



## RESEARCH PAPER

### Systemic Xenophobia in Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*: A Critical Race Study

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines systemic xenophobia in Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019) by applying Derrick Bell's concept of interest convergence to understand how racial hierarchies structure the experiences of Black British women. The novel's portrayal of intersecting forms of race, gender, and class reveals the ongoing influence of colonial legacies that shape contemporary British society. Using a qualitative design and textual analysis grounded in Critical Race Theory, the research explores how xenophobia operates as a structural force embedded across institutions. The analysis demonstrates that characters such as Amma and Carole experience limited, reversible, and conditional forms of racial inclusion, confirming Bell's argument that progress for marginalized groups aligns with dominant interests. The study recommends countering systemic xenophobia through anti-racist institutional reforms, inclusive educational practices, community-centered narratives, and literary interventions that challenge tokenism and cultivate equitable representation.

**KEYWORDS** Half-Caste, Multiculturalism, Xenophobia, Assimilation, Inter-Generational Trauma

## Introduction

Contemporary British literature has turned its attention towards the unequal systemic experiences of culturally and racially marginalized communities by challenging the monolithic narratives of British rulers and their society. Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019) stands as a historical landscape, offering a complex portrayal of colored British women and non-binary communities by redirecting intersections of race, gender, and class. Being the first Black woman to get a Booker prize, Evaristo reclaims the authorities and narrative space for colored British women and communities. She traces their histories and lived experiences within the postcolonial Britain framework. The novel traces the racial and socio-political progress of Britain from the early 20th century to the present day, exposing how race, class, sex, and gender interact within a systemic power structure. The narrative weaves through different dimensions, creating a smooth and flawless flow within the narrative. It explores the entrenched inequalities and cruelty of the British towards minorities and the racial communities, exposing the internalization of racism towards them.

Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019) presents an ignored perception about Western society by presenting the problems as an intersection of race, gender, color, and class, as well as the domain of systemic inequality within the Western cultural context. The novel portrays communities of African Caribbean descent, who bear the societal inequalities that make them subjugated and oppressed by the hands of Whites. Despite all these things,

people of color show their ability to resist and banish the domestic violence in same sex relationships. It particularly deals with the taboos such as sexual abuse, gender enforcement, discrimination, and harassment within homo as well as heterosexual relationships. The characters explore different themes and present unique identities within the context of Bell's interest convergence. Novel's setting is not confined to a single place, but is interconnected to different places from Africa, South Asia, to Britain. The title *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019) itself challenges the binary system and the definition of gender, making space for some non-binary diasporic people.

The novel includes many overarching themes including the most important one, xenophobia, as both systemic and overt. Gilman (2019) emphasizes the tone and style of Evaristo's narrative that, by a fusion fiction style, Evaristo blends a novel into prose and poetry to reflect the womanhood in the novel and presents the lives of minorities who are affected by traumas and colonial impacts. Through its rich and layered narrative, Evaristo exposes marginalization of British society through Amma and Shirley's portrayal who resist white dominance and Britishness. Their marginalization is not just based on social scale; rather, it expands to structural, cultural, and institutional levels, as it is manifested in schools, educational institutes, trading centers, and labor markets etc. The tone of the novel is celebratory as it does not shy from exposing and critiquing British norms and xenophobia that shape the current experiences of all the characters of the novel. Racism in Britain oppresses immigrants, foreigners, and people of color, under the realm of multiculturalism and race tolerance. The writer reflects the reality by critiquing how the people of African and Caribbean descent are subjected to symbols, exclusions, and tokenism.

Evaristo's unique writing style, polyphonic and prose structure, ignores standard punctuation, providing a flow in reading structure, the fluidity of the characters, and the narrative without structural norms. Coleman (2020) argues that the narrative of Afro-British women, they are not monolithic. They share the experiences and results coming from the colonized and colonizer era. They are judged on base of their gender, race, and skin color type. Skin color plays an important role in Britain as it dictates their value, place, and privilege in contemporary Britain. The novel explores the undergrounded faces of the people in authority, especially white people residing in Britain. The narrative clearly depicts the societal and historical thinking of the colonial mindset to be served by the slaves and Blacks. With the advancement in the era and generation, women's autonomy, suppression, and marginalization are also enhanced, and there have been modifications made in it. The roots of brutality are not thought to have vanished but are shaped within another, more refined form, not to be expressed as subjugation. Bell explicitly describes such societal norms in his book, which are not eroded from the minds of the authoritative class but have become a crucial part of the dominant minds. The racial identities are never given their basic rights equally. The study deeply analyzes such problematic flaws of the society, reflecting the characters of Amma, Shirley, Yazz, Carole, etc., their sufferings, traumas, and the societal pressure that navigate their way of living and their identities.

