The Intersectional Aesthetic: Analysing Fusion Fiction as Structural Resistance to Societal Binaries in Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of Kerala

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled in **The Intersectional Aesthetic : Analysing Fusion Fiction as Structural Resistance to Societal Binaries in Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*** is a record of the studies carried out by **Asna Salim**, at the Department of English, T.K.M. College of Arts and Science, Kollam under the guidance of **Dr. Muhammadali P K.** and submitted to the University of Kerala in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature.

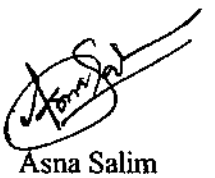


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I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **The Intersectional Aesthetic : Analysing Fusion Fiction as Structural Resistance to Societal Binaries in Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*** submitted to the University of Kerala in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature is the original record of studies and research carried out by me during 2024-2026 under the guidance of **Dr. Muhammadali P K.,** Assistant Professor of English, T.K.M. College of Arts and Science, Kollam and it has not formed the basis for the award of any degree, title or recognition.



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Preface

Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019) forces us to change how we read, bringing needed attention to diverse voices that traditional storytelling rules have long kept hidden. This project explores how the novel challenges rigid social boxes, focusing on how Evaristo's unique style which she calls "fusion fiction" acts as a form of rebellion against everyday stereotypes. Instead of seeing her lack of full stops, lowercase letters, and flowing lines as just a creative experiment, this study shows how her style is actually a political tool. By combining Kimberlé Crenshaw's ideas on intersectionality with Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of multiple narrative voices, this project argues that standard grammar rules are tied to old systems of power. By breaking these rules, Evaristo creates a fluid, open space where many different realities can exist at the exact same time.

The research is divided into four chapters. The first chapter, "Introduction," sets up the background of the study and explains the core ideas behind this open writing style. The second chapter, "Theoretical Framework and Stylistic Fluidity," digs into the theories behind the project, tracing the history of intersectionality and showing why writing without full stops is a powerful choice for narrative freedom. The third chapter, "Disrupting Societal Binaries in *Girl, Woman, Other*," looks directly at the book itself, grouping the characters into themes to show how the story challenges divisions around age, class, and gender through figures like Amma, Carole, and Morgan. Finally, the "Conclusion" ties all these threads together, looks at how Evaristo redefines the modern novel, and shares a few ideas for where future research can go.

Chapter One

Introduction

Historically, contemporary British literature has been shaped by rigid cultural hegemony that took the focus away from the lives of marginalised people. Bernardine Evaristo's 2019 Booker-Prize winning novel, *Girl, Woman, Other* shattered this existing literary structure. Evaristo being the first Black woman to win the honour, she challenged the boundaries set up by dominant writing styles. The novel weaves together the lives of twelve characters. She brings out the stories of Black British women, trans and nonbinary individuals. The characters stretch across different generations, regions, classes, and political beliefs. Every individual has a different background and views to portray. There's Amma, a queer socialist theatre director to Carole, an Oxford educated investment banker. By discussing these twelve distinct individuals, Evaristo analyses complex and polyphonic human nature.

Unlike the traditional way where a single character stands for their entire race, here she shows them as real people who argue and have different opinions. For example, the heated debate between Amma and Dominique's girlfriend Nzinga over the word 'black,' shows that their opinions are different and they are not symbols but individuals. They are allowed to be selfish, opinionated, wrong, and political. Here Evaristo challenges the historical erasure of stories of Black British women where they were once treated as side stories. Through the novel, she argues they are part of the backbone of British history. While *Girl, Woman, Other* was initially praised for its achievement of looking into marginalised voices, later the focus shifted to her unique writing style. She dismantled the rigid rules with her own literary structure development.

