



RACIAL COMPLEXITIES AND COLOUR DISCRIMINATION; A POSTCOLONIAL STUDY OF BERNADINE EVARISTO'S *GIRL, WOMAN, OTHER*

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Abstract

Girl, Woman, Other (2017) by Bernadine Evaristo is a postcolonial Anglo-African novel written in the free-flowing style which she herself dubbed as 'fusion-fiction'. A polyphonic narrative depicting multiple layers of social oppression through the interconnected stories of twelve black British women, it portrays the state of colored women in contemporary Britain that examines the legacy of Britain's colonial history in Africa and the Caribbean. This study analyzes the fictional novel '*Girl, Woman, Other*' through the lens of racial theory identifying the dynamics of racial complexity and colour discrimination. In the contemporary context where hybridity and fluidity of cultural and individual identities prevail, Evaristo has emerged as a cross-cultural writer who illustrates the intersectionality of layered systems of social constructs that create and locate ideologies, stereotypes, class structure, and ordering in the hierarchies of power and privilege. This paper adopts Fanon's theoretical framework of race, racism, and colorism which analyzes the nature, causes and effects of colonization on the oppressed race, especially engaging with the black race. Fanon's theorization arises from a fusion of historical, psychological, philosophical, and literary approaches. Postcolonial studies seeks to inform, contest, and subvert the narratives of global processes and global citizens in dominant theoretical texts by an attempt at decolonization of nation, culture, politics, and most importantly, the decolonization of the mind.

Keywords: Race, Racism, Colour Discrimination, Postcolonial Studies, Power, Culture, Oppression

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Introduction

The research paper entitled “Racial Complexities and Colour Discriminations: A Postcolonial Study of Bernadine Evaristo’s *Girl, Woman, Other*” is an attempt to explore the complexities of racial categorizations and discriminations based on trait such as skin colour which consequently undermines the existence, cultural integrity, basic human rights, that deprives black people of the humanitarian ideologies of equality and justice. The effect of racism is suffered not just psychologically, but also on political, social, and economic levels. *Girl, Woman, Other* is studied as Evaristo’s attempt to contest and subvert the Euro-American ideologies and dominant historicity while speaking up against the unjust systems. She depicts in the novel, the present racial prejudice, discrimination, and dehumanization of the objectified in her novel *Girl, Woman, Other*.

The eighth novel by Bernadine Evaristo, *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019) was the co-winner of the 2019 Booker Prize, alongside Margaret Atwood’s *The Testaments* (2019). The protagonist of the novel is Amma, a playwright, around whom the narrative structuring is centered around. The novel unfolds with the anticipation to the opening of her new production *The Last Amazon of Dahomey*, at a theatre in London. The significance of the story *The Last Amazon of Dahomey* within the story of *Girl, Woman, Other* is the opening up of a double narrative in which a more exclusive voice can be placed with a universal voice speaking to and for desired effect.

The categorization or organization of humans into groups based on shared physical, cultural, and social characteristics that gives rise to distinctions within a given society termed ‘race’. Rattansi, in the book *Race: A Very Short Introduction* (2007) traces the origin and development of the terms race and racism to the 16th century which eventually acquired common meanings that referred to family, lineage, and breed. By 19th century, race was the “key concept” to division of humankind distinguished by “physical markers” and associated with distinct social, cultural, and moral traits hierarchically arranged with binary opposition between the blacks and whites (31). The term ‘racism’ has connected terms such as ethnocentrism; nationalism, xenophobia, negrophobia, and so forth.

British biologist Steven Rose defines racism as “any claim of the natural superiority of one identifiable human population, group or race over another”. By scientific racism, it implies “the attempt to use the language and some of the techniques of science in support of theories or

contentions that particular groups or populations are innately inferior to others in terms of intelligence, ‘civilization’ or other socially-defined attitudes”. (94)

Kane, in “Frantz Fanon’s theory of racialization implications for globalization” (2007) identifies three constitutive elements of Frantz Fanon’s racial theory as race “as historically situated, race as culturally maintained, and racial constructions as embedded in human ontology. Fanon sees the idea of racial categorization as the problem rather than the existence of racism” (Kane).