Evaristo's mixed heritage also plays a crucial role in developing and characterizing the autonomy of her novel's characters. Moreover, it critiques and resists the legacy of colonialism, its effects, and its everlasting impression on the psychology of the characters. Patriarchal, societal, regional, and systemic inequality are persistent across a wide range of the worldwide region. The study uncovers the miserable lived experiences of the novelist and her characters, in whose lives, the writer's own life experiences are reflected. With the application of Critical Race Theory, the research reveals the colonial and racial effects on the lives of Black Britons. Evaristo, through the narrative of her characters, presents a rich

and vital ground where critical space examines how racialized communities, their contexts, and identities are framed in the British context.

*Girl, Woman, Other* (2019) problematizes the understanding of contemporary Western society, presenting a multi-voiced narrative, highlighting the complexities of race, class, gender, and identity by reflecting institutionalized bias and racial hierarchies, and investigating the resistance and resilience of African and Caribbean communities. This study not only reveals the persistence of systemic xenophobia in British society but also exposes how Black identities negotiate their personalities within that structure of power for structural inclusion.

### Literature Review

This literature review examines Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019), situating the study within the broader context of Critical Race Theory. It highlights the elements of xenophobia and systemic inequality, including racism, prejudice, oppression, and marginalization of colored communities in Western literature. It examines the gaps in recent and previous research and find a new way in which the voice of the unheard and stories of untold are brought into notice and the false conception of Western legacy, liberation, and gender discrimination is eliminated. The novel *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019) reflects an authentic picture of contemporary Western society by emphasizing the problems of gender discrimination, power inequality, xenophobia, and invisible borders between humans of different origins. Evaristo also highlights the agency of characters and their ability to resist the subjugated Western system.

The focus is on the narrative style of the author, her development of a coherent role of innate xenophobia in contemporary British society. It exposes the factual image of the Britons, who negotiate the progress and autonomy of people of color, providing them a surface-level inclusion and negating their actual presence at a political, social, and institutional level. The main focus is on exploring how Evaristo presents a true picture of unknown, untold, and unheard people by analyzing systemic xenophobia stemming from the roots of Whites, especially Britons. This research also highlights the long-term effects of homo as well as heterogeneous marginalization experienced by both females and males. Utilizing Critical Race Theory, the research analyzes the apparent power structures of the dominant regime, which can easily manipulate people of color for their benefit, offering them a chance to assimilate into their culture and language, becoming a part of them, but not owing them and never facilitating them with their equal and basic rights.

Rhodes (2019) highlighted the complexity of characters and challenged the monolithic notion of identity by describing the personality of a protagonist, Megan, with her multicultural roots and context. Rhodes reported, Megan's identity is not fully captured by her fragmented parts; it does not fully capture who she is. Instead of these broken pieces, she considers herself a complete human being. The protagonists of the novel are highly ambitious and are not restricted just because of their culture. They do not have a single identity but possess multiple layers. Their complexity deconstructs their limitations and encourages their identification towards individuals as complete human beings rather than fragments of cultural affiliations, and positions the novel in a critical debate of identity and belonging in the contemporary era. To explain the complexity and womanhood in the novel, Evaristo, in an interview argues, it is an exemplary novel with each character's own space that is a very necessary part of one's life. Every character has their own stories which are interlinked (de Leon, 2019). A scholar, reviewed the novel *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019) by exploring the multiplicity of female experiences with the lens of intersectionality. She reviewed, many of the protagonists in the book have faced

harassment and sexual abuse, but none of them remains a victim. All are, in their own way, warrior-like and triumphant (Manyika, 2019). All the protagonists mentioned in the novel, although they suffer from brutality and harassment they do not take it as the end of their lives. Instead, they are all triumphant in their lives in one way or another. These characters, in fact, flashlight themes like agency, resilience, and empowerment that are central aspects of the contemporary feminist perspective. Protagonists' experiences of sexual abuse and harassment are not isolated incidents but reflect the brutal aspect of societal structures enforcing gender-based violence. These themes challenge societal norms that confine women to victimhood and serve as powerful resistance in the patriarchal power structure. The presence of Black women in British society and their efforts to progress here affirm the call to celebrate the diversity and complexity of British Black people.

