubles history secret until they are on the brink of being captured as slaves, when she finally reveals the truth to Esi while giving her another Black stone. The Black stone becomes a symbol of the connection among the different generations of women in the novel, and represents their resilience in the face of adversity and their legacy of survival. It can be interpreted as a form of defiance and generational healing, showcasing their strategies for care and perseverance despite challenging circumstances (10). Maame relationship with Esi is portrayed as a good one, as she tries to protect her after their village is attacked. She decides to escape Esi only to prevent her from being kidnapped and enslaved and to take her inheritance.

> Esi's mother grabbed Esi's hand and dropped something into it. It was a Black stone, glimmering with gold. Smooth, as if it had been scrubbed carefully for years to preserve its perfect surface. I have been keeping this for you, Maame said. I wanted to give it to you on your wedding day. I left one like this for your sister. I left it with Baaba after I set the fire (Gyasi 43).

Her final words to Esi, informing her about her sister Effia, indicate a deeper connection among the characters and the lasting legacy of pain, memory, resistance to slavery, and the lineage's exposure to oppression. It embodies the spirit of maternal sacrifice and determination in facing overwhelming challenges, struggling to maintain her family ties and cultural heritage amidst violence and exploitation. Lewis argues that break in the relationship between mother and daughter is unique as Maame decides not to flee again, yet the result is consistent: enslaved Black mothers often did not have the opportunity to be actively involved in their children's lives, leading to generational family disruptions (23). Her resistance and refusal to escape to the forest during the dangerous attack reveals her internal struggles.

2.3. Abena's Journey Towards Self-Discovery and Independence

In Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*, Abena's journey is a story toward self-discovery and independence, starting from the history of her family to the societal and cultural expectations which place upon her in many ways.

First, Abena struggles with the idea of her father's reputation, as "the unlucky", due to his fail's crops. Her desire to break free from the constraints of her village is further heightens by the stereotypes and expectations place on women, for example she is twenty-five years old and unmarried, she does not deserve the bride price because she is too old and is the daughter of unlucky man, and this affects her ability to find a husband. Even Ohene Nyarko, her childhood lover, has not married her.

Abena challenges her father's refusal to allow her to visit Kumasi, a place which she has always wants to see. She challenges her father's authority by mocking him for the failure of his crops. Her desire to visit Kumasi is due to her curiosity about her family's past and heritage. She eventually convinces Ohene to take her there as she desires independence and self-reliance.

Despite the harshness of society towards women, Abena wants to break those stereotypes and traditional norms by having a sexual relationship with Ohene Nyarko. This represents their connection to freedom and their outcomes of pursuing personal desires. The villagers blame Abena for the poor crops due of the relationship she has, but she continues her relationship with him, and refuses to allow others to dictate her actions.

Especially after the bad harvest season, Abena continues to struggle with the violent reactions and judgments of her community, as she must bear the consequences of her actions and choices, but despite all this, Abena remains steadfast in her beliefs and convictions, and rejects the societal expectations imposed on her.

Abena decides to leave the village and go to settle in Kumasi, especially after she discovers her pregnancy and Ohene's rejection of her. She resists and avoids the traditional practices and beliefs of her community. She wants to make her own decisions, even if that means leaving her home, her family, and her community behind.

In addition, Abena receives the Black Stone necklace from her father before she leaves. Through this necklace that belongs to her grandmother Effia, Abena reclaims a part of her family history and heritage. She refuses to erase her identity or forget as she always seeks to know her origins, connect with her past, and draw strength from her ancestors. Abena's only option, while going to Kumasi as an unmarried pregnant woman, is to seek refuge in a missionary school after she discovers the practices of power that European colonialism is doing in Kumasi. Overall, Abena's story is an example of a strong woman who stands up for herself. She makes her own choices in the face of sexism and resilience in the face of adversity.

