CHAPTER TWO

RE-REMEMBERING TRANSOCEANIC BLACK ATLANTIC

Slavery is one of the oldest, most extensive and complex of economic institutions. Slavery is a “system under which people are treated as property to be bought and sold” (Brace 43). “Slaves are passed from the hand of one man to another like a sack of grain” (Cam 156). There are different types of slavery, like chattel slavery, bonded labour, forced labour etc. People are handled as their master’s personal property in chattel slavery, whereas in debt bondage or bonded labour a person pledges himself or herself against a loan. In forced labour, an individual is made to work against his or her will under threat of violence or other punishment with restriction on their freedom (Heuman 21-30).

Slavery was a common practice in ancient times. It existed in ancient Greece, Rome and Egypt thousand years back. One source of slaves was sub-Saharan Africa. The Muslims exported the African slaves in the 632 Christian era. The Muslims used their religion to justify the enslavement of non-muslim Africans. They exported the slaves to expand the Muslim Arab Empire. The best documented slave trade was the Atlantic slave trade. The Atlantic slave trade transported nearly eleven million people to America between the mid fifteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries. Moreover, the Atlantic slave trade created a large population of African descent in America (Heuman 21-30). The ancient slavery differs from the modern slavery, i.e., transatlantic slavery. Sir Alfred Zimmeren, the distinguished historian and classical scholar defines slavery as: “… two distinct ideal types or models of slavery, which I shall refer to for convenience as ‘stick’ slavery and ‘carrot’ slavery” (76). By ‘Stick’ slavery, he implies the slavery system of the Atlantic slave-trade, the familiar image
of the overseer with a whip driving the slaves as cattle. Caryl Phillips in his
*Cambridge* through the perception of Emily, a white woman, says “I recognized the
negro as Cambridge, the aged slave… tremendously lashed with the cattle-whip” (92).
The significant implication of ‘carrot’ slavery is that the slaves earn income, which he
may use to buy his freedom.

Slavery differed in practice from one society to another. There are many types
of slavery, but the definition of slavery applies to all of its forms:

Slavery is one form of exploitation. Its special characteristics included
the idea that slaves were property; that they were outsiders who were
alien by origin or who had been denied their heritage though judicial or
other sanctions; that coercion could be used at will; that their labor
power was the complete disposal of a master; that they did not have
the right to their own sexuality and by extension, to their own
reproductive capacities; and that the slave status was inherited unless
provision was made to ameliorate that status. (Paul 1)

The Governor and high officials exploit the unnamed narrator in ‘Heartland’ of
*Higher Ground*. He was useful for these officials to control the slaves and other
‘cargo’ transaction because he was a translator, but the Governor of the fort considers
him as “the most unlikely creature” (HG 13). He was the only link between the
colonizers and the colonized. As a result, he has to face the hatred of his own people,
and also the colonizer.

Caryl Phillips wrote ten novels, but his three novels, namely, *Higher Ground*,
*Cambridge*, and *Crossing the River* met with great critical acclaim and won him
major awards because he has written about forced labour, slavery and Atlantic slave-
trade. Jean Paul Sartre writes in the preface of *The Wretched of the Earth*, “Forced labor … is no contract; in addition it requires intimidation; the oppression…” (xiix).

Being a black British writer, Caryl Phillips writes about the British slave trade and how they benefitted by it. Even his non-fictions are about the involvement of the British in the slave trade. Britain, as a country, was enriched by the profits of trading in human flesh. James Walvin in *The Trader, the Owner, the Slave: Parallel Lives in the Age of Slavery* says:

> The British did not initiate this Atlantic slave system, but by the mid-eighteenth century they dominated it; by about 1750, slavery had established itself as an unquestionable institution in the British way of life. Hundreds of British ships, thousands of British sailors, tens of thousands of British settlers – not to mention British workers, merchants, financiers – and millions of consumers, all depended on, or benefited from, slavery. (xvi)

The African slave trade is the subject matter of *Higher Ground, Crossing the River* and *Cambridge*. The readers come to know the history of the African diaspora from these novels. These stories begin in the period of the slave trade and extend up to the New World and Europe. In *Cambridge*, Caryl Phillips exposes the complex relation between the master and slave and the background of *Cambridge* is a nineteenth century Caribbean plantation. Caryl Phillips deals only with the Atlantic slave-trade. Being the recent black British second generation writer, he “tells the long history of African descent in the west since the slave trade” (Weedon 81).

Slavery is obliterated from the critical debate in Britain and absent from the imaginative writing in British literature. However, writers like Caryl Phillips,
D’Aguiar and David Dabydeen wrote about slavery. On March 25th, 2007, Britain commemorated the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade. Even the then former Prime Minister, Tony Blair expressed “how profoundly shameful the slave trade was and made a historic statement condemning Britain’s role in the transatlantic slave trade as a ‘crime against humanity’ and expressing ‘deep sorrow’ that it ever happened” (Smith). Throughout Britain, in the 20th century, both in the field of literature and among the public, virtually forgot its involvement in the slave trade.

Aphra Behn’s novel Oroonoko: or The Royal Slave (1668) relates the tragic story of slavery. In the 18th and early 19th century, slavery was a persistent theme in literature and letters. During that period, Britain rose to become the first European power trading in slaves. Some of the prominent writers who wrote slave narratives are Samuel Johnson, James Thomson, William Blake, and S.T. Coleridge (Eckstein 34-38). Samuel Johnson had a negro as a servant to him, and Caryl Phillips mentions this in his biographical novel Foreigners: “Dr Johnson’s faithful negro servant, Francis Barber…” (6). Slavery and slave ceased to be the major concern in British letters and literature after the abolition of slavery in British colonies in August 1834. British writers like Thomas Carlyle, Charles Dickens, and John Ruskin supported the slaves in their literary works and lectures (Eckstein 34-38).

In the Post-Victorian period, slavery and the slave trade rapidly faded from the collective memory and literature. The writers of the so-called Windrush generation, named after the SS Empire Windrush, took only an indirect interest in the histories of slavery. The writings of George Lamming, Sam Selvon and other first generation diaspora writers revolved around the conditions of arrival and exile in Britain. In the 1990s, however, things started to change with a new generation of Caribbean/Black British writers who eventually began to re-inscribe transatlantic slavery into literary
discourses. Writers like Caryl Phillips, Fred D’Aguiar and David Dabydeen took on the challenge of turning the horrors of the middle passage and plantation slavery into poetry and fiction (Eckstein 34-38).

These writers had many challenges before them to turn the transatlantic slavery into literature. It was not an easy task for them. The first problem they faced as in the words of Theodor Adorno was:

The morality that forbids art to forget [the suffering] for a second slides off into the abyss of its opposite. The aesthetic stylistic principle… makes the unthinkable appear to have had some meaning; it becomes transfigured, something of its horror removed. By this alone an injustice is done to the victims, yet no art that avoided the victims could stand up to the demands of justice. (188-89)

The task of writing about transatlantic slavery is not easy because it requires artistic sincerity, constant reflection of literary approaches and aesthetic choices.

The most important problem these writers faced are due to “the scarcity of historical evidence and the absence of reliable accounts of trauma from the perspective of the victims” (Eckstein 36). There are only few reliable sources like John Newton’s *Journal of the Slave-Trader, 1750-1754*, *The Interesting Narrative of the life of Olaudah Equiano* and Lady Nugent’s *Journal* (Eckstein 34-38). The few slaves who can learn and write got their education through Christian institutions. They obtained their education through religious and ideological brainwash. Moreover, the white abolitionists controlled the editorial and the publishing process. The contemporary writers had these challenges before them in writing novels about slavery (Eckstein 34-38).
Having these challenges before him, Caryl Phillips turned this transatlantic slavery into polyphony of history, to voice in his novels. By writing about slavery Caryl Phillips is writing back to Britain’s centuries – long amnesia and he also reminds us that slavery belongs to British history and literature. Carl Plasa and Betty J.King assert: “In Britain the subject of racial oppression has been examined primarily in relation to colonialism, post colonialism and imperialism but much less fully with regard to the problematic of slavery” (xiv).