Fanon argues in *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008) that, whether black or white, one is stereotyped into racial identities, “the negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority” and both “behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation” (43). Psychoanalytically elaborating the mind-body dualism, Fanon explains the colored man’s difficulty in developing his bodily schema as, in relation to the white man, the definitive structuring is a negating activity of the self. Not only does the man of color realize this condition, he also realizes that his image has been distorted and dehumanized.

In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), Fanon states the correlation between race and class; how the two social structures determines the socio-economic and ontological consequence of a man : “...it is clear that what divides this world is first and foremost what species, what race one belongs to. In the colonies the economic infrastructure is also a superstructure. The cause is effect: You are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich” (5).

An important contribution to racial theory is Fanon’s employment of psychoanalytic theory to examine social injustice. Sardar, in the foreword to *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008) comments on it as an examination of the “effects of racism on individuals, particularly its impact on the self-perception of blacks” and the consequential impact on the racial group (10). In relating the nature of the psyche to the social constructs, Fanon demonstrates the intersectionality of sociological components. As race and class are inextricably interconnected to one another, privileges and disadvantages are distributed in the same manner unequally. Fanon puts forth that cultural perceptions and societal conceptions exacerbating popular attitudes operate as the instrument through which the normalization of the social construction of race as a system of hierarchical power relations occur which is further reinforced by religious, bureaucratic, and educational regulating systems.

In the essay "The Negro and Language" from *Black Skin, White Mask* (2008), Fanon elaborates that "to speak is to exist absolutely for the other" and "to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization" (8). After being colonized, the colonized people try to assimilate into the colonizer's culture as a survival resort, only to be ridiculed, patronized, and detested. The black man is considered to be a threat to the civilization, purity, and stability of the white society.

Fanon's promotion of violence and outright rebellion to oust the colonials have been interpreted in literal physical terms by Sartre, who moreover supports it as the only means to freedom. However, Homi Bhabha sees it as a more figurative aspect in the sense that there can be a violent rejection of cultural, psychological, geographical colonialism by an active attempt to decolonize in these given aspects. Fanon expostulates the egomaniac narcissism of the aggressive colonizing nations; and Sardar, by contextualizing Fanon's writings to the Algerian war in the attempt to free people from subjugation, enslavement and injustice comments thus: "By unmasking the historical, contingent, and socio-political character of subject-formation, Fanon sought to transform and re-form a universal humanism appreciative of all cultures, embracing the 'reciprocal relativism' of each for the purpose of mutual enrichment and genuine fraternite" (44). While protests against racism, spread of awareness and education of racial prejudice has moved the global society towards mutual existence, racism as a prejudice deeply embedded in the collective mind has withstood absolute elimination. Modern scholars such as Michel Foucault and Edward Said, through their insights into the intertwining of knowledge, power, and rule, through direct and indirect exploitation of colonial knowledges to subjugate colonized populations in imperialist projects have contributed greatly to postcolonial studies.

Racial Complexities and Colour Discrimination in *Girl, Woman, Other*

Girl, Woman, Other is a blend of diverse experiences with focus on the leitmotif of identity – national, cultural, and individualistic. The book also covers arching themes such as society, ideological mutability, informed feminism, politics, racism, relationships and sexuality.

Girl, Woman, Other, as the title implies is about the lived experiences of women whose identities are interconnected to each other through historical, social and cultural conditioning. The novel narrates the shared experiences of twelve

individual black women: Amma, Yazz, Dominique, Carole, Bummi, Latisha, Shirley, Winsome, Penelope, Megan, Hattie, and Grace, living in the twentieth century Britain.

Evaristo attempts to inform and elucidate upon the stereotyped schematic perception of what a black person is. She retraces the histories and effects of colonialism, with its consequential migration and mass movement that brought these women and their ancestors to Britain. These alienated diasporic populaceis met with the need for assimilation and adjustment into new environments, cultures and altered priorities. Enormously diverse as the experiences of these women portrayed are, the crux of the book is towards a shared connectedness with more experiences binding the women together than differentiating them. *Girl, Woman, Other* can be said to be an overt social and political purpose to foreground the experiences of black British women, underrepresented in our literature as they have been.