According to the literary theorist Cedric Courtois, *Girl, Woman, Other* is a deliberate political act. Courtois states that Evaristo disrupts Jacques Ranciere's philosophy of, 'Distribution of the Sensible' (Courtois 55). Ranciere's concept defines the Invisible rules which decides who gets to be seen and heard in the society. He argues that Evaristo rewrites these rules, helping the silenced voices to be acknowledged. Portraying the lives of twelve individual protagonists who span different socioeconomic statuses, generations, and the geographical locations, Evaristo stands against the idea of being Black women through monolithic beliefs and presenting them as symbols (Courtois 60). Nicole Abram, a literary historian, corrects mainstream narrative *Girl, Woman, Other* is an anomaly and a sudden one too. Abram points out that novel roots are traced back to traditions of the 1970s and 80s Black British Women's Movement (Abram 15). This included the collective theatre groups and self-published poetry anthologies. The novel is fluid, polyphonic and in non-hierarchical layout. It reflects the political strategies of Black British feminists who promoted collective action while valuing their internal differences (Abram 22).

When we link the novel's framework to this history, it becomes clear that the book is a form of protest. It resists the old, narrow ways of flattened definitions on identity. Evaristo shows this form of resistance in *Girl, Woman, Other* through her unique style. Rather than just creating diverse characters; she invents a new literary technique to give life to them. This project explores two main ideas: 'fusion fiction' and the 'intersectional aesthetic.'

The term 'fusion fiction' is coined and popularised by Bernardine Evaristo herself. It ignores the standard rules of grammar. There are almost no

full stops and very few capital letters. The sentences are found scattered and broken like poetry. In the novel, as she uses enjambment, we find the characters' voices blended together rather than being separated by punctuation. Here she is promoting the idea that language does not have to be 'perfect' or 'complete' to have a meaning. She throws away the rules that constrict a thought to flow freely. Evaristo resist the binary constructions of traditional English language and focus on the idea that fusion fiction ensures that no voice will be left unheard or shut off.

The lack of punctuation in Evaristo's 'fusion fiction' is not just a stylistic approach, but it is a rebellion against the so-called standard rules in English. Scholars like Amina Bibi and Atif Saleem Tahir argue that by omitting full stops, she is taking a strong stand against the Eurocentric rules that have been restricting and controlling the English language for many years (Bibi and Tahir 1-12). The standard punctuation forces a binary way of thinking. This thought makes every sentence seem like a neatly wrapped box. This results in them having no further artistic creativity. By using fusion fiction Evaristo makes sure that no language gets categorised or characters become labels. The sentences turn open ended. Also, the internal consciousness of characters like Carole and Amma is freed from linguistic rules that affect their character development.

As we said the project examines two concepts: fusion fiction and intersectional aesthetic. Fusion fiction is the linguistic part while the intersectional aesthetic is the theoretical framework. One is the vehicle itself, while the other is the engine powering it. This concept is based on Kimberlé Crenshaw's ideas on intersectionality. She states that identities like race, gender, class, and sexuality are not independent from one another. They all overlap and

intersect to form complex layers of discrimination and experiences. Evaristo's way of turning Crenshaw's legal theory into a literary practice is identified as the 'intersectional aesthetics.' She matches the overlapping nature of Identity with an overlapping style of writing. In our daily life we are forced to take part in binary divisions. We must be either black or white, male or female, rich, or poor. Evaristo introduces characters as messy and multidimensional. They can be an elite or a working class, conservative or queer, morally grey, or outright unfaithful and even all at once. Through her work she systematically shatters all these binaries. She does not separate each identity with punctuations. This helps the character arc to develop and not to be constrained when their gender is mentioned. As there are no periods to separate clauses, their identity flows into each other and forms the true nature of human experience, overlapping within a single, stanza-like sentence (Crenshaw 1241-1299).

This formal flow of stanza-like sentences introduces the literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of true polyphony (Bakhtin 1-282). Polyphony can be explained as a complex multi-voiced narrative where no single narrative has absolute power to be the final word. In earlier traditional novels we always find an omniscient narrator- narrate the characters life in an authoritative voice (Bakhtin 6). Here Evaristo breaks this hierarchy between the characters narration and perspective by introducing fusion fiction which takes away the power of a singular authoritative voice. As she leaves out all the usual standard rules, punctuations and other shackles, the characters inner thoughts, their actions and the words all blend together. The readers are guided to navigate through the narrator's stream of consciousness. This forces the readers to

experience identity as a living and ongoing rather than something isolated or binary.