Britain’s imperial involvement in Africa and the Caribbean was essentially excluded from the teaching of literature and history at that time. Phillips often emphasizes “his first trip to the USA, where, for the first time, he came across Richard Wright’s Native Son and Ralph Ellison’s Invisible Man” (ET 8). This discovery of an alternative, the black tradition of writing, eventually also led to his decision to “confront confusion and write” (ET 8). Caryl Phillips had said in one of his interviews, “When I was little growing up in England – this was true for all of us black British children – there was nothing in the textbooks, nothing in the geography around me which actually acknowledged that I had a past” (qtd. in Schatteman 30). Caryl Phillips came to know about his past after his first visit to America. He says:

I wandered into a local book (America) shop and picked up two books… Frantz Fanon’s Black Skin, White Masks and The Wretched of the Earth. The subtitle of the book is ‘the handbook for the black revolution that is changing the shape of the world… became my Old Testament and New Testament. (NWO 129)

After this incident, Caryl Phillips, a prolific Caribbean writer, started to write about the African diaspora due to transoceanic migration. Higher Ground focuses on
the African participation in the Atlantic slave trade. In Crossing the River, the multiple characters from different times and places voice the African diaspora that begins from the transatlantic slave trade. Caryl Phillips highlights the fact that the historical event, the transatlantic slavery, continues to shape the contemporary African diaspora. Slavery is a distinct historical event, but its effect is present in the life of the present generation African diaspora. Rudy Williams, a 20th century convict of ‘The Cargo Rap’ of Higher Ground suffers due to racism. He gives an account of how the blacks are suffering in the hands of the whites due to racism. He says, “They assume black people to be the ‘trouble makers’…. The trouble makers are those who set dogs upon unarmed men and women, who shoot and bomb children in a church in our hometown who turn fire hoses on the black people to prevent marching peaceably on the sidewalk” (HG 64). Caryl Phillips pinpoints that racism is the offspring of slavery in the New World. Slavery is a shared history of a painful intermeshing of black and white histories and not just the experiences of individuals or in the diaspora community. Involuntary nature, high rates of mortality and social dislocation by the capture and transportation are the differences between transoceanic migration and modern migration. The unnamed narrator says, “the human cargo is simply plundered” (HG 36).

Caryl Phillips, in Crossing the River, Cambridge and Higher Ground combine masterfully an elaborate mixture of numerous scraps and bits of actual historical texts to form a single coherent narrative. In Re-Membering the Black Atlantic: On the Poetics and Politics of Literary Memory, Lars Eckstein says: “Emily’s voice in Cambridge is composed of a large number of travelogues and historiographies from the late 18th and early 19th century, while Cambridge’s tale contains many bits and pieces of historical slave narratives and other writings by and about black people from
the same period” (90). *Crossing the River* is Phillips’ most popular work on transatlantic slavery. Four fragment narratives span 250 years of black Atlantic history together. Caryl Phillips follows the theme and structure of *Higher Ground* in *Crossing the River*. In the first story ‘The Pagan Coast’, Nash a freed African slave resettles in Liberia and ‘West’ is a story of Martha Randolph, who suffers mentally and physically as she separates from her family on the auction block. The third story ‘Crossing the River’ is the account of the slave ship captain, James Hamilton and ‘Somewhere in England’ is the diary entries of the white Englishwoman, Joyce, who falls in love with the black GI Travis during the Second World War. The polyphonic representation of the African diaspora gives an epic quality to *Crossing the River*. In the chorus, at the beginning and at the end of the novel, the quasi-mythical father identifies Nash, Martha and Travis as his children. The African father is filled with guilt as he had sold his children to the slave trader after the draught. The “chorus of common memory” (CR 1) of the African father connects the four narratives in fragments. The quasi-mythical father at the end of the novel accepts and adopts Joyce, a white woman, as one of his children and thus embodies an identity giving counterbalance to the sufferings of displacement.

Lars Eckstein in *Re-Membering the Black Atlantic: On the Poetics and Politics of Literary Memory* writes that writers like Caryl Phillips, D’Aguiar and Dabydeen have tried to re-establish slavery and the slave trade as a key motif in British writing. They tried a new fictional subject matter. The fearlessness and confidence among these writers keeps alive the legacy of slavery in new artistic forms and transformations. There is hope that transatlantic slavery will continue to live in the British literary imagination in future (63-72).
Paul Gilroy, a black British critic, first introduced the term ‘Black Atlantic’. Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic* discusses “the historical and cultural linkage” (43). Ashcroft et al in *Postcolonial Studies* say that the diaspora of the Africans resulted “from the Atlantic slave-trade across the infamous Middle Passage and the so called ‘Triangular Trade’ which flowed between Africa, the Americas and Europe, a trade which had a powerful effect on modern economics” (22). Caryl Phillips in *The Atlantic Sound* talks about the Triangular Trade” or Middle Passage:

The trading ‘triangle’ was simple. Goods, be they guns, glassware, iron bars or liquor, would be exported from England to the West coast of Africa, where they would be sold in exchange for human captives. The second leg of the ‘triangle’ or the ‘middle passage,’ involved the transportation of the captives to the Americas, where they would be sold to plantation owners either for cash or for a combination of cash and crops such as tobacco, sugar, cotton, coffee, or any of the ‘new world’ produce that was becoming fashionable all over Europe. The final leg of the ‘triangle’ involved a return to England, where the produce was sold to agents and merchants. The traders made money on all three sides of the ‘triangle’, but the human beings who were subjugated in Africa and sold in the Americas represented the profitable heart of the trade. As early as 1572 a royal proclamation awarded an English company a monopoly to the trade slaves in all English territories, recognizing the massive fortunes that might be realized. English ships, alongside those from Spain and Portugal were soon transporting thousands of Africans across the Atlantic Ocean every year. (31)
A black Atlantic writer focuses on the Middle Passage and the symbolic and literal meaning rooted in the Atlantic. Black Atlantic writers also focus on slavery, the slave-trade, Colonialism, Post-colonialism, neo-colonialism and how the slave trade developed the Americas and at the same time underdeveloped the Africa. Similarly, many of Caryl Phillips’ novels and non-fictions deal with the Atlantic slave trade and its effect on the African diaspora. Caryl Phillips is a typical black Atlantic traveller and writer. He covers many subjects with black Atlantic themes writing from the slave trade in The Atlantic sound to Post-colonialism (Gilroy 43-45)

Caryl Phillips, a black British, has, ”re-visioned the history of slavery the most extensively in his writing... as unfinished business in terms of its continuing impact on the sense of self and on relationships between black and white people in the modern world” (Joannou 195). Caryl Phillips travels from the Caribbean to Britain and to America mimicking the triangular slave trade. The writing he produced as a result of these travels is classified as ‘Black Atlantic’ writing. His first encounter with travelling was soon after his birth when his parents moved from St Kitts to Britain. Since then, travelling has been an important part in Caryl Phillips “offering him opportunities of observing what he calls “the residue of the colonial past” (Cheng 1).

The Atlantic Sound is an account of a journey he made to the three very important hubs of the Atlantic slave trade: Liverpool in England, Elimain in the west coast of Ghana and Charleston in the American south. Cambridge, Higher Ground and Crossing the River spin around the Atlantic and many stories have hidden behind it.