### **Material and Methods**

This study examines how xenophobia within the narrative structure of a novel, intergenerational tension, and character portrayal manifest. The research addresses the questions of colonial legacy and its impact on racial minds and identities, with reference to characters of Evaristo's novel who fall under this category. It also critiques the ongoing impacts of colonialism on them and their resistive power and agency, which they posit to eradicate such normative behaviors. CRT frames racism and xenophobia as features of societal structures that are operationalized within institutions, narratives, and ideologies. His concept of interest convergence, permanence of racism, and use of allegory critically analyzes how exclusion from societal structures persists under the presentation of surface-level inclusion. Although Bell's work originates in the U.S, its comprehensions are adapted to British literary and cultural contexts, with their own histories of migration, exclusion, and colonialism. Bell's theory reflects how marginalized communities are given superficial audacity and visibility to deflect criticism of racism instead of eradicating it. Similarly, it also determines the presence of marginalized people in the discussion at a limited surface level and to sit on the chair, but refuses to give them the right to speak for themselves or their rights by discriminating and excluding them from equality, power, and decision-making. Bell elaborates that these strategies of inclusion are not made or practiced to eradicate racism; rather, they are just taken as a concession to avoid complaints without changing the actual power and racial structures. It is just about the upper layer of a surface that could have a very deep dive. In addition, Britons take the Black community as a symbol to segregate them from all social and cultural spaces. Moreover, Bell explores the ignorance of the authoritative class on persistent racism while arguing with another speaker who says, Whites think that racism no longer exists (Bell, 1992, p. 30). Whereas, the reality is that mostly White students are privileged, and some Black students too, unless they face indifference and enmity due to racism, exposing the permanence of racism. Hence, the Black people have traveled from margins to symbols. The point that lies here is that racism is not just a word or a concept, it is an ideology that is inculcated in the minds of Britons and is nurtured day by day without exception.

Racial progress is always reversible and conditional under white supremacy. Bell argues that racial realism demands proper acknowledgement of permanence for survival strategies. He says about civil rights gains that they can be rolled back once the White interests shift. Whereas, in Britain, racial realism demonstrates how structural bias persists despite authentic commitments to equality. Racial disparities persist across decades, exposing that inclusion is always conditional and structural inequality does not disappear but adapts differently. Racial realism believes in truth and justice, which is seen rarely in the contemporary world and in Britain too. Bell criticizes the hypocrisy of American ideals, advocating that, this country has promised democracy for many years but delivered only discrimination, slavery and delusion in the name of progress (Bell, 1992, p. 99). It critiques

the double standards of White folks and the false narrative of progress. It also claims Bell's idea that racism is not progressive, accidental, and temporary but permanent, derogatory, systematic, and enduring. Moreover, Bell extends this criticism to civil rights laws that, the rules regarding racial discrimination law have become reified as well as deified (Bell, 1992, p. 101). Thus, equality rules have become reified, powerful actions that are some abstract ideas and deified as well, to be worshipped as certain truths. Building on this, this worship strategy benefits the dominant class by maintaining their unreal and false image of benevolence and benefits the suppressed group with hope, masking ongoing trouble inside them about systemic inequalities and racial injustice.

CRT illustrates that racial hierarchies are managed and shaped not only through law but also through discourse and authority control. Bell demonstrates how legal, social, and cultural institutions privilege the White class while suppressing and silencing marginalized voices, resulting in structural exclusion. In the British context, Black voices are marginalized and sometimes tokenized as a symbol but not provided equal authority.

## Results and Discussion

In *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019), Evaristo presents a dominant narrative foregrounding the lived experiences of non-binary and Black British women. This analysis contends that Evaristo positions racism not as an outcome of individual bias but as a systemic force embedded in all institutions, shaping a society where racial discrimination operates as the decisive mechanism of oppression against minorities. The novel reveals a coherent cycle of inter-generational trauma and suffering, portraying attempts at liberation and resistance as persistently elusive for her characters.

## Oppression and Trans-Generational Trauma in Marginalized Communities

In *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019), Evaristo presents an intersectional traumatic scenario capturing identity struggles, layered systems of discrimination, and inherited marginalization faced by racial minorities.

## Inherited Trauma and Oppression as a Subjugating Phenomenon

Subjugation, as Fanon (1963) comments, is forced domination of one group by another through control and systemic violence. While, oppression is interlocking system that restrict freedom (Frye, 1983). Subjugation and oppression are closely relevant terms, but are distinct in some points. Subjugation leads to oppression where systemic structures continue their control and mistreatment through laws and practices, such as the example of colonizers, colonizing the indigenous people through war and slavery, keeping them inferior and powerless. These phenomena manifest in Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019) to endure effects of colonial and historical inequalities. Evaristo's narrative opens up the character of Amma, one of the strongest female characters of the novel, who is featured and explained as a person who is tolerant of anything, symbolizing the suppression (Evaristo, 2019, p. 18). Amma's depiction is unfulfilled, she is an ambitious woman who works a lot for her career and in theatre too, but deep inside, she has never made a complaint about her rights, which is a sure sign of marginalization for someone. Additionally, if a female is working day and night with complete devotion and not complaining about anything, it reflects the theme of not feeling liberated enough to express her emotions. This idea intersects with Bell's critique where he asserts that, colored people can never get equality in this system (Bell, 1992, p. 12). Along with this, Oppression is a prevailing mechanism, and the conception of erasing suppression caused through racism is illusory. Amma is facing disappointment based on her race and gender, which is seen

everywhere as a sign of tokenism. Both scenarios highlight the theme of permanence of racism with resignation to attain equality and cultural progress.