The traditional English novel was structured in a very orderly manner. It was both predictable and logical following a linear progression and omniscient narrator, to tell you who was "right" or "wrong." This style developed alongside Western industrial capitalism and colonialism. People started categorising everything in the binary concept. Subjects became either rational or irrational, civilised or savage, man, or woman. These strict binary divisions turned marginalised people, especially those who do not fit into the predetermined categories face double erasure. As a result, those at the intersection of blackness, womanhood, and queerness were forced to pick one identity and stick to it. They were not allowed to mix them because it will be too complicated for the story. The traditional novel forces people into an either/or trap. They flattened their identity, denying their internal contradictions.

The core challenge in *Girl, Woman, Other* is both social and structural. First, the societal problem occurs from how society treats identity like a check list. Society polices you through binary conditions, where we are forced to choose between professional or authentic, traditional feminist or an intersectional activist. In the novel the characters are squeezed by these constrictions when they have the ability to be all those at the same time. The second problem arises from traditional grammatical structures that act like a cage. This traditional system shackles creative minds and traps fluid, complex lives into the neat, binary boxes. A standard sentence with the capital letter at the beginning and a period at the end is considered as a closed structure which has no room for improvement.

Evaristo reminds us that these traditional concepts cannot be dismantled using the same rules that created them. Instead, she encourages us to follow more radical, open, messy manners where many overlapping truths are allowed to exist. To find how she resolved this, this project address four key questions:

1. How does fusion fiction challenge the historical traditional grammatical structure and binary logic?

2. How does Evaristo change Kimberle Crenshaw's socio-legal framework of intersectionality into intersectional aesthetic and balance the conflicting identities?

3. How does Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of polyphony across the twelve distinct protagonists break the binary between the "omniscient narrators" and the marginalised "other"?

4.Does the way Evaristo breaks the rules of punctuation help to portray the characters more real and free, escaping the binaries society created?

To address these questions, first we have to look into the way she presents fusion fiction closely. The way she uses punctuation, line breaks and white space that all challenges the existing norms. Second, pairing it with postcolonial, queer, and feminist theories.

The project is divided into two main parts. Chapter 1 titled "Theoretical Framework and Stylistic Fluidity" builds the foundation where we look into the history of intersectionality and show how Evaristo translates that theory. It also uses Bakhtin's theory of 'polyphony' to explain how she gives voices to 12 different characters at once. In Chapter 2, we apply the discussed theories into the characters by grouping them into clusters of three. They are grouped based on their experiences. Finally, in the conclusion we address the questions: what

does this mean for the future of the novel? Can Evaristo's intersectional aesthetic and fusion fiction be used to rethink other post colonial stories?.

Bernardine Evaristo's distinctive fusion-fiction structure is the most apt literary reflection of this cognitive alienation. In a conventional realist novel, textual signs such as quotation marks and different fonts ensure a strict division between a character's public, spoken dialogue and private, genuine inner thoughts. Evaristo abandons all such structural divisions. By mixing Carole's elegant and proper corporate language with her nervous, unfiltered thoughts in one and the same unpunctuated line, Evaristo demonstrates the exhausting effort of "code-switching" through literary style.

The rapid rhythm of the writing makes it clear that the heroine is never relaxed. In an exclusive corporate environment, mistakes made by elite people can simply be laughed off, while a marginalised woman remains under constant scrutiny. Because the thoughts pour out as a massive, intertwined bundle, Evaristo structurally demonstrates how intersectional oppression cannot be divided into separate problems. For Carole, money becomes not only a weapon against hunger but also an insulating device that conceals her subaltern status.

Transitioning from the corporate context to the politics of human classification, Morgan's rejection of their birth name, Megan, in favour of they/them pronouns can be explained through Judith Butler's influential theory of gender performativity. Butler claims that gender is not something fixed and intrinsic within an individual, but rather a social practice that is strictly regulated by society and performed each day (Butler 25).

The writer uses the structure of fusion fiction to dismantle this grammatical and social prison. The grammatical structure of traditional Western

writing requires the use of capital letters and full stops. Each sentence is confined within its own borders, closed and separated from others, just as the laws of the gender binary require an individual to belong to one group or another. By avoiding final periods, Evaristo resists these traditional literary laws.

Through seamless conjunctions of language and clauses, a borderless text emerges in which several complex truths coexist simultaneously without being fragmented. This structural quality establishes a link between Morgan's modern queer theory and Hattie, their ninety-three-year-old great-grandmother. In hegemonic societies, the illusion of a binary division between the "old" and the "new" is prevalent, with the older generation often assumed to resist the idea of fluid identity.