Each of the lives chronicled in this novel are performed in response to the overlapping social, political, sexual and economic jeopardies and establishes the fact that we construct the ideal of essence, which in turn creates a lot of dissonance and ruptures. They narrate their discriminated and marginalized experiences and as they fight for equality and justice against the systems layered upon them. Evaristo depicts the singularities as well as the multidimensionality of subaltern, marginalized black British women. Action-oriented and critical, these women work towards a reconfiguration of their place in society and to improve their lives. Evaristo conceives to illuminate and overcome the lived intersectional reality of these characters, across the hundred years that she chronicles. The novel portrays the overlapping effects of the base structures of race, class, gender, sex that exert influence over their lives.

Evaristo employs the stream-of-consciousness narrative style to fuse the women's stories across geographies and time. Despite being a playwright and a director who has written fifteen plays and directed over forty movies, Amma, the main character around whom the novel is structured, is excluded from the mainstream theatre companies that are conventional in nature with racially discriminatory content as "the majority of the majority sees the majority of *Les Negresses* as separate to themselves, an embodiment of Otherness" (425). Evaristo, in *Girl, Woman, Other* (2017) situates Amma on the fringe of the society as "a renegade lobbing hand grenades at the

establishment that excluded her until the mainstream began to absorb what was once radical and she found herself hopeful of joining it" (10). Burkitt, in "Breaking the Mould" (2010) argues that the identities of Evaristo's characters are "hybrid, complex and conflicted in terms of race and nation are further complicated as the exploration of gender and sexuality focuses on the personal and disrupts all classifications that are collective" (83). The multicultural global nationality and complexity of inter-mixed race is brought out in *Girl, Woman, Other* in many characters, Morgan and Dominique's race being the most prominent and complex. Evaristo highlights the complexity of racial origin in Dominique's ancestry thus: "Dominique was born in the St Pauls area of Bristol to an Afro-Guyanese mother, Cecilia, who tracked her lineage back to slavery, and an Indo Guyanese father, Wintley, whose ancestors were indentured labourers from Calcutta the oldest of ten children who all looked more black than Asian and identified as such, especially as their father could relate to the Afro Caribbean people he'd grown up with, but not to Indians fresh over from India" (13).

The categorizations of people into single races is challenged by Evaristo as exemplified by Dominique, a British citizen, whose mother's ancestral lineage goes back to slavery, and whose father traces his ancestry back to India, but having immigrated to Britain and lived in the culture of the west feels alienated from his native land. Fanon explains in *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008) that the black man is identified with his ancestors who were "enslaved or lynched" in contrast to the way the white man is identified with ancestors who were "tax-paying, hard-working peasants" (85). Whether Dominique ought to be defined by her mother's origin, or her father's, or oppressed by the situations of both are questions Evaristo opens up for debate, thus portraying the incongruity of racial segregations based on history and sciences. Megan is a character who is "part Ethiopian, part African-American, part Malwain, and part English" who finds it absurd and unnatural to be defined and determined by her genealogy and descent when "she was just a complete human being" (Evaristo 316).

The condition suffered by black women is layered by multiple oppressions. Not only are they deprived of opportunities but they are also marginalized and oppressed by society. Living becomes a performative act to fit into stereotypes or to. Evaristo brings out the shared suffering in Amma's story when she attends a black women's

group in Brixton: "She listened as they debated what it meant to be a black woman what it meant to be a feminist when white feminist organizations made them feel unwelcome how it felt when people called them nigger, or racist thugs beat them up what it was like when white men opened doors or gave up their seats on public transport for white women (which was sexist), but not for them (which was racist)" (17).

Treated as sub-humans, openly discriminated and abused, Evaristo highlights how patriarchal and societal oppressions afflict the lives of black women. Suppressed, marginalized, and pushed to the periphery, the experiences and sufferings of black women are written off history. With cultures suppressed and identities alienated, the people living in the margins fight to find their voice back and to revive their lost cultures and homes. Evaristo creates this scene for Amma and Dominique who decide to rail against the oppressive systems. They decided to start up their own company called "Bush Women Theatre Company" to "be a voice in theatre" and "where there was silence black and Asian women's stories would get out there" (18).