Dr James Proctor states:

Phillips is a diasporic writer, whose work rejects the investment in national belonging, preferring instead the border spaces of the Black Atlantic. Even in the non-fictional books The European Tribe and The
Atlantic Sound expose a preoccupation with what Phillips has diagnosed at different moments as the gift of displacement and the high anxiety of belonging. (qtd. in Campbell and Aundrietta)

Caryl Phillips’ Higher Ground is a novel in three disparate parts and Caryl Phillips titles each part. The first part of Higher Ground is ‘Heartland’ and the second part is ‘The Cargo Rap’ and the third part is titled ‘Higher Ground.’ Through the perspective of an unnamed narrator, he brings out the expedition of the Europeans to capture the slaves. The setting of ‘Heartland’ is not the geographical heartland of the continent, but the coast, the shore land, the edge of Africa. He further gives a heartfelt picture about the suffering of the slaves in the dungeon and their shipping to America or West Indies. The unnamed narrator says about the suffering of the slaves:

The coffle has finally arrived with its noise and smell. The men, women, and children wear heavy wooden collars that are secured with iron rings and linked to the person in front and person behind by means of cumbrous chain. The soldiers eye their captives; rope whips poised, muskets cocked…. At the end of each day, the soldiers will have handed the captives a small measure of grain and watched as they tried but failed to rest their heads on the ground. (HG 58)

Caryl Phillips has given an authentic record about the suffering of the slaves in the hands of the whites or Europeans. Ronald Segal says:

When the slaves come to Fida, they put in prison altogether…. They are thoroughly examined even to the smallest member and that naked too both men and women, without the least distinction of modesty those which are approved as good are set on one side; and the lame and
faulty are set by as Invalids… remainder are numbered… In the meanwhile a burning iron with the Arms or Name of the companies, lyes on the Fire; which ours are marked on the breast… I doubt not but this trade seems very barbarous… but since it is followed by mere necessity it must go on. (28)

Caryl Phillips says about the harshness of the overseer. He says: “The overseer has a horse named ‘Ginger’. The plantation is wide and stretches beyond the horizon. The days are hard and long. We toil from ‘can’t see in the morning to ‘can’t see at night. The master is cruel, but nobody ‘knows’ him better than his slaves” (HG 172). Caryl Phillips thus in his novels focuses on the left out of traditional historiography. Caryl Phillips novels deal the hidden history of the West, for example, the transatlantic trade. Benedicte Ledent in “Caryl Phillips: A Master of Ambiguity” says, “slavery and other presence in England were either inexistent or, at best, figured as side issues in most English novels until the 1990’s, they have become central issues in Phillips’s writing.”

In the introduction of *Crossing the River*, Caryl Phillips exposes the effects of slavery on the Africans from the period of the slave trade to the present period. The novel begins with the voice of the father who regrets having sold his children to the slave master. He says: “I soiled my hands with cold goods in exchange for their warm flesh. As shameful intercourse I could feel their eyes upon me Wondering, why?” (CR 1). The father seems to exist outside the physical body since he makes the following statement: “For two and fifty years I have listened to the many tongued chorus. And occasionally among the sundry restless voices, I have discovered those of my children” (CR 1). Caryl Phillips explained in an interview about his inclination to write novels set in the past. He says, “… deeply committed to the notion of history
being the fundamental windows through which we have to peer in order to see ourselves clearly” (qtd in Knopf 46). Slavery is a lost and forgotten incident. Caryl Phillips by writing about slavery shows “past continues to exert its influence active yet unseen fiction makes the ghosts of slavery speak?” (Sharpe xii).

Jenny Sharpe says, “Black British writers engage the historical documents on slavery in order to make visible the transatlantic crossing that took place long before the Empire Windrush made its legendary journey” (88). Caryl Phillips writes about the diasporic life of migrants in England in his novels like The Final Passage, In The Falling Snow, and Dancing in the Dark, but he writes about the history of slave-trade in Crossing the River. In this novel, he uses the montage technique by combining four story lines. In the third section of Crossing the River, Caryl Phillips gives the journal account of a voyage on a ship Duke of York written by the master of the ship James Hamilton. “Journal of a voyage intended (by God’s permission) in the Duke of York, snow, from Liverpool to the Windward Coast of Africa, etc., commenced the 24th August 1752… Officers and Seamen belonging to the Duke of York. Commenced pay 24th August 1752” (CR 98-99). A substantial part of this third section is a reworking of Newton’s log, and Marcus Wood explores some of the alterations Phillips makes to the text and consequent implications for literary works which return to the past of slavery “Phillips’s work raises big questions about what can be done with these white text that claim to tell us about how slavery worked, what it meant and how we should respond to it” (Wood 10).

The study of the ‘Black Atlantic Slavery’ is haunting of history. In the postmodern world, slave narrative stops to exist except as a shadow of the past. Now the slave narratives are disclosed in bits and pieces because the slave narratives do not matter any longer and are forgotten, “the past co-exist with the present in the
amnesiac country in this forgetful century” (Cliff 198). Caryl Phillips’ *Cambridge* is a “postmodern historical novel written in an anachronistic prose of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century travel diaries” (Sharpe 88). Caryl Phillips in *Cambridge* has also rewritten colonial accounts of slavery. This novel begins with a prologue and ends with an epilogue, in between the prologue and epilogue, the accounts of Emily Cartwright and Cambridge about slavery in West Indies are given and also a paper report of the murder of the overseer by Cambridge. Though this novel is a post-modern novel, its subject matter is slavery. Caryl Phillips has “resuscitated the lives of the dead by raising the painful memory of slavery and engages the colonial records of slavery in order to find a place for the histories of black people those records exclude” (Sharpe xii).

History matters to Caryl Phillips because of the slave-trade, which is a past incident, but closely bound up with the present. History is an ongoing, open ended process and history is not an impersonal divorced from real people. Michael Foucault writes the historian’s relationship to the document. He says:

History in its traditional form, undertook to “memorize” the *monuments* of the past, transform them into *documents*, and lend speech to those traces which, in themselves are often not verbal, or which say in silence something other than what they actually say: in our time, history is that which transforms documents into monuments. (7)

Foucault’s words may hold a new meaning in connection to the past of slavery and its historical records. In contemplating the transatlantic slave trade, we might think of several examples where documents stand as unofficial monuments to the
past. Olaudah Equiano’s narrative is oft-cited and anthologized as one of the earliest examples of black writing in Britain and, as James Walvin has argued in *An African’s Life: The Life and Tunes of Olaudah Equiano, 1745-1797* that Equiano has become a symbol of black Britain: “Equiano is more popular today than ever before…. He has his own postcard issued by an English museum” (10). Equiano’s narrative has become a kind of literary ‘monument’ to the survivors of the slave-trade. Evelyn O’Callaghan more recently has found that Phillips has quoted entire paragraph of Equiano’s narrative unchanged in his *Cambridge*. Caryl Phillips has used the travel diaries and slave narratives such as Lady Nugent’s Journal and the interesting narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano. A substantial part of the third section of Phillips’ *Crossing the River* is also a reworking of *Newton’s log* (34-47). The following passage illustrates Caryl Phillips’ use of *Newton’s Log* in his *Crossing the River*.

*Friday 2nd April*... By the favour of Divine Providence made a timely discovery today that the slaves were forming a plot for an insurrection. Surprised 4 attempting to get off their irons, and upon further search in their rooms found some knives, stones, shot, etc. Put 2 in irons and delicately in the thumbscrews to encourage them to a full confession of those principally concerned. In the evening put 5 more in neck yokes. (114)

*Monday 11th December*... By the favour of Divine Providence made a timely discovery today that the slaves were forming a plot for an insurrection. Surprised 2 of them attempting to get off their irons, and upon further search in their rooms, upon the information of 3 of the boys, found some knives, stones, shot, etc., and a cold chisel. Upon enquiry there appeared 8 principally concerned to move in projecting
the mischief and 4 boys in supplying them with the above instruments. Put the boys in irons and slightly in the thumbscrews to urge them to a full confession. (Newton 71)

The sea played an important role in the life of the slaves. The sea is a symbol of diaspora, “as a vehicle of separating Africans from homeland, at the same time it connects Africa to the New World in chain of bodies” (Gatsby 35). The waters and the landscapes of the Atlantic and the Caribbean witnessed many tragic episodes. The arrival of Columbus and his reclamation of the surrounding islands and the transportation of a million slaves of Africa changed the history of the Caribbean island. The sea bears a witness to the experience of the Middle Passage, residing in the imagination of those who travelled throughout it to the Americas. The sea is a symbol of the beginning of a new life in a new land for the slaves and an abrupt end to their old life in their mother country. The sea is also a symbol of the end without an ending to their sufferings. Caryl Phillips used ‘sea’ as a symbol to symbolize the deracination of the slaves. Literally ‘deracinate’ means to pluck or tear up the roots; to eradicate or exterminate. Ashcroft says in Post Colonial Studies that the European slave traders “not only uprooted Africans from their home environments, but through centuries of systematic racial denigration alienated enslaved Africans from their own racial characteristics” (60). In the journal, the ship captain James Hamilton says:

Friday 21st May... During the night a hard wind came on so quickly, with heavy rain. Occasioned a lofty sea, of which I was much afraid, for I do not remember ever meeting anything equal to it since using the sea. At dawn brought the ill-humoured slaves upon deck, but the air is so sharp they cannot endure, neither to wash nor to dance. They huddle
together, and sing their melancholy lamentations. We have lost the sight of Africa. (CR 124)

Caryl Phillips is a post colonial writer, but his novels *Cambridge, Crossing the River* and *Higher Ground* deal with colonialism. Slavery is a historical event and moreover, it is a thing of the past and belongs to the imperial or colonial period. In *Post Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* Bill Ashcroft et al say: “Colonial discourse is greatly implicated in the ideas of the centrality of Europe. Colonial discourse is thus a system of statement that can be made about colonies and colonial peoples, about colonizing powers and about the relationship between the two” (37). “Colonialism can be defined as the conquest and control of other people’s land and goods. A colonial study is also about imperialism” (Bottomore 84). Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* says: “Imperialism means the practice, the theory, and the attitude of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; ‘colonialism’ which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting settlements on distant territory” (8). The main power or the imperial power behind the transatlantic slave trade is Europe. Caryl Phillips remarks about the imperial power behind this slave-trade and also reveals the relationship between the colonizers and colonized. In *Cambridge* Caryl Phillips refers to the condition of the implanted Negroes in England and their relation with the colonizer. Cambridge says:

Negro children are sold for amusement like parrots or monkeys, although the practice of decorating them with gold or silver collars has mercifully fallen from usage. Many of these English men, seemingly unaware that Slavery cannot be tolerated in a Christian land, still sought to intimidate black men into obedience and treated the passing African strangers with unacceptable brutality. It appeared that the
countrymen had little interest in recognizing or relishing the negro on terms of equality. (Cam 151)

Minority people living in the West like the black British writers and the writers living in the Third World share “a history of colonial exploitation, may share cultural roots and may also share an opposition to the legacy of colonial domination, their histories and present concerns cannot be simply merged” (Loomba 18). Caryl Phillips, a postcolonial writer debates about colonialism and imperialism; he wants to find out his root of the African diaspora. He also reveals the relationship between colonizer and colonized i.e., master/slave relationship. In The Empire Writes Back Bill Ashcroft writes “the ideas of colonial subject have had a strong impact on postcolonial cultural and literary interpretation” (30). By writing about slavery, Caryl Phillips is making a comparative approach closely “related to that based on the tension between the colonizer and the colonized” and also emphasizes “the relationship between the dominated and dominating societies” (Dorsinville 75).

Young says in Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory and Culture and Race “postcolonial theory has been deployed in recent times to investigate earlier imperial and colonial periods, as well as to look at imperial domination in the other parts of the world” (200). Paul Gilory in The Black Atlantic suggested “an exploration of diaspora necessarily involves mediation on the legacy of slavery and colonialism, as well as consideration of the relationship of the blacks to the modern western tradition of thought particularly those have been defined in relation to an African other: Reason, Enlightenment and Modernity” (77). Caryl Phillips, a postcolonial writer in order to understand the postcolonial discourse had to write about colonialism. Slavery is the origin of the African diaspora, so to find out his cultural root he writes about slavery: a colonial concept.
Certainly Caryl Phillips has a postcolonial approach to his colonialism because he is a modern postcolonial writer. The colonizer chartered a new route in the sea, and they also rooted the colonized from their place through the power and the gun, and thereby changed the history of these colonies. Ashcroft says in *The Post Colonial studies: The Key Concepts* that, in the colonial literature, the narratives of the barbarians, cannibals and the savage were fascinating to the elite of the West. These narratives gave the colonizer an edge to justify their acts of violence unleashed on the natives of the colonies. The colonizer victimized the Africans, West Indians and Australian aborigines by guns and in texts. The continuous denied recognition of these colonized as human beings enhanced the process of colonization. Post-colonial literature is not about the sympathetic Western writers writing about the indigenous people, but the natives themselves who speak for their cause. Postcolonial literature is the voice of the oppressed people. The suppressed people, after breaking the shackles of colonialism only can express their experiences because the post colonial view is in contrast to the colonial view. The colonial literature is the stereotyped representation of the orient by the occident, whereas the writers of the postcolonial literature act as the spokesperson for his tribe and community. Caryl Phillips has not failed to bring out the colonial notion of the colonized. In *Higher Ground*, Caryl Phillips pictures the Westerners view of the colonized through the speech of the new governor. The governor says:

True, your kinds are becoming increasingly common place in the streets of my country, but in your primitive state, that is how I wished to view you…. In your clothes and your manners, your are truly the most unlikely of creatures’… He speaks to me of cannibalism and his
fantasies of being eaten alive. He stops and roars with uncontrollable laughter. (HG 12-13)

The perspectives of the colonial writers are completely different from the Postcolonial writers. Caryl Phillips views the colonizer with the lens of a postcolonial writer. The Governor represents the colonial literature. Caryl Phillips, a Postcolonial writer, is looking at this in the political point of view, and he also tries to decolonize the minds of the readers which is one of the most important tasks of the Postcolonial writers. Caryl Phillips in order to decolonize the mind of the reader gives the history of the slave trade from the perspective of a slave. In the first part of *Higher Ground*, in ‘Heartland’ the unnamed narrator belongs to the colonized, through his perception only we come to know how the ‘trading post’ was flourishing in their country. The following description of the unnamed narrator shows how the Westerners treated the slaves. He narrates:

The dungeon smells foul, the air thick with putrefaction impossible to disguise. No amount of cleansing will ever make this place inodorous… He stands and looks about himself and then kicks at the neck-chains with his boots…. In the corner trading equipment is temporarily stored: whips, flails, yokes, branding-irons, metal masks… ‘How many?’…. One hundred. May be one hundred and fifty. ‘It is a just a place of storage’…. ‘And these markings?’ I follow the line of his fingers. Those with small pox, when they move they leave behind skin and blood. Then, of course, many have dysentery. Such stains are common. (HG 15-16)
Cambridge gives a brief description about the handling of the slaves in the ship. He says: “My host and captain ordered his men to throw me into the belly of the vessel and confine me in irons in a condition of captivity all too familiar” (Cam 155). Caryl Phillips pictures the suffering of the slaves from the viewpoint of the colonizer. In the third section of *Crossing the River* the master of the ship, James Hamilton, writes a journal of a voyage, in this journal he gives an account of how the colonizer purchased the slaves and harshly treated by them. He writes: “Put overboard a boy, No. 29, being very bad with a violent flux…. Put 2 in irons and delicately in the thumbscrew…. In the evening put 5 more in the neck yokes” (116-17).

Through the voice of the colonizer, Caryl Phillips portrays the trauma the slaves suffered in the hands of their masters. Emily Cartwright also gives an account of how slaves were treated by the overseer like Mr Brown in *Cambridge*. Emily also belongs to the master race. She writes what she has seen in her father’s plantation. She has also written in first person, so she is a viewer and it is a firsthand account. She says, “I recognized the Negro Cambridge, the aged slave… being tremendously lashed with the cattle-whip… the proud black to go to the pond and wash off the blood for many an hour” (Cam 92).