In contrast, tokenism is an illusory, inclusive idea that never completely fulfills its agenda. Inclusion is the thorough involvement of all kinds of people, irrespective of color, creed, or race, having their voices raised at any level and given equal rights. Inclusion basically reflects the authority, agency, and equity of every individual, whereas tokenism only provides a superficial image of equality and authority. In reality, not giving any rights to the minority or marginalized group. It is done only to falsely repute an organization or institution, showing that everyone is equal, whether he is from a colonized community or the colonizer. Moreover, it is also practiced to escape from criticism, avoiding the question of not involving any person of color in the cabinet or law system. Not only Amma, but Shirley also faces racism despite their professional success. Thus, they are seen and taken for granted with no importance at all. Mother-daughter pairs fall under trauma legacy, moving from Amma & Yazz, Shirley & Morgan, to Carole, Bummi, and Dominique. Each character faces racism, enslavement, and trauma in one way or another through a feminist perspective, identity crisis, cultural burden, silence, control, sexual violence, and racial shame.

The point of discussion here arises that colonization, male dominance in society, and loss of female autonomy are not only present in Britain and Western regions, but are present everywhere with all their prospects. If a subjugated person finds a little bit of power in his hands, he becomes exactly like the colonizer and oppressor, thinking that he is in authority over anything he wants to do. It contrasts with Karl Marx's concept of socialism and communism that dismantle the idea of power structures and hierarchies by redistributing the power equally so that no group dominates the other. His critique of capitalism represents how oppression operates in the system, privileging one class over the other. Marx calls communism the end of history, as the world started with communism, with no power structures, and also ends with it. This idea of Marx highly dismantles the ideology of the oppressed to replicate the same behavior that once was their fate. He believed in collective transformation where the oppressed rise not to subjugate but to equalize all people. In Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019), struggles of many women highlight that they are not only racially and gender oppressed but also class-inflected. Amma's theatrical representation reflects the socialist notion that resists the commodification of capitalists.

In addition, it also mirrors the post-colonial subjects who have internalized the colonizer's mindset, reflecting Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept, which she discusses in her work *Can the Subaltern Speak?* She comments, "White men are saving brown women from brown men" (Spivak, 1988). She argues about the silencing of women in two ways, commenting that brown women are doubly marginalized, at the hands of colonial whites and by brown patriarchy. She explicitly asks the question about the subalterns, whether they can speak or not. This highlights the oppressed women, mainly those who are saved from white men by the hands of brown men, but in reality, brown men use them as a tool to fulfill their agenda by neglecting their voice and agency. These women are suppressed and subaltern because they cannot speak, and if they speak, nobody truly listens. Spivak shows how Black British women are trapped in patriarchal and colonial sympathy. Evaristo dramatizes this entrapment through the portrayal of her character's struggles. For instance, Shirley educates her students on the notion of 'respectability' in the British system, whereas Yazz does not feel liberal enough, which still centralizes white acceptance. Similarly, the 'saving' strategy of Britons relates with Bell's interest convergence idea as this rescue is not an emancipation but an act of strategic move. The claim of empowering them on a surface level, but in depth, this empowerment is conditional and contingent.

### **Inheritance of Social Trauma and Systemic Discrimination**

Though Evaristo in her narrative explores the exploitative nature of society, structural inequality, and colonial legacy, she also demonstrates the kind of trauma that is inherently transferred and evolving throughout the world on a bigger level. She gives a more indirect comparison of characters of the novel from the older generation. Yazz, daughter of Amma, embodies such inherent traumas and keeps the burden of an identity crisis. Being Amma's daughter, she lives a more liberal and confident life in an educated environment, yet she has to struggle with identity confusion. She seems torn apart into a split personality with psychological inheritance of political mindset and racial identity. Additionally, Evaristo narrates about Yazz that, at this young age, she has learnt the lesson that you cannot know anyone until you get into their histories and drawers (p. 49). This discussion is highly symbolic in the traumatic nature of how people start to hide their personal and private lives when their traumas are not healed, whether their issues include sexuality, family trauma, or racial acceptance. Hence, the drawer is used here as a metaphor to represent private parts of someone's life. Carole, Shirley, and Penelope, too, are evidence of this trauma; each of them hides her different kind of suffering in a drawer.