The criticism towards objective dominant historicity and the enquiry into its legitimacy is narrated by Evaristo when Yazz, questions her father "Dr Roland Quartey, the country's first Professor of Modern Life at the University of London" critical of the superfluous designation he holds as she considers him or anybody deserving of conferred identifications, classification, or designations. Yazz, therefore, questions her father, thus: "...Isn't that more like God's purview? tell me, are you God now, Dad? I mean officially? how on earth can you be a Professor of Modern Life when your terms of reference are all male, and actually all-white" (43-44).

By pointing out the superficial nature of his role and denomination against the weight it holds as a Professor of Modern Life supposedly learned about the whole human race, however his studies and references only based on white races and male sexes, Yazz points out at the erroneous falsehood presented as truth and applied to all nations and people. Knowledge systems, discourses, beliefs, and historiography, likewise, falsified and distorted by the dominant narratives is questioned by Evaristo in such contexts.

Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* presents a postcolonial world in which identities are fluid and shifting. In highlighting individualistic subjectivities, she connects them together by shared experiences. The questioning of objective historicity accepted as truths, and thereby,

untenable, is challenged by postcolonial studies. According to Bhabha, in the foreword to the 1986 edition of *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008), he comments upon Fanon's ideation of identity as most effective when spoken from "the interstices of historical change: from the area of ambivalence between race and sexuality; out of an unresolved contradiction between culture and class; from deep within the struggle of psychic representation and social reality" (23). Evaristo's characters in *Girl, Woman, Other* are marginalized women in the periphery who are not fully accepted by their host country but are also alienated from their roots as they have altered from coming in contact with new cultures and assimilated some of its cultures. Placing her characters in ambivalent positions, she constructs contrary narratives from the voices of these characters.

Commenting upon Fanon's "Hegelian-Marxist dialectic" mode of thought to illuminate the existential presence of the marginalized, Bhabha observes that Fanon creates hope for history through a psychoanalytical elucidation of the "madness" of racism (24). For Fanon, there is neither truth in objectivity nor a unified notion of history. Racism is a historical, social schema with no justification or satisfactory explanation. He expounds in *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008) how colonialism with its superior complex creates chaos and unsettles the affected people: "Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country" (9).

The death of culture is brought about by instilling in the minds of the people the supposed inferiority of their culture in contrast to the whites. After repeated exposure to such influences and thoughts and facing repeated discriminations, they seek a way of escaping their confusion. In such situation, Fanon explains that the person who has lost their culture tries to assimilate into the foreign country. The Negro is considered to have "no culture, no civilization, no long historical past" whereas the white man is by default considered to be from a civilization, a culture, a civil man" (22).

Considered to be childlike, uncivilized and savage, the negro is not expected to be rational or capable of learning. The stereotyped racism, unfortunately, is not exclusively exploited by the whites. Even black people view each other with the stereotyping tendency. Evaristo brings this out in *Girl, Woman, Other* (2017) when Nzinga, on witnessing that black women can speak in English

in the British accent, exclaims, somewhat scornfully how weird it was to see that. Evaristo narrates Amma's reaction to this exclamation: "Amma thought she was accusing them of being too white or at best, inauthentically black, she'd come across it before, foreigners equating an English accent with whiteness, she always felt the need to speak up when it was implied that black Brits were inferior to African-Americans or Africans or West Indians" (76).

Further on, Dzinga comments: "black women need to identify racism wherever we find it, especially our own internalized racism, when we're filled with such a deep self-loathing we turn against our own" (77). Evaristo's characters struggle against not just the white racism but also against internalized racism. When a black person puts on the white culture and speaks their language perfectly, they are paternally praised that they are civilized unlike their brothers or sisters. When they are successful, they are often tagged as 'black successful persons' whereas no white person is tagged with their skin colour or racial identity as their introductory labels. Fanon argues in *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008) that "white and black represent the two poles of a world, two poles in perpetual conflict: a genuinely Manichean concept of the world" (31). Both, enslaved by their complexes, behave in 'neurotic orientations' and thus makes it impossible for either to assimilate into each other's worlds or to accept each other fully. The disadvantaged one being the black person, Fanon echoes the mind of the west in these lines: "A Negro? Shameful—it's beneath contempt. Associating with anybody of that race is just utterly disgracing yourself" (47). The inferiority and superiority complex is built upon binary opposition. Evaristo points towards this in *Girl, Woman, Other* "that the word black, for example, always has negative connotations..." (77).