Caryl Phillips, in order to decolonize the minds of his readers, has depicted a clear picture of how the slaves were treated in the perception of the colonizers and colonized. He leaves the readers to fill in the gap. Moreover, Caryl Phillips does not directly pinpoint the cruelty of the masters, but by repeatedly saying the same idea in the perspective of the masters and slaves and thereby making the colonizer accept his cruelty and faults. This is one of the most important tasks of the postcolonial writers in their process of decolonizing the minds of the readers.
Caryl Phillips has also highlighted the practice of re-naming of the slaves. The European owners re-christened the slaves, after purchasing them. The slave owners, i.e. the Colonizers re-named the slaves to assert their superiority over them. Burnard states, “Whites fostered such distinctions (naming) in order to further their belief that Blacks were inferior – more like animals than Anglo-European” (329). The colonizer believes that, by re-naming, the slaves become their property. Caryl Phillips in his novels *Crossing the River* and *Cambridge* has highlighted the colonizer’s practice of re-naming the slaves. In *Crossing the River*, the Europeans numbered the slaves and called the slaves by that number and not by their real name. Captain Hamilton writes in his journal: “This day buried 2 fine men slaves, Nos 27 and 43… Buried a man slave (No. 8) …2 girl slaves, who have long been ill of flux died. Nos 117 and 127” (CR 116). By calling the slaves by numbers shows, “blacks at that time were regarded as material wealth, produced to be traded to be sold, to be bartered” (qtd. in Schatteman 69). Caryl Phillips illustrates the caged life of the slaves after being captured by the colonizer. Moreover, James Hamilton buys these slaves in return for goods and he treats them as commodity by saying “30 slaves of superior quality” (CR 117).

The Colonizer renamed Cambridge several times. The colonizer hates to call the blacks in their native name. Cambridge says, “My true Guinea name, Olumide” (Cam 134) and later “No longer Olumide but Thomas” (Cam 140). The white, nicknamed Cambridge as “the black Christian” (Cam 161) after he became a Christian. This shows Cambridge’s hybridity. He is a black slave and a heathen. Later he accepted Christianity which is an Englishman’s religion. In England, Miss Spenser of Blackheath taught the Christian religion to him and “new born she gave to the world David Henderson” (Cam 144). A free man, Cambridge, captured again as a
slave when he returned to his native country, and again renamed. Cambridge ironically says,” I alone of my parcel was purchased by a Mr Wilson, who made it known that my title was to be Cambridge” (Cam 157). Burnard explains,

Europeans named slaves using naming practices that were noticeably more distinctive and imaginative than their own… Many slaves had classical names that Whites never had, Cato, for instance, Caesar for instance, were the eighth and eleventh most popular names and Venus was the fifteenth most popular female name. Besides classical literature references slave owners also named slaves after English towns and countries such as: London, York, Bristol, Cambridge and Oxford. (329-36)

In the Higher Ground at the end of the section ‘Heartland’ the auctioneer auctions the “prime nigger heathens” (HG 60), he renames the slaves. He says, “Let’s call her “Venus” (HG 60). By naming the slave as ‘Venus’, the auctioneer follows the British culture of giving new names to the slaves.

The colonizer used Christianity as an effective weapon for colonization. The colonial officials did not support the Christian missionaries, but certainly used The Bible as one of their tools of colonization. The missionaries used English as the administrative language, though The Bible was available in their indigenous languages. To the new converts the missionaries taught hymns and choruses in English and not in their indigenous language. The colonizer misinterpreted The Bible, to preach the Gospel, for their selfish gains, and they also suppressed the native religious systems. As the religious schism ravaged closely-knit societies, the colonizers capitalised on the situation with their divide and rule policies. The Bible
inspired the young Africans. Some Africans believed that Christianity shaped them, moulded them and helped them in their struggle for freedom. As Wauthier points out: “When the Europeans took our country, we fought them with our spear, but they defeated us because they had 'better' weapons. And so colonial power was set up much against our wish, but the missionary came in time and laid explosives under colonialism. *The Bible* is now doing what we could not do with our spears” (218-19).

The principle of Christianity is love and unity, but ironically the colonizer used the Christian religion to propagate violence and division among the indigenous people. Rudy Williams blames the colonizer for using Christianity as a weapon. He says, “The Europeans raped, pillaged, and exploited our people with two instruments: the Bible and the gun. He walked into our lands holding up his book of religion, but behind it was toting a full and ready-cocked musket” (HG 76).

There are lots of relations between Christianity and slave. Caryl Phillips’ view of Christianity is ambiguous. Phillips points out in an interview, *The Insistence of Voices: An Interview with Caryl Phillips*, “Christianity was both oppressing and liberating the colonised” by providing some with “the capacity for self-analysis and self-expression” (qtd. in Eckstein 35-36). He supports the view of Wauthier and also exposes the hypocrisy of the Christians. He has expressed his views about Christianity in his novels. Christianity changed a slave into “a virtual Englishman” (Cam 156). Accepting Christianity and learning *The Bible* changed the culture, manners and appearance of Cambridge. He became civilized after he came to England. Cambridge thought that this transformation that had happened in his life is due to his acceptance of Christianity. Cambridge was more religious than the English people. His speech is full of praise to God:
Surely the Lord Almighty was with me at the time, and I believe He whispered to me, a poor heathen, words of comfort. So great was His mercy that He took me in hand and enabled me to reign over my quaking terror…. The Almighty Lord will have amply rewarded him with the gift of His everlasting love. (Cam 137-38)

The Bible became Cambridge’s source of survival. Ironically Christianity helped Cambridge to overcome his difficulties. It was a source of solace and power to him. Cambridge did not give up his newly accepted religion, even after his re-enslavement. Emily Cartwright surprisingly comments after she sees a black slave, Cambridge, reading *The Bible*. She says, “I noted that I appeared to have disturbed him in the most unlikely act of studying the Bible” (Cam 92).

In the first section, ‘The Pagan Coast’, of, *Crossing the River*, Phillips exposes the life of a slave named Nash Williams. Nash’s master, Edward, treated him kindly. “Nash was a teacher of remarkable gifts” (CR 7), so Edward wanted him to resettle in “the Crown Colony of Sierra Leone” (CR 16) and to teach Christianity in that region. Nash Williams thanks his master for bringing him up as a Christian. He says:

I praise His holy name that I was fortunate enough to be born in a Christian country, amongst Christian parents and friends, and that you were kind enough to take me, a foolish child, from my parents and bring me up in your own dwelling as something more akin to son than servant. Truth and honesty is great capital, and you instilled such values in my person at an early age, for which I am eternally grateful to you and my Creator. (CR 21)
Cambridge also opines that Christianity has the power to turn his savage people into civilized people. In order to fulfil his wish, Cambridge returns to his mother country after the death of his wife. Cambridge expresses his opinion about Christianity. He says:

The first purpose of my mission was to open a school in my native Africa so that those of my complexion might acquaint themselves with knowledge of the Christian religion and the laws of civilization… It was also intended that those of my native Africa should be given the great advantage of little learning in reading and writing. (Cam 149-50)

Caryl Phillips in *The Nature of Blood* describes the plight of a Black Jew girl named Malka. Malka along with her family comes to Israel, from their desert country, thinking Israel as their own land. The culture and outward appearance of Malka and her family are different from the people of Israel, so the people of Israel do not accept them. Malka does not blame the religion or the Holy Land but the hypocritical people only. She says, “This Holy Land did not deceive us. The people did” (NB 207). Cambridge also talks about the hypocrisy of the English people. Cambridge says:

I would quote from the holy book. ‘Did not He that made them, make us; and did not One fashion us in the womb?’ This fraction of scripture… England cannot be tolerated under the government of God. ‘Surely,’ I would say, ‘it is a blasphemy against His benevolence even to suppose it.’ (Cam 148)

Caryl Phillips has also brought the hypocrisy of the colonizer. The Governor in his death bed, asks the unnamed narrator to read *The Bible*, and he talks to him about the word of God and their civilization which can be achieved only by
Christianity. The unnamed narrator narrates the incident by saying, “Do you know the Bible... ‘It contains the story of our God and all the wisdom of our people’... I am fascinated by the possibility of glimpsing into the world of their Gods... he has not even asked after my name” (HG 51-53). Caryl Phillips in Cambridge, in some places, has italicized the word ‘Christian’ to emphasize the message about the inhumanity of Cambridge’s tormentors. Some of the lines where the word ‘Christian’ is italicized are:

These Christian inheritors of the Hebrew tradition; I... was washed towards the coast and from my rich and fertile soil by Christian Providence; the treachery of some of our petty kings, encouraged... by so-called Christian customers; such enterprise with Christian religion as its true companion. (Cam 133-134)

Caryl Phillips jeers at the hypocritical self-styled Christians. At the same time, he frankly admits that to a certain level Christianity has helped his uncivilized, barbaric people become civilized ones. In ‘Heartland’ the unnamed narrator dryly considers Christian conversion as a political sop of slave owners to appease “the anti-slave trading lobby” (HG 52). The governor says, “If only they could see the evidence of Christian work in the shape of your person then I believe that some of the present difficulties would be eradicated; some of the hypocrisies would disappear overnight” (HG 52).