Furthermore, Yazz's exposure to such things at this young age illustrates the idea of cross-generational trauma that is passing from an early age and is being embedded in their minds before their maturity age, exposing the cruel and disturbing realities of life and society. Like Carole, who experienced sexual violence at an early age, Yazz, struggling with her mother's radical ideas, reflects the bitter, unidentified exposure of painful realities at an early age, leaving everlasting impacts on the innocent minds. Bell comments about discrimination in his book, *Discrimination requires licensing*, without choosing whom to discriminate (p. 48). The narrative exposes how racism and discrimination are institutionalized and regulated through the system itself. He also elaborates that racial progress is always reversible. Therefore, people are required to practice discrimination constantly if they want some benefits, codifying racial nature by making it a rule.

### **Xenophobic Sufferings of Evaristo's Life with the Characters' Complexity**

Evaristo's narrative presents a truthful picture of hatred for women and people of color who are being marginalized and suppressed by the hands of the elite and authoritative class. Evaristo's own life is based on such xenophobic oppressions, and she has faced many calamities on the basis of her complexion and mixed heritage.

### **Evaristo's Mixed Heritage and its Effect on her Worldview**

Bernardine Evaristo, a bicultural author with different parental backgrounds, mother as English and father as Nigerian, born in 1959 in South-East London, was brought up in an era where racism and xenophobia were normally practiced socially and legally in society. Living in a white-dominated society and neighborhood, she deeply developed a sense of awareness, identity, and belonging through her lived experiences. Her mixed racial heritage gives her a proper insight to write such characters who are victims of suppression, xenophobia, and marginalization. Being a living example of racism and a minority, she portrays an insightful understanding of systemic injustice and rich diversity within the lives of her characters. Sherman Alexie, a great American literature writer, says a beautiful quote, a person does not have the right to say something about a nation unless they enter and live within it (Alexie, 1996). A person cannot make a comment on any nation until he himself becomes a part of it and passes through all the conditions the people have

to go through. Like his concept, Evaristo herself is a victim of self-depravity and is conscious of all brutality and provides a meaningful conception of British culture and white-dominated society. Her self-experience of racial discrimination, gender subjugation, and social exclusion from society in her childhood enriches and influences her literary power and thematic conception about race, power, gender, and class within the British marginalized and biased society.

Likewise, Evaristo's resistance is shown not only in her work, social narratives, and characters, but she also narrates such things in her interviews. In one of her interviews with *The Telegraph*, she clearly comments that, "I'm not here to appreciate the status quo" (Leonard, 2020). In this interview, she was asked about her early life experiences and their relevance in the depiction of her characters' miseries in the novel. She emphasizes her childhood in a white area where whites live the most, and among them, their Nigerian family lives. She further examines and narrates the worried nature of her father about their skin, his family values residing within whites. He is almost always afraid to let his children go outside and play in their big garden with white children. Such narratives deeply construct the mindset of a child who does not have any knowledge about racism, superiority, and class differences. She loved to read books and go to the library, but did not have enough money to pay for them. Through all the insights of her father, she examines some kind of difference between her and other children of her age. Evaristo was interested in African history and so visited Africa in 1985. After winning the Booker Prize, she still says that she has to struggle for her inclusion, but now her position has been granted to her.

Similarly, in another interview, Evaristo talks about the future of theatre as an inspiration and source of models for other people. She asserts that my background is not white, upper-class, or privileged; I came from a middle-class background (Nicol, 2021). She has been known for her literary achievements, but says that she has many more things to do and much more to share with youth and young minds. She claims that she is not a privileged child or person to be supported for everything they want to do, but she is given the opportunity to choose whatever she wants. It is perhaps because of the ignorance and negligence of her parents, as she is the fourth child of her parents. They did not pay attention to her like the older ones. Along with this, she describes Britain as a racist country, believing, adopting, and practicing class difference, social and racial discrimination as a normal thing in institutions and in legal firms too. She repeatedly defines that she has nothing to do with racism and the status quo; she just wants equality of gender, power, sex, and class, which is highly depicted in her novel through the reflection of her characters, their power struggle, and ignorance of societal norms.

Conversely, Evaristo talks about another wonderful concept that whites write a book, and we cannot assume what this book is about. If a Black person writes a book, it is easily perceived that it should be about suffering, and racialized Black writers do the same thing, giving them the suffering they want to read. Evaristo claims that she is not like them all. She writes about reality. People ask for tragedy, but she gives them a reality check and different aspects to portray the characters' lives. She writes about the victims who are highly interested in triumphing their personalities over their sufferings.