3. Black Women's resistance against oppression and colonial legacies

3.1. Black Women's Resistance against the Notion of Classism

Class is one of the most prominent issues affecting black individuals, which causes the marginalization of people from a lower social and economic status. But, some marginalized voices, especially black women, resist and challenge this oppressive class system, and this takes several forms, including a call for equality and standing against people from higher classes. Through these resistances to classism, a more just society can emerge where everyone is valued regardless of his/her social and economic status. Collins states that the dynamics within African-American women's groups challenge traditional power structures that typically label wealthy White men as global oppressors and impoverished Black women as helpless victims, with other groups falling somewhere in between. Instead, factors like race, gender, class, citizenship status, sexuality, and age determine where a group stands within the global system of power. These varying positions affect how groups participate in different activities, with different levels of power leading to distinct ways of perpetuating domination or resisting it. Recognizing and understanding these diverse group perspectives is essential for developing a more comprehensive and intersectional political strategy (245).

The theme of resisting the intersectional paradigm, based on racism and classism, is most apparent through the character of Willie. She demonstrates her resilience and numerous attempts to improve her life including her son Carson and her daughter. Despite facing various forms of classism in America, such as discrimination at work, due to her race and gender, Willie's struggle to get a job is a significant challenge in a society that marginalizes women of color. Despite her search for a job more than her husband, and his separation from her, she cannot get a job. However, Willie takes on different tasks, such as caring for the Morris family's son, cooking, cleaning for

them. The most important thing is pursuing her passion for singing, despite facing rejection at the jazz club due to her skin color. She continues to affirm her talent, despite the obstacles she faces there, such as the rape attempts in the club's bathroom and her resistance by hitting the two men. Her personality and actions embody how a woman's role in society is not only in the home to care for her family but also to do what she wants and prove her strength and ability to be recognizes and avoid being marginalizes, whether in her own society or in other societies.

In the context of racism against Black women, Collins states that Black feminism continues to be relevant because Black women in the United States are still marginalizes and oppresses. There is a complex relationship between the oppression faces by African-American women and their activism. This relationship is characterized by opposes forces. As long as Black women continue to face discrimination based on race, class, gender, sexuality, and nationality, Black feminism will remain a necessary response to address these issues (22).

On the other hand, Marjorie faces classism in the American society, especially in her school. White students avoid her and believe they should not sit or even talk with Blacks, thinking she is the wrong type of Black person. However, Marjorie remains resilient, she preserves her heritage by speaking Twi, her grandmother's language, and writing a poem about her ancestors during a school cultural event.

According to Landry, Frantz Fanon notes that Marjorie reflects on her experiences in Ghana, where she could only be herself and not defines by her race. In contrast, upon entering the United States, her Blackness becomes a defining factor in how she is perceived and treated by others. Frantz Fanon's concept of Blackness as a social uniform that dictates how individuals will be treated and expected to behave resonates with Marjorie's concerns about the restrictions places on her autonomy to create her own sense of self (qtd in Landry 7).

Gyasi represents oppression and class resistance in the stories of female characters between generations. Ness is one of the female characters who resists class, in many ways, starting with the plantation system in which she works, in addition to the little girl Pinky. Both of them are subjected to the control and power by the plantation owner, Thomas Allan Stockham, because they are considered slaves, weak, and from a poor class, unlike the landowners. But despite the harsh circumstances, Ness and Pinky are able to form a friendship, and stand up against classism and injustice they are exposed to. Ness helps her while she is being abused and beaten by the farm owner's son just because she is a maid and from a poor class. Ness's memories of the period she has spent in Hell also express resistance against oppressive class structures and overcoming them, through her attempt to escape with her husband and son, despite the dangers to which she is exposed and the devil pursuing them, but she refuses to remain under the restrictions imposed because of her social status.

3.2. Women's Defiance Against Gender Stereotypes and Colonial Violence

In Black Feminism perspective, Collins suggests that U.S. Black women, being historically oppressed, have developed social thought as a means of resisting oppression. The objective of Black women's collective thought stands apart, aims to discover ways to break free from, endure, or defy common social and economic injustices. Social theories that arise from or on behalf of U.S. Black women and other historically oppressed groups seek to uncover methods to escape, survive, and resist prevailing social and economic inequality. In the United States, African-American social and political thought examine institutionalized racism not to aid its efficiency, but rather to challenge and oppose it. Feminism calls for the liberation and empowerment of women. Beyond U.S. borders, numerous women from oppresses groups also face challenges in understands novel forms of injustice (9). Black women always face challenges and discrimination

based on gender stereotypes and colonial violence. However, many women have resisted these oppressive forces with defiance and resistance. In contrast to conforms to expects gender roles, such as submission, domesticity, and caretaking, these stereotypes reduce women's opportunities for education, employment, and political participation.