The colonizer after establishing the slave trade re-interpreted The Bible to reflect the new historical situation. The Europeans allude to The Holy Bible to justify their act of enslaving the black people. The white people refer to the Noah's incident in The Bible as a curse on the blacks. After the flood, Noah and his family started
replenishing the earth. After many years, one day, Noah due to excess of drinking of wine, laid in his tent uncovered. Noah had three sons, namely: Shem, Japheth and Ham. His son Ham saw him naked and informed his other two brothers, and they covered his nakedness. Noah comes to know about this, and he curses Ham’s fourth son Canaan. Many people refer to this curse as the cause of Black slavery. This incident is in the book of Genesis. Noah’s curse is, “Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants, he shall to be his brethren. And he said:" Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem, and May Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth, and may he dwell in the tents of Shem and may Canaan be his servant” (Gen 9. 18-27). Braude Benjamin says, “The Curse of Ham... has constituted one of the standard justifications for the degradation and enslavement of the African black in both South Africa and the American South” (103).

In the book of Genesis, chapter four, there is an incident where God put a mark on Cain for killing his brother Abel. Cain killed Abel after coming to know that God had accepted the offering of his brother and not his. So in anger, he killed his brother. God cursed Cain, “And the Lord said to him, Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him” (Gen 4.15). Haynes Stephen remarks, “Though this account makes no reference to skin colour, why did many eighteenth-and nineteenth-century Americans believe Cain was cursed with black skin, and when did that belief originate?” (2). After the curse of Cain, only God destroyed the whole World with a flood. The surviving family after the flood was Noah’s only. The nullified curse of Cain cannot be the cause of the blacks to be enslaved by the colonizer. The colonizer re-interpreted The Bible to justify their trade of human flesh alive.
No evidence is found in Genesis that Ham was black. The belief that Ham was a black man developed much later. Ole Bjorn Rekdal says: “It is a rabbinical elaboration, not explicitly formulated until the Babylonian Talmud of 500 AD” (19). Hence this concept belongs to the category of Jewish “myths and unending genealogies” (1 Tim.1.4). European scholars used the Jewish Talmud idea that the ‘sons of Ham’ were blackened by their sins. During the slave trade of the 18th and 19th centuries, the Europeans used the Jewish Talmud to justify their action. A historian, Edith Sanders, concludes the identification of Ham’s descendants as Black Africans. This gained currency in the sixteenth century. “Thereafter, it” persisted throughout the eighteenth century, [and] served as a rationale for slavery, using Biblical interpretations in support of its tenets. The image of the Negro deteriorated in direct proportion to the growth of the importance of slavery. (521-32)

Caryl Phillips in Cambridge exposes to the readers how the colonizers were using The Bible hypocritically to justify their transport and trade of “African cargo” (Cam 156). In Cambridge, Cambridge gives an account of Miss Spencer’s opinion of the Black slaves. Cambridge says,

She related, black men were descended from Noah’s son Cham, who was damned by God for his disobedience and shamelessness in having relations with his chosen wife aboard the Ark. This wicked act produced the devilish dark Chus, the father of the black and cursed Africans. (Cam 144)
Cambridge also feels pity for the white minister who has a false notion that, “this man who would attempt to build a false notion that all of a black skin are tainted with Cain’s crime, or that of Noah’s son, Ham” (Cam 160). Even Emily in Cambridge while giving an account of the celebration of the Africans, says, “A son of Ham enjoying his jubilee” (Cam 87).

One of the most distinct features of Caryl Phillips is that he compares the trauma of the slaves to that of Jews. In all the three novels, though each section appears to be a different story with juxtaposition there is a unity. *Higher Ground* is worth investigating because, in this novel, the Holocaust and slavery appear side by side. The thoroughly studied genocide is the holocaust and not slavery. Moreover, the atrocities of holocaust provided a sacred status than slavery. Phillips tries to compare these two historical traumas without equating them. Trauma researchers are primarily concerned with Europe’s biggest trauma: the Holocaust. The Holocaust overshadowed other world-historical traumas, such as slavery. There are similarities between the holocaust and slavery. Both incidents took place during the colonial period, and moreover, millions of people lost their lives in both the events.”The Jews are still Europeans nigger”, (ET 52) and the black slaves are still “nigger” (HG 152), and so these two incidents refer to racism. Both of them subjected to the power and control of an authority. These are some of the similarities between the holocaust and slavery, and yet Caryl Phillips does not try to equate or rank these two events.

The first story “Heartland” of *Higher Ground* is about the suffering and trauma of an unnamed narrator who is a black slave, whereas the third story “Higher ground” is about the trauma and suffering of a Jewish girl. Caryl Phillips places these two stories side by side, but he does not equate or take sides to prove which suffering is the worst. By putting these two historical events side by side, the readers come to
know the different types of racism, trauma and human suffering in the World. Caryl Phillips’ multicultural background helps him to have a broad perspective of the universe. Caryl Phillips came to know the atrocities of the holocaust only through the television on the holocaust. He writes,

I was about fifteen when Amsterdam first began to, fascinate me. There was a programme on television, part of the World at War series, which dealt with the Nazi occupation of Holland and the subsequent rounding up of the Jews…. I watched the library footage of the camps and realized both the enormity of the crime that was being perpetrated, and the precariousness of my own position in Europe. The many adolescent thoughts that worried my head can be reduced to one line: “If white people could do that to white people, then what the hell would they do to me?” After that programme I wrote my first piece of fiction. A short story about a fifteen-year-old Jewish boy in Amsterdam. (ET 66-67)

Caryl Phillips came to know the cruel side of human nature, only after watching the television programme. He identified his own situation reflected in the sufferings of the Jews. Only later, he came to know that he has a Jewish ancestor. In *A New World Order*, Phillips reveals that his grandfather was a Jew. He says:

Soon after I was sitting in a bar in St Kitts with my brother and a friend told us that our grandfather had just walked in and taken a seat in the corner… But, sure enough, seated in the corner was Emmanuel de Fraites, a Jewish trader with Portuguese roots that reached back to the island of Madeira. I now understood that the cultural hybridity that is
the quintessential Caribbean condition had certainly marked my person, and the quality of the blood that flowed through my veins was doggedly impure. (NWO 130)

Caryl Phillips, an African diaspora, born in the island of St Kitts had a strong link to the history of slavery. In spite of that, he had a personal link to the Jews which influenced his interest in the sufferings of the Jews during the Holocaust.

Caryl Phillips views the holocaust and the slavery as two separate, horrific experiences in human history. When asked in an interview with Lars Eckstein entitled The Insistence of Voices: An Interview with Caryl Phillips, if he sees any difference between the Holocaust and slavery, he responds:

I see lots of differences, I see lots of similarities. I think it’s probably dangerous to regard them as being parallel in any way. I mean they are similar in as much as you have two groups of people who, as a people, are scattered across the globe and maintain some kind of identity because of an accident of history. (39)

Higher Ground reflects Caryl Phillips’ sympathy towards the holocaust and the slaves. Phillips’ answer is very careful since the comparison of the two histories is a sensitive theme. Hence, Phillips does not want to equate the Holocaust and slavery. He just describes the feeling of not belonging, which relates to all people.