Evaristo further portrays a situation of such deeply embedded beliefs of racial inferiority and superiority complex in a conversation between Courtney and Yazz where Courtney is told: "People won't see you as just another woman any more, but as a white woman who hangs with brownies, and you'll lose a bit of your privilege, you should still check it, though, have you heard the expression, check your privilege, babe?" (Evaristo 62).

The black and white division has deeply been embedded in the minds of all humans that often, without critical thinking, the schematic opposition of blacks as symbolic of lack in morality, untruth, sin, animism, poverty, and inferior to the whites

symbolic of purity, civility, progress, goodness, and truth are accepted as logical and established truths. Evaristo portrays this prevalence of thinking and the possible risks a white person takes in associating with a black person. This stereotyping and distrust embedded in the society is portrayed furthermore by Evaristo in Courtney's explanation of her father's dislike of London, thus: "...they think it's a hellhole full of colored, suicide bombers, left-wingers, luvvies, gays and Polish immigrants, who deprive the hardworking men and women of this country of the chance to earn a good living; Dad gets all his political thoughts from the newspapers, quotes from them verbatim" (62).

Fanon argues that "the collective unconscious, without our having to fall back on the genes, is purely and simply the sum of prejudices, myths, collective attitudes of a given group" (145) independent of "cerebral heredity"; which he states is the "unreflected imposition of a culture" (147).

Evaristo, in *Girl, Woman, Other* (2017) rejects hierarchical superiority or inferiority and makes her characters struggle towards emancipation from the oppressions. Carole is a banker who works towards achieving a better place in the strata of society. Though she has achieved her place and dignity, she is still victimized by covert racist stereotyping where co-workers, clients, and colleagues denigrate her supposedly racial inferiority by concealed derision and belittling remarks, to which she reacts by equally concealed discomfort. Evaristo reveals the equal effects of every sort of discrimination whether overt or covert. Shirley's mother Winsome, on immigrating to Britain is oppressed by discriminations such as being served last to whichever shop she entered and being shoved and pushed around deliberately to show their dominance and power to mistreat her. Once as she returned home, she found a phrase "GO HOME" painted on her door. Such overt discriminations and oppressions have the same effects as that of Carole's suffering of the covert discrimination towards her by her colleagues in office who praises her accent and achievement by a paternalistic empathy.

Evaristo portrays the hierarchical structure that exists even in racism and discrimination in *Girl, Woman, Other* (2017). Aware of the discriminatory hierarchy, Yazz explains the oppression of racism to Courtney: "I'm black, Courts, which makes me more oppressed than anyone who isn't, except Waris who is the most oppressed of all of them (although don't tell her

that) in five categories: black, Muslim, female, poor, hijabbed" (62). Fanon argues in *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008) "that it is utopian to try to ascertain in what ways one kind of inhuman behavior differs from another kind of inhuman behavior" (63). Pointing towards the European civilization for the existence of "colonial racism," he also quotes Francis Jeanson to support his argument that "every citizen of a nation is responsible for the actions committed in the name of that nation" (68).

Evaristo portrays the dislocation, diaspora and uprooted identities in *Girl, Woman, Other* in many lives. Grace, who has lost her mother at a young age and been put in an institution to train servant girls to serve the whites, continue to long for her mother. When she finally has a home of her own after her marriage to Joseph, she expresses to her death mother, in monologue, what luxury and splendor even basic living is. This highlights the contrast in the living standards between the typical immigrants and the natives.