### **Complexity of Evaristo's Characters with her Xenophobic Sufferings**

Xenophobic sufferings are the problems faced by minorities and people of color as a result of dispossession, disempowerment, and marginalization. Xenophobia is not an individual concept or ideology, but an institutional phenomenon practiced throughout Britain and the whole world where minorities occur. It is a systemic idea embedded in the



minds of natives and elite class to make the outsiders feel alienated and diasporic. It is not a biological problem that is innate, but has become normal as it is practiced at the institutional, legal, and merchant levels. People of color face such problems because of their class, race, color, and gender discrimination at a broader level. Along with this, Evaristo is a person who has faced these sufferings and hatred due to her color since her childhood. She has written characters in her novel *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019) who are also victims of systemic xenophobia, cultural and social unacceptance. Through different narratives, she examines and reflects on females and people of color facing cultural erasure, discrimination, and inequality through the prejudice of deeply rooted dominant structures.

Extending this idea, Shirley, another protagonist of the novel, is victim of such systemic sufferings, but in an opposite way. In contrast to Amma, she is acknowledged and gets achievements by assimilating into the foreign society and culture. She does so by offering her devotion and dedication to the dominant culture, highlighting the values of white culture in the field of education and politics. Shirley fits completely in Bell's idea of interest convergence as she tries her best to endure white culture and assimilate into it, but she does so by ignoring her root culture and her Blackness. She pays a cost for her fake identity to be accepted in the diasporic society. To be a part of the dominant culture, she forgot her roots from where she came and nurtured, and fit completely into white culture, being a teacher and headmistress of the school. She has lost her real identity, and has become a secondary version of herself for which she paid the cost of her Black history, working-class roots, and radical ideas like Amma. Shirley's inclusion in the authoritative culture is just an act of structural inclusion where she is given some authority and acknowledgement on the basis of her indulgence and as a result of assimilation, where whites have no fear of Blacks to get over them. She is included in the system by whites as a symbol to prove equality without mentioning injustice and inequality. Being a positive figure of the colored class reduces her to a collective racial symbol, not an individual one. Her narrative, efforts, and work are considered and judged on the basis of a collective mainstream, not a single-minded conception. She, by herself, is symbolizing the whole Black community and carrying an unseen burden of racial representation. Bell exclaims about racism and power structure as, racism rearticulates itself in other forms to survive in the system (Bell, 1992, p. 12). His idea connects to Shirley's narrative of persistence of racial structures in society with Bell's idea that power structures never erase but reshapes in modified ways to articulate in the societal systems. It expresses his view that the eradication and exclusion of racism from society and the minds of the dominant class is an illusion. Besides Bell's conception, Shirley's identity crisis and indulgence in a foreign country's culture also demonstrate Frantz Fanon's idea of internalization of racism and colonized consciousness, which is reflected in his work *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952). His concept relates closely to Shirley's internalized sufferings, removal of her Black identity and embraces whiteness for respectability and validation from white culture. This idea reflects the effects and after-effects of colonialism and how it shapes the minds of colonized people. They absorb the colonial and racial effects of the system, internalize the slavery and race system, think of themselves as inferior, and avoid systemic marginalization, becoming a conscious target for oppressors to oppress them.

### **The Protagonists' Resistance to Colonial Impacts**

Evaristo's exploratory narrative gives a comprehensive insight into the colonial legacy and its ongoing impacts on the minds of colonized people, their everlasting internalization of suppression and marginalization. Besides the domination of society, she also reflects the agency and power of resistance of the women who, being victims of colonization, use their power to resist the white and oppressive culture, demolishing the white superiority structure.

## **Enduring Impacts of Colonial Legacy on Racial Hierarchies**

Colonial legacies within a colonized structure shape and maintain the personalities of colonized people emotionally, physically, structurally, and psychologically. Colonization left an everlasting effect on the minds of the racial identities that they have lost their own identities and left them in a space where they cannot find proper peace and freedom, which are the basic human rights irrespective of color, race, or gender.