The main themes of Higher Ground are slavery, the Holocaust and an outsider in society, i.e. a prisoner. Phillips shows that suffering is common to all human beings in the world. Although the atrocities experienced by the victims are different, the suffering of the people is comparable. The novel Higher Ground contains three
separate narratives. The first story titled “Heartland,” the second one “The Cargo Rap,” and the last one “Higher Ground.” All three stories cover very different and yet very similar topics. The first story “Heartland” tells the story of an African man during the horrible period of the slave trade. The nameless man has betrayed his own family and works for the slave traders. “The Cargo Rap” consists of letters penned by Rudy Williams, who lives in an American prison. Rudy Williams wrote these letters between January 1967 and August 1968. The last story “Higher Ground” describes the life of the Polish Jew Irene. Irene fled to England, in order to escape the Nazi regime in her own country.

All the stories are set in different periods, in history. The setting of the first story is during the period of slavery, the second and the third stories in the twentieth century. The temporal setting and the spatial setting are not the same. The first narrative is set in Africa, the second one in America, and the last one in Europe. Benedicte Ledent writes in Caryl Phillips, “the three stories represent major stages in Caribbean history: the deportation from Africa to the New World, the confined existence there with the attempts to find roots, and finally exile in a European metropolis” (55).

At first sight, the three narratives do not appear to be related to each other, because of all the differences. Therefore, the reader assumes mistakenly that the three stories stand on their own. The novel can be seen as one unit, even though there is no coherence in this novel. The subtitle of the novel: A Novel in Three Parts reflects Caryl Phillips’ intention of writing this novel in three separate parts. That is why the novel can be seen as one continuous story. Caryl Phillips’ Higher Ground is a triptych, the three different stories forming a thematic unity. There is some connection between the main characters of each part, although, at first sight, this does not seem to
be the case. The suffering of the characters can be considered to be similar. It is up to the reader to find the links and connections between the stories. Benédicte Ledent in Caryl Phillips says: “Though these stories make sense in isolation and seem at first to have little in common, their full meaning emerges when read as parts of a single narrative with a dense web of interconnections” (56). The three parts together have a surplus value. They make the reader think further than they would have done with one single story. Three separate stories multiply the power that only one story would have had. The three narratives present similarities in suffering across the world. By situating these three stories in a different time and place, Phillips makes clear that the suffering of all those different people is, in fact, comparable. The suffering of the three protagonists can be considered alike, though the story of their life is very different.

The structure of this novel is not very clear. The structure of the novel shows the universality of human suffering caused by racial discrimination. The novel Higher Ground makes a significant circular movement. The novel begins with an epigraph taken from a black spiritual: “Lord plant my feet on higher ground.” The novel closes with a Jewish liturgical note: “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one.” These two sentences at the beginning and the end of the novel frame the work “in the language of black and Jewish spiritual yearning” (Zierler 61). The novel begins with a black spiritual and ends with a Jewish liturgical note show, the circular movement of racism in the world. Racism keeps surfacing through history.

Phillips describes the story of an African man who works for the slave traders in the first section of “Heartland” of Higher Ground. He betrays his own family and collaborates with the enemy. However, the slave traders regard him as not much more than an animal. The unnamed narrator expects recognition as a human being but is
sold into slavery. This story concerns a person struggling to be recognized as a person with feelings and emotions. This is particularly noticeable in the scene where he wants the governor to approve his love for the girl: “I suspect the Governor will probably ‘understand’ the question of my love and see it as another example of how I have managed to raise myself up above the animal” (HG 53). The protagonist wants to be recognized as a human being. During slavery, blacks were regarded not much more than animals. “Heartland” is about the protagonist’s struggle to lead a normal life. “Heartland” is completely written in the first person and present tense. Caryl Phillips uses the present tense to narrate a past incident, i.e., slavery. This helps the reader to comprehend slavery vividly. The history of slavery is no longer a forgotten topic. The second part “The Cargo Rap” consists of letters written by a prisoner, called Rudy Leroy Williams. “The Cargo Rap” narrative echoes the first story “Heartland”, the suffering of the first story amplified in the suffering of the second story. In both cases, it is mental and physical suffering.

Language plays an important role in the novel Higher Ground. When looking at Rudy’s language in “The Cargo Rap”, it is something strange. Rudy frequently uses Holocaust terms, for example: “Moma, I can write no more because of the brightness of the light. I have tried to persuade the Gestapo Police that I need an eye test, but so far nothing” (HG 127). Rudy uses the term Gestapo Police to describe the guards in prison. The Gestapo was the secret police in Germany during the Nazi regime. Everyone feared the Gestapo, because of the cruelty and omnipresence in the German society. Furthermore, the Gestapo is known for the imprisonment of people without a trial. Rudy shows the similarities between his situation and that of the Jews during the Holocaust. A black prisoner using the Holocaust language shows the similarities between the suffering and the trauma of the Jews and the blacks.
The last story of the novel *Higher Ground* has the same title as the novel itself. This part contains the story of the Jewish refugee Irene. Irene lived together with her sister and parents in Poland. However, she had to flee the country, because of the war. The war suddenly interrupted the girl’s plans for the future. Irene was sent to London, where she had to survive all by herself. The shock of living all by herself in a foreign country and without the comforting feeling of a family makes Irene an outsider in London. “Higher Ground” echoes another story, namely “The Cargo Rap”. The theme of Jewishness presented in “The Cargo Rap” resurfaces in the story about the Jewish girl Irene. Rudy’s imprisonment and isolation is reflected in Irene’s feeling of isolation. Although Irene is not physically locked away in prison, her room has some characteristics of a prison cell. Mrs. Molloy, her landlady, seems to resemble a jailer. Caryl Phillips describes: “Irene’s room was small. The frame of the bed was cold and metallic. No matter how warm it might be inside of the bed, the frame was always cold. She dreaded accidentally touching it in the night” (HG 175). Like the two previous protagonists, Irene is an outsider. She will never fit in because she is an immigrant.

“Higher Ground” is much more reticent about the Holocaust than “Heartland” is about the slave trade. “Heartland” and “The Cargo Rap” are in the first person and “Higher Ground” is in the third person. The third person narration in Irene’s story gives a more distant effect to her story. In *Higher Ground*, the Jewish and black stories echo one another. The characters of “Heartland”, “The Cargo Rap” and “Higher Ground” bear a lot of resemblances, although there are differences. Caryl Phillips does not consider slavery as inferior to the Holocaust. The different structures and the several characters of Phillips’ novel show the interrelations between the
Holocaust and slavery. However, Phillips does not equate the two historical traumas, i.e. Black and White holocaust.

Historians have failed to discuss the psychological impact of the enslavement but slavery has a psychological dimension. For Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers, Slavery can be defined as “an institution of ‘marginality’ where people who are in the same way or another considered marginal to social structures are included within such social structures on highly disadvantaged terms. Slaves are, almost by definition, political and social outsiders” (54). Caryl Phillips not only depicts the pain and suffering of the slaves, but also pictures the psychological torment of the slaves. The first section of Higher Ground, i.e., “Heartland” redirects the attention of the readers to the psychological dynamics of Africans who are involved in the slave trade.

The unnamed narrator of “Heartland” is an African who was sold to the colonizer by his fellow men. He learns the language of the colonizer. The linguistic capabilities of the unnamed narrator assisted him to be appointed as an intermediary of an English slaving expedition. Anne C. Bailey points out:

The European and American slavers through their artful strategies and tactful relations maneuvered systematic modes of operation in the slave business to gain acceptance and approval of the local tribes and leaders. One of such components was employing the locals to assist them on the coast as canoe men, servants, messengers, gong beaters, washerwomen, porters, and translators. (76)

The unnamed narrator worked as a translator and facilitator between the captives and the captors. The unnamed narrator speaks the language of the colonizer yet they considered him a marginalized and at the same time his own people
considered him an outsider. Phillips demonstrates the unnamed narrator’s psychological anguish in participating with the whites in the slave trade and in distancing himself from his own people in “Heartland”.