Furthermore, Black women are also the target of colonial violence, includes sexual violence and forced labor, and those who resist this violence, by defending their rights or speaking out against injustice, are subjected to further violence and retaliation. But, Black women continue to resist and challenge gender stereotypes and colonial violence by calls on marginalized voices to put an end to violence against women, recognize their rights, challenge patriarchal norms and colonial legacies, and work for a more just and equitable society.

In *Homegoing* The community depicts, represents complex stories of multiple generations of women, each navigating the complexities of gender stereotypes and colonial violence. Through acts of resistance, these female characters challenge societal norms and resist oppressive forces to diminish them, showcasing their strength, resilience, and unwavering determination. hooks claims that stereotypes against Black women are formed during slavery, before sociologists discuss the idea of a Black matriarchy. White male slave owners spread myths to undermine the contributions of Black women, claiming they are all masculine and not fully human. Black female slaves demonstrate the ability to perform both physically demands tasks and domestic chores like cooking and childcare. Their capacity to excel in roles considered male threaten patriarchal beliefs of women's inherent physical inferiority. By assigning Black women the same labor as Black men, white male slaveholders contradict their own sexist ideology that women are inferior, this is due to their physical vulnerability. They need to justify why Black women could perform tasks typically associated with men (71). They challenge strict gender norms and expectations imposed

on women. Characters like Maame refuses to adhere to these stereotypical roles and duties as a servant and a mother. This resistance extends to her offspring in subsequent generations, as women challenge societal expectations. Through their actions, decisions, and relationships, characters like Effia, who is oppressed because of her menstrual cycle and doubted her ability to have children and contribute to society, defies these beliefs by getting married and giving birth. Moreover, Abena refuses to live in a patriarchal society that marginalizes her because she is not married at the age of 25 and it rejects her daughter, and this is why, she goes elsewhere.

By challenging these stereotypes, they assert their individuality and independence in a world that seeks to silence them. Abu jweid states that the notion of gender equality serves as the foundational principle behind the feminist "courageous code" which acts as a bridge to narrow the gender disparities between men and women. This code not only grants Black women additional space and opportunities to assert their existence but also to establish more impactful social and gender roles. Essentially, the "courageous code" symbolizes the empowerment of women to claim rights traditionally held by men. In *Homegoing*, Cobbe is taken aback by the independent nature of rural women, with Effia exemplifying a feminist rebellious attitude against male authority. Initially, he is content with his wife and daughter being the most important women in the village, but his shifting attitude towards women in the village reflects a departure from the prevalent objectification of women. Moreover, the wife's actions signify the inception of the feminist "courageous code" as she rejects the inherited patriarchal belief of women as inferior and lacking equal rights. Through the concept of the "courageous code," women are provided with increased female subjectivity, presenting an opportunity for them to gradually attain equality with men, as they strive for stable and meaningful social roles (37).

Colonial violence significantly shapes the characters in *Homegoing* influencing their experiences and identities. Women bear the brunt of this violence, facing unique challenges to their capabilities, identities, and relationships. As they navigate the brutality of colonization, they are forced to confront their flexibility and adaptability in the face of oppression. Through their struggles, the female characters in the novel illustrate the lasts impact of colonization on marginalizes communities and the enduring power of women in faces adversity. In Postcolonial feminism concept, Gunjate claims that Postcolonial feminist women are not only questions beliefs that have devalues women's status, but they are also challenging the common idea that the white Western middle-class woman is the standard. Simultaneously, they work to eliminate stereotypes that portray them as inferior and highlights that despite the decline of imperialism, they are still faces the influences of neo-colonialism (286). Despite the immense obstacles they face, Black women in *Homegoing* demonstrate remarkable acts of resistance and defiance. Whether it is Esi who rejects her fate as a slave in America, or Ness who rebels against the plantation owner and his son and smuggles her son Kojo away from the devil to protect him from becoming another slave like her. These characters show the strength of resistance in the face of oppression. Their actions are driven by a deep desire for justice, freedom, and self-determination. hooks suggests that Black women are able to perform tasks that patriarchal society deem as male jobs, which threaten the patriarchal beliefs about women's capabilities and roles. To explain this, white males depict Black female slaves as sub-human and lack in femininity, claiming they are not real women but instead masculinized creatures. This false portrayal serves to justify the exploitation of Black women and uphold patriarchy. By perpetuating the stereotype that Black women are more masculine and less feminine, white men seek to prevent any potential unity or solidarity between Black and white