Moving from other characters, Shirley's personality and her internalization of colonialism are portrayed specifically as she tries her best not to be suspected as a bearer of fear, with a negative reaction to her race and color (Evaristo, 2019, p. 238). Her validation in the societal structures and theatre is commodified with the interest of White institutions. Her acceptance in that society is based on the denial of her roots, and she actively tries to resist the cultural and white norms being imposed on her. She is not given proper rights and authority, and she knows it very well, but fears speaking it aloud due to the inconvenience in her validity which could harm her. It is ironic that forgetting a person's real self to enter another domain, is considered overwhelming and sometimes justified. Hence, they actually know the results of assimilation can bring to them a loss of identity, language, and culture, but they ignore and take it lightly. Bell in his book relates this idea that, authoritative class manipulates racial minorities..... (Bell, 1992, p. 8). Shirley struggles throughout her life not to be treated badly, but experiences mistreatment at the hands of the dominant class. She tries to console herself that such mishaps are due to her skin color. It creates a structure where marginalized groups are seen harmful for the system by elite class. She continuously tries to manage her image not to be suspected as a harm for the White culture. Hence, she does not want to believe that the reason behind her inferiority and mistreatment is racial structure. To some extent, it is true as the authoritative class has internalized that they are superior and worthy of all rights and equality. They shape the racial personalities as inferior and slaves to them. She remains constantly in an emotional and psychological dilemma between her real self and the assimilated one.

In contrast, Carole, the daughter of Bummi, becomes a target of this internalized generational systemic denial and racial shame. After passing through racial traumas, systemic and sexual assault, Carole detaches herself from her identity and tries to fit into the Eurocentric culture. Brought up by Bummi, who was a self-denier and disassociated from her cultural roots, Carole inherits such a sense of self-rejection, and it is expressed within the text, she removes the weaves sewn on her scalp and straightens her hair, assuring that she does not like her natural hair (Evaristo, 2019, p. 146). Significantly, it reflects the social and psychological impacts of racial and colonial standards on Carole's mind, as she is in denial of her natural identity and tries to be like the British white class. In the colonial era, colonizers preferred white beauty and made beauty standards of living, rejecting the Black cultural and natural roots.

Consequently, Bell expresses this relevance of racism and internalization of colonial impact with interest convergence, Blacks are magical faces at the bottom of society's well, the poorest whites feel themselves powerful by gazing down on Blacks and achieve self-esteem..... (Bell, 1992, p. v). This context depicts systemic racism as a stabilizing force to adjust in the dominant culture, focusing on how the poorest whites who only get their earning from hand to mouth look down on the racial minorities and feel within themselves a sense of superiority to suppress the Blacks. They acquire self-esteem by looking down on others. The last option a person of the colored community has is to assimilate within the

new culture and erase their own identity as a sort of escapism. The survival strategy remaining here is to get into them and become a part of them, to maintain their living and respectability. But in doing so, they have to pay a great cost in maintaining their lives and validity. Self-worth remains silent, and the Blacks gain token acceptance and structural exclusion from all institutions, and it occurs only when it aligns with white benefit.

### **Characters' Resistance and Female Agency**

Evaristo's characters, after being traumatized and badly treated, resist the patriarchal and societal violence, colonial legacy, and systemic silencing, after realizing their power to fulfill their needs and requirements on their own. Building on this, Carole, feeling shame about her identity and African lineage, tries to assimilate into the white culture to be a part of them and gains importance in a foreign culture. She alienates herself from her cultural and racial hierarchies, adopts the lifestyle of white culture, and loses her total real identity. She attains her liberation and agency through the process of healing and reclamation of her mother culture. Her mother tries to console her and encourages her to engage her own identity by saying, you should go back and fight your battles as a true Nigerian (Evaristo, 2019, p. 143). The statement of her mother rationalizes her to align with all the challenges she has to face in the British community, but with her true Nigerian nationality not masking up with white cultural beautification. Thus, her mother plays a great role in undoing the assimilation of her mind and body, facilitating her by saying that there is always someone for everyone. Earlier, Carole was ashamed of her color and identity, which is why she tries to adopt the beauty methods of the white class, but later, after reclaiming her identity, she got rid of all these ornaments. Evaristo describes it as, she scraped the plastered foundation from her face, removed giant eyelashes..... (p. 146). The language used here by Evaristo is a bit violent, as scraping, ripping off, etc., reflecting the burden of white culture Carole imposes on her due to societal pressure and admiration. After realizing her worth, she removes all these beauty products and ornaments and makes herself free from these artificial beautification burdens, confronting the denial of her cultural identity. This explanation demonstrates her return to cultural roots and identity by removing the adopted assimilation, resulting in her liberation from psychological and physical trauma. Her mother's words affirm her conception that the real identity and cultural roots are the real self of a person, and cultural erasure is not possible for any person. In recalling Civil Rights Act of 1964, Bell identifies that, this nation has promised progress and racial integration, but neither approach seems satisfactory (Bell, 1992, p. 49). By adopting her cultural roots and reclaiming her identity, Carole reflects the decolonization of her mind and soul from the colonial impact, illustrating that resistance does not always begin outwardly but also reshapes identity from within.