The unnamed narrator once accompanies Price to a village because Price “needs a girl. She will be well treated and eventually returned” (HG 22). The villagers looked the unnamed narrator as an enemy because they identify him as “one who dwells with the enemy” (HG 24). The unnamed narrator narrates how the villagers were angry at him and not at Price. He narrates:

‘Your life will be in danger.’ Then he spits in my face. ‘You are filth. There are many old warriors in this village who would happily go to the Gods with your death on their hands.’ I wipe away the spittle and choose not to retaliate…. Have I, unlike their Head Man, ever made profit for myself? I merely survive, and if survival is a crime, then I am guilty. I have no material goods, no fine hut in which to dwell, nobody to wait on me. (HG 24)

The unnamed narrator suffers psychologically because of the rejection of his own people and he has found a technique of draining his mind to overcome this trauma. He says, “Draining the mind is a tedious but necessary business… I have finally mastered this art of forgetting-of murdering the memory” (HG 24). The unnamed narrator suffers a sense of isolation, rejection and loneliness, and this cripples his psychic saneness. His cry is, “loneliness scales the walls of my being and threatens to destroy my soul. Her assaults are increasingly difficult to withstand. Have all Gods abandoned me?” (HG 15). The unnamed narrator is expected to be a village chief one day. His collaboration with the white slavers gained him only loneliness. He
isolated himself, from his family, community and his own self. His complicit role closed his acceptance to his community forever. The unnamed narrator achieved his privileged position at the cost of his own people. Having been detested by his own people, a sense of shame and disgrace overpowers him.

In *Crossing the River*, Caryl Phillips brings the whole gamut of the African complicity in a couple of lines. “A desperate foolishness. The crops failed. I sold my children. I remember” (CR 1). This line shows that the African father is guilty of selling his children. The African father represents every African who has participated in the transatlantic slave trade. The Africans realize the nature of their business as “shameful intercourse” (CR 1). “A desperate foolishness. The crops failed. I sold my children” (CR 1). The African father explains the cause for selling his children. It recalls one’s attention to “the system of bartering of Africans for European goods” (Varunny 27). The mythical father represents the Africans sense of shame and dishonour in selling out their own children to the slave owner thereby scattering them across the globe. These children are cut off from their roots forever as there is “No sign posts. There is no return. To a land trampled by the muddy boots of others. To a people encouraged to war among themselves. To a father consumed with guilt” (CR 2). Their fate sealed when he says, “You are beyond. Broken-off, like limbs from a tree” (CR 2).

The memory that haunts the African father is the “common memory” (CR 1). Caryl Phillips, through the voice of the African father, unwraps the collective consciousness of the Africans, and he also keeps the consciousness of the Africans alive and vibrant across time and space. His novels *Higher Ground* and *Crossing the River* examine “the African responsibility in transatlantic slavery, and also investigate how such involvement has constructed particular psychological vexation in its
partakers” (Varunny 23). The unnamed narrator laments, “I have cut myself off from these villagers to such an extent that I have actually become their enemy” (HG 27). Jose Varunny says: “While for many this difficult truth is hard to accept and reluctant to acknowledge, for Phillips the remembrance and acknowledgement of them are some of the essential means of a cure for the psychological damage that the transatlantic slavery has created” (27).

One of the major reasons for the flourish of the slave trade in Africa is due to the social structure of Africa. The colonizer used the social structure of Africa to capture slaves. Caryl Phillips has not failed to pinpoint Africa's pre-colonial social structure in his novels about slavery. “African social system and political structure had a lot to do with their involvement in the transatlantic slave trade. Notably, fifteenth-century African society was not homogenous in nature and character” (Varunny 24). Price once enquires the unnamed narrator about his tribe, and whether they have waged war against another tribe. The New Governor of the fort also once asks the unnamed narrator, ‘What was your former role?’ (HG 52) The narrator replies. “I was a shepherd… being a shepherd is a respectable occupation… was perhaps destined one day become the Head Man” (HG 52). From these conversations, we come to know, that African society is divided into many parts and ruled by many Head Men or Kings. The village chiefs and kings gained by the diverse social and political structures of Africa. They enslaved their adversaries from inside and outside their clans and tribes.

“Slavery was widespread and indigenous in African society, as was, naturally enough, commerce in slaves. Europeans simply tapped this existing market, and Africans responded to the increased demand over the centuries by providing more slaves” (Thornton 73). The Governor of the Fort in Higher Ground says to the
unnamed narrator how they get slaves from the kings or tribal leaders. He says, “Bells, baubles, bars of lead, beer, such things sway the minds of your so-called leaders and they willingly aid in this business” (HG 51). The Africans sometimes even cheated the Europeans like “lead bars in exchange for wooden masks and ivory statuettes” (HG 35) in their trade and in turn the Europeans plundered “the human cargo” (HG 36). Henry Louis Gates Jr writes,

The historians John Thornton and Linda Heywood of Boston University estimate that 90 percent of those shipped to the New World enslaved by Africans and then sold to European traders. The sad truth is that without complex business partnerships between African elites and European traders and commercial agents, the slave trade to the New World would have been impossible, at least on the scale it occurred. (Web)

In the Higher Ground, the unnamed narrator says, “Some years ago a King’s trader captured me to one of their factors…. I was brought by his under-trading officer to this fort” (HG 44). Caryl Phillips in Higher Ground says that due to this slave trade the village has no men and “contains mainly women and old men, with few children running wild” (HG 22) and Phillips also says that these young children “soon blossom into the young exportable goods of this trading continent” (HG 22). Anne C. Bailey observes, “The fact of the dual involvement of Europeans and Africans in the slave trade did not imply an equal partnership, but rather parallel lines of activity originating from different cultural and political spaces” (76). Bailey’s observation suggests varied socio-cultural background of Africa that contributed and accelerated transatlantic slave trade. The system of slavery existed even before the arrival of the Europeans, but transatlantic slavery began after the arrival of the Europeans.
By writing about slavery, Caryl Phillips is trying to fill-in the gaps and silences created by a white tradition of the white-writing about slavery. The white tradition fails to recognize either the suffering or the culture of the slaves while the Black British writers’ works attempt to address both the suffering and the culture of the slaves. These slaves have to live with two cultures, having to adapt themselves to a new environment and to each other. According to Caryl Phillips, “a person from the Caribbean just naturally thinks in terms of the triangle... the cross-Atlantic pattern is part of the twentieth century Caribbean experience” (qtd. in Schatteman 29).

The Atlantic slave trade plays an important role in the lives of the slaves. It uprooted them and through their transoceanic route slavery changed the destination of the blacks. Yet the Atlantic slave trade was distinctive in a number of important ways. As David Eltis and David Richardson says that the Atlantic slave trade was:

A new phenomenon in the human experience. It was “the largest transoceanic forced migration in history” whereby relatively small improvements to the quality of life of a person on one continent (Europe)... were made possible by the removal of others from a second continent (Africa), and their draconian exploitation on yet a third (the Americas) (45).

The Atlantic slave trade was more than just an economic issue. It was both a profound tragedy, one of the worst and most sustained crimes committed in history, and also an arena of dramatic social transformation. The transoceanic migration was distinct from other modern migration in its involuntary nature, and in the high rates of mortality and social dislocation caused by the methods of capture and transportation.
Caryl Phillips novels, namely *Higher Ground*, *Crossing the River* and *Cambridge* anchor the unstable space of the Atlantic Ocean, so these novels are historical novels about the transatlantic experience. Caryl Phillips has used the intertext to reconstruct the evils of the institution of slavery. It is a pastiche and a montage of other narratives that call attention to the intertextuality in his novels. Caryl Phillips creatively interweaves slavery, a history of the sixteenth century in his novels.

Slavery, though a popular discourse in Britain is regarded as an event from the past and unconnected to modernity. Still its memory is central in the lives of the Black British. Slavery continues to haunt the public memory in contemporary black society through recollections (Eyerman 60). In the words of J.M. Coetzee, Caryl Phillips novels bring to light “what we like to forget” (qtd. in Schatteman 141). Rethinking of the ‘amnesia of Britain’ helps writers like Caryl Phillips to re-vision their past and by rewriting and re-reading the past Caryl Phillips helps the readers to re-remember the past. Caryl Phillips remembers slavery in his novels, and the readers, thereby, reading his novels are re-remembering the past. By careful study and rewriting the documents of the transoceanic Black Atlantic, Caryl Phillips has transformed slavery into a monument. Transoceanic migration displaced the slaves from their mother country, and this journey is the starting point of their diasporic life.