women. This myth of Black women possess masculine characteristics is used to justify their exploitation and to maintain the gender hierarchy in society (71).

The intersection of gender and colonialism is a major theme in *Homegoing*, highlights the complex ways in which women navigate their identities in a world shape by oppression and violence. Women must not only deal with gender stereotypes, but also with racial discrimination, economic inequality, and social marginalization.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter highlights the numerous struggles and victories of Black women in faces of racial discrimination, societal expectations, and various forms of oppression such as classism. Through these acts of resistance, the characters embody the strength of women in challenging social restrictions and the colonial violence that continues to shape the lives experiences of marginalized communities. These women refuse to be silent, and continue to strive for justice and equality. In general, the stories of these women demonstrate their strength and resilience in defying injustice, serving as a powerful reminder of the indomitable spirit of black women.

General Conclusion

Intersectionality and women's resistance are considered as the most important issues in literature, as writers can highlight the experiences of women, especially those who are oppressed, and focus on their struggles and their confrontation to various forms of oppression and racial discrimination. Many black women writers try to shed light on the experience of marginalized black women who are subjected to injustice. They also aim to showcase their resilience and strength in the face of the restrictions imposed on them, challenging oppressive structures and stereotypes, and defying dominant narratives that silence and marginalize women. Literature reinforces such feminist victories and struggles, conveys the voices of women, especially those belonging to marginalized communities, and inspires readers and motivates them to delve deeper into such issues.

Analyzing intersectionality and women's resistance, in Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*, is essential to understand the experiences of the female characters in the narrative, shaped by the complex interaction between issues related to race, gender, and class, as the characters face discrimination and racial oppression related to slavery and its generational heritage, in addition to the consequences of colonialism and mixed heritage. The novel also addresses the trauma and oppression faced by African women under colonialism and their continuing impact, and how these women's experiences are affected by the roles and expectations set for them in society. It reflects the traditional roles imposed on women in Ghana in the eighteenth century, including women bearing physical, sexual, and emotional violence in patriarchal societies. The effects of class oppression also appear on women's experiences and the extent to which it affects their lives due to social hierarchy. It highlights the impact of class on individuals' lives, and the extent to which women suffer from power dynamics and oppression in society.

Black women show resilience and resistance in the face of these adversities with strength and endure the humiliating acts of slavery, including being moved away from their hometowns and families. Although some black women suffer from struggles with poverty and discrimination, they show the ability to face difficulties and try to survive and preserve their identity to assert their independence within harsh conditions embodying their resistance to oppression. Women characters also embody the spirit of challenge as they face adversity, fight oppression, demonstrate the importance of women's agency and resilience, confront and disrupt oppressive structures, and confront sexual harassment and assault, as black women's resistance is considered an essential part of black feminist movement.

The impact of trauma, in shaping black women's experiences and their resistance, plays an important role in the novel, as generations inherit the legacy of slavery and the influence of colonialism across generations and realize themselves and their place in the world. By experiencing a feeling of separation from their culture and identity, these feelings can encourage women to engage in their own resistance to try to break free from oppression. By challenging traditional norms and injustice, these strategies help to enjoy a free and good life and get rid of all inheritances.

This dissertation emphasizes the importance of intersectionality as a means of highlighting the resistance of oppressed women and expressing marginalized voices. By studying Gyasi's work, it is possible to understand how women are subjected to many forms of oppression and suffering, how they demonstrate their resistance to that oppression and discrimination, and the ways in which they face this oppression.

In conclusion, this dissertation contributes important insights into black women's resistance to oppression and a call for gender equality and work for a just society in which all

marginalized individuals, regardless of their gender and identity, can live free from all kinds of suffering and discrimination.

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