Similarly, Carole and Shirley are the characters who reclaim their identities from internal resistance. Shirley endures agency in her personality by resisting the limitations imposed on her due to her class, race, and culture. Due to her Black cultural roots, she is seen as an inferior personality in all fields, but she proves herself as an excellent teacher who is always ready to help her students, irrespective of their race, color, or gender. Thus, Shirley plays a dual role as assimilating into foreign culture, internalizing the British colonial legacy, and simultaneously attempting to resist racist ideas by proving herself an essential part of the British educational system.

### **Conclusion**

Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019) presents a fictive narrative of Black British women, immigrant experiences, and queerness, analyzing multidimensional themes and features that expose the exploitative nature and colonial mindset of the authoritative

regime and the dominant class of British society. The research has manifested that Evaristo has challenged many societal norms through her narration, including personal bias, female autonomy, identity, binaries, and traditional and cultural traumas connected to the psychology and physiology of women of color in the dominant structure. It creates gender disparities in the marginalized, oppressed, and, to some extent, patriarchal community.

The main objectives of the research were to identify the inequalities that are institutionalized within contemporary British society, racial and cultural abuse, along with the consequences of the colonial legacy in the West faced by minorities. The research has raised questions about the identity, autonomy, and agency of the female domain in British society, shaped and controlled by powerful social structures. The research answers the question of resistance and ongoing impacts of colonial regime through the depiction of Amma and Carole's autonomy and resistive power by neglecting the cultural and societal norms imposed on them by the authoritative class. Similarly, it also highlights the role of women in empowering themselves, whether through resistance or through subversive domination and partial inclusion. The question of inter-generational trauma and oppression is presented by the deeply affected personalities of the novel, who, to get validation and acceptance in the diasporic community, vanish their real identities and become socially and structurally excluded by the system. Shirley's structural acceptance and her notion of being a good teacher reflect her attention and devotion given to students to convey her positive attitude (Evaristo, 2019). This racialization and marginalization are not an outcome of individual experience and bias, but are deeply embedded in the socio-political and cultural systems where Whites are privileged, and the coloured are further suppressed. Through her narrative, Evaristo deconstructs the unilateral notion of British society and exposes the multifaceted invisible borders that force women to be symbols, tokens, excluded, marginalized, suppressed, and exploited. These findings explore Bell's argument that Black people are disadvantaged unless White society finds something beneficial for them (Bell, 1992).

Intertwining Bell's concept of interest convergence, the research extends the existing theoretical framework and validates that the racial minorities are always kept on the side when it comes to their benefit, and when it comes to this point, they are progressed and benefited only when it aligns with the progress structure of the elite class. The limited acceptance of Amma, Carole, and Shirley exemplifies the conformity and how a woman's personal agency is limited by the partial acceptance by the mainstream society. The research also answers the question relevant to Evaristo's heritage, shaping the lives of her characters with the example of Amma. Like Evaristo, Amma faces discrimination and rejection through systemic structures unless she becomes a source of commodification for them. Symbolizing Bell's notion of interest convergence, Evaristo portrays a clear picture of British society. The research also contributes to validation in British society, which is made conditional and determines a survival-based strategy of characters to move in that societal structure, welcoming their oppressive norms, rules, and regulations, removing and losing their own motherhood and personal identity. The research exposes systemic xenophobia operating overtly and covertly, not only in the Western world but throughout the global world. Moreover, this study opens up further explorations for future researchers on themes like identity politics, systemic exclusion in education, institutions, the intersection of class, sex, and gender, cultural memory, resistance across global traditions, utilizing the broader fields of gender, cultural, and postcolonial studies, legal, education, diasporic, and media studies. Although this research provides crucial insight into understanding the subjectivity of female autonomy, identity, agency, marginalization, subjugation, and inequality in contemporary British society, it also has some limitations. Relying on a single work's textual analysis, selected significant themes, and some selected

characters' analysis, this research is confined to the sufferings, traumas, and systemic inequalities, along with the xenophobia presented in Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019).

### **Recommendations**

The research underscores the importance of acknowledging the misrepresentation of women in a society where their whole existence is questioned, and the readers confront uncomfortable truths about race, class, power, and gender inequality. The study gives voice to the unrepresented and to hear the unheard stories, presenting them with their own narrative power and platform to talk about their miseries and lived experiences of brutality that they have to face due to their race, color, and gender. It is crucial to highlight that Evaristo's representation of control over personal individual space, particularly for women, is a highly ignored perception in our contemporary society that leads to critical thinking. To get emancipation, women need to understand and examine the social, political, cultural, and invisible control dynamics imposed on them by authoritative societal structures.

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