Penelope, a staunch racist, who had considered herself to be 'a pure white woman' whose ancestry, she believed, was rooted in Britain, undergoes a DNA test to ascertain which part of England she originally hailed from. To her disbelief, the results provide many different nationalities 22% Scandinavian, 25% Irish, 13% African, and only 17% British. The collision between who she thought she was and who she might be unsettles her identity. Evaristo portrays her thoughts, thus: "... as she lay there, she imagined her ancestors attired in loincloths running around the African savannah spearing lions, at the same time wearing yarmulkes, eating open-topped rye sandwiches and paella, and refusing to hunt on the Sabbath perhaps she should get a dreadlock wig in keeping with her new identity, become one of those Rastafarians and sell drugs" (Evaristo 457). Evaristo, in this way, by opening up the possibility of racial intermixing without a purely singular racial lineage, discusses the equality of humans regardless of which race one apparently belongs to. Penelope, in the list of genetic relatives, is found to be connected to over a hundred relatives and one parent who has been biologically revealed to be her blood mother. She rushes to Yorkshire to meet her estranged mother, Hattie Jackson, who emerges from a farmhouse to meet her. As Penelope watches her mother, she notices how strange and contrary to herself her mother looks but thinks: "who cares about her colour? Why on earth did [she] ever think it mattered?" (460), and in that moment, feeling something so "pure and

primal” in which their whole sense of themselves recalibrated, she realized, human connectivity was all about “being together” (460).

In *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008), Fanon provides insight into the concept and state of “ambivalence” in which the “psychological phenomena” governing the relations between colonizer and colonized is unstable and changeable (61). The dependency of the colonized is formed due to a failure to assimilate and they take on a “dependent behavior” but “if he takes it into his head to be the equal of the European, then the said European is indignant and casts out the upstart—who, in such circumstance...pays for his own rejection of dependence with an inferiority complex” (69). The black person is made to feel inferior “because the white man has come, and if at a certain stage he has been led to ask himself whether he is indeed a man, it is because his reality as a man has been challenged” (73).

The inferiority complex of the oppressed turns into a sort of neurosis where the victim is constantly surrounded by stereotype threat. This neurotic condition is portrayed by Evaristo in *Girl, Woman, Other* (2008) when Carol begins to live amongst the whites and she displays neurotic behaviour: “when she heard another student refer to her in passing as ‘so ghetto’, she wanted to spin on her heels and shout after her, excuse me? excuuuuuse me? say that to my face, byatch! (people were killed for less where she came from) or had she misheard it? were they actually saying get to – the library? supermarket?” (121-122).

Placing the development and formation of neurosis to environmental situations and the social constructs, Fanon argues in *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008) that “every neurosis, every abnormal manifestation, every affective erethism” in a black person is the “product of his cultural situation” and “there is a constellation of postulates, a series of propositions that slowly and subtly...work their way into one’s mind and shape one’s view of the world of the group to which one belongs” (118). The objectification of blackhood and its resulting state of psyche is explained by Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008) as “sealed into that crushing objecthood” where the black man is fixed into a stereotyped identity. The Negro is “given two frames of reference within which he has had to place himself. His metaphysics, or, less pretentiously, his customs” (83). This struggle of mind-body separation of the condition of certain uncertainty is portrayed by Evaristo in *Girl, Woman, Other* as Carole finds herself in delirium. She questions her existence and visibility in reaction to other people’s

avoidance of her. People walked around her or looked through her, as though she were imagining her own presence. Fanon explains that the failure to recognize one’s “corporeal schema” is combined with a “historico-racial schema”. Historical biases have woven the negro “out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories” and it is not by “residual sensations and perceptions primarily of a tactile, vestibular, kinesthetic, and visual character” that he constructs his “physiological self, to balance self, to localize sensations” but by the narrative of other, the white man (84).

The black man’s body is identified and conferred on him “sprawled out, distorted, recolored, clad in mourning” in contrast to the white body identified with a “white winter day.” The Negro is identified with an animal, meanness, ugliness, poverty, sinfulness, and threatening (86). As the black person is constantly used a comparison, he becomes obsessed with self-perception, self-image, ego-ideal and attempts to react with a superiority complex. (165) The idea of racial hygiene and safeguarding one’s culture and tradition is sometimes superimposed just as Evaristo portrays in *Girl, Woman, Other* (2017) how Bummi protested against Carole’s marriage with a different race, expressing that it was the “beginning of the end of the pure Nigerian family line” and that their children would be mixed, and their children would look white to be wiped out in two generations (174).

Questioning truths and objectification, the black man cannot understand what is and what’s not in the world order constructed to ostracize him. Whether history is erasable, whether history can be forgotten, how great its impact still is on the present is elaborated by Evaristo in *Girl, Woman, Other* (2008) by Nzinga who goes to Ghana, her motherland, and visits Elmina Castle “where captured Africans had been incarcerated before being shipped to the Americas as slaves” and “the guide led them into a dungeon, shut the door in the hot, suffocating darkness” and “graphically described how up to a thousand people were crammed into a space meant for two hundred, with no facilities or sanitation and little food or water, for up to three months...” (73).

Nzinga had been plunged back into the horror of history and collapsed in pain. She knew that the Europeans had a lot to answer for, but also that her people had also been a part of the slave trade. Fanon comments on the history in *Black Skin, White Mask* (2008) that slavery is an unpleasant memory just as the black man’s inferiority is a supposed ideation. The black man, though he has every right and reason to hate the

whites, to despise and reject them, but for the sake of humanity, he is willing to forget and forgive on the condition that discriminations are eliminated. But when the black man “should have been begged, implored” he is instead “denied the slightest recognition. Since it was impossible for [him] to get away from an inborn complex, to assert [themselves] as a black man, since the other hesitated to recognize [them], there remained only one solution: to make [themselves] known” (87).

Girl, Woman, Other is a novel that portrays the plight of the most oppressed in the society. Being mostly women of colours, these characters are oppressed not just by the patriarchal systems which too, oppresses other women, but they also bear the brunt of unjustified racial discrimination, marginalization, contempt and condemnations, deprived human rights, and they are disadvantaged from the start to struggle against the discriminatory systems. Evaristo gives hope to such women and in writing her characters to humans on equal footing with the rest of the world, in enquiring into the objectivities of historiography, in giving a voice to the voiceless, in filling up the spaces in the erased and distorted histories, she creates a possibility for understanding and creating a new world. Homi Bhabha, in *The Location of Culture* (1994), proposes for the “need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on...moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences (2). Locating the transitory time-in-space as the ‘in-between’ spaces, he proposes that such terrains provides the opportunity “for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining society itself.” (2) These “interstices” or the clashing points of “domains of difference” is where the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value” can be negotiated. The wider significance of Evaristo’s *Girl, Woman, Other* is her “awareness that the epistemological ‘limits’ of [her] ethnocentric ideas are also the enunciative boundaries of a range of other dissonant, even dissident histories and voices – women, the colonized, minority groups...” (6). By re-inscribing the historical past with contemporaneity, she redefines black British women as transnational identities disposed towards a new humanism.

Conclusion

Evaristo’s *Girl, Woman, Other* presents a postcolonial world in which identities are fluid and unconventional. By highlighting individualistic subjectivities, she locates a parallel possibility for the interconnectivity of shared experiences and shared belongingness to humankind’s race. As racialization is a social construct which places human beings in hierarchical positions that places the black race at the lowermost strata in terms of civilization, progress, dignity and respect, Evaristo’s women in *Girl, Woman, Other* portrays the misery, oppressions, dehumanization, and discrimination that challenge these black women. Though alienated and inferiorized, these women invent and create new strategies of selfhood for themselves portraying a re-inscription of social narratives.

Evaristo, in *Girl, Woman, Other* reconfigures the plights and suffering of black women to an assertion of the humane collective identity while breaking the stereotypical moulds of prejudice; and through an unsettling of the grounds upon which discriminations are based, she portrays the need for a restructuring of the society to accommodate new and hybrid identities and cultures under the ideology of new humanism as likewise proposed by Fanon. As the present is in the process of being historicized, both Fanon and Evaristo align in their proposition for changing the course of human history from that of power struggle to that of shared communality.

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