However, because Hattie lives in tune with the laws of nature, which remain fluid, change with the seasons, and defy the labels imposed on them by human beings, she innately comprehends Morgan's non-binary identity. Through unpunctuated language, Morgan breaks the barriers of the generational divide between them, demonstrating that non-binary gender identity does not belong to the internet era alone.

The novel's final climax, where all twelve storylines come together in one surprising place the afterparty of Amma's play *The Last Amazon of Dahomey*is a perfect example of Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia. Foucault defines heterotopia as a real place that simultaneously reflects, challenges, and entirely reverses the relations of society (Foucault 24). The National Theatre—previously the elitist, bourgeois, and Eurocentric embodiment of institutionalised high art is transformed into a heterotopia by

being filled with the sounds of laughing, marginalised Black women. Simply having the opportunity to perform a play in such an elitist venue is itself revolutionary, shattering the invisible walls that shout "keep out."

This event may also be interpreted through Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of the rhizome. Unlike a hierarchical tree with unique roots and vertical growth, the rhizome moves horizontally and connects any point to another without making them similar to each other (Deleuze and Guattari 7).

The characters' stories throughout the novel move along their own parallel lines, like watching different programs on different channels. At the afterparty, Evaristo constructs a vast rhizomatic convergence.

Evaristo's structural resistance finally culminates in the meeting between Hattie and the young revolutionaries, which represents Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality as living history. Young revolutionaries such as Yazz and Morgan discuss gender fluidity, systemic oppression, and privilege-checking in the terms of contemporary academia; yet Hattie is neither angered nor confused by them. She understands the truths they share at a deeper spiritual level, even though she cannot express them through institutionalised language.

By omitting periods, Evaristo structurally breaks down time itself. Past and present blend into one sentence, demonstrating that these generations are neither enemies nor separate from one another; rather, they are closely connected. Yazz's current privilege to sit comfortably and discuss theoretical issues is a direct result of the struggle for somatic survival undertaken by Amma and Hattie.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Framework and Stylistic Fluidity

Bernardine Evaristo in *Girl, Woman, Other* fights against the mainstream feminist notion that treated all women as identical. For decades, early feminist movements (especially the first and the second waves) acted based on this false calling. They challenged the society based on the fake propaganda of "universal woman." They believe that every woman faces the exact same struggles and one the exact same kind of liberation. But in reality, this universal view was justified only for a small and specific group: white middle class, and Western women. Identifying them as a single group led mainstream feminism to become a knife to their own throats. But in Evaristo's novel, she completely dismantles the traditional monolithically structure and delves into Kimberle Crenshaw's intersectionality.

Evaristo portrays the web of racism, classism, and misogyny which a wealthy white woman will never have to face. She reminds us that a working-class Black woman in London doesn't just face sexism but also has to undergo various discriminations. The story focuses on twelve individual characters. They come from different generations, sexualities, economic backgrounds, and identities. Their stories prove that there is no single, universal female experience. Evaristo provokes the readers to get rid of the existing traditional definitions on womanhood.

Mainstream early feminism acted on the assumption that their ultimate enemy was suburban households. They claimed that true freedom meant escaping the kitchen and becoming independent financially. These activists thought trapping females inside the four walls of the home was patriarchy's main

atrocity. But they were unable to understand the reality. This was a deeply privileged problem which placed only the white, middle class, heterosexual Western woman as the default here. When they framed domestic household as the primary centre for torture, they already failed to realise the severity of the situation. It was the freedom cry for who already had the option to stay home.

On the other hand, for millions, especially black, brown, indigenous and working-class women-they were forced into workplaces for survival. They never had any choices. Due to the existing legacies of slave trade, colonialism and global racial capitalism, they never had the chance to enjoy the protection of domesticity. They were forced into low-wage, racial segregation and had to bear physically toiling labour. The coloured women faced double discrimination. They were exploited by the very same economic system where white feminists were fighting for the right to get corporate jobs and other rights that will increase their standard of life. Mainstream feminism erased all these dark and historical truths.

This erasure pushed down the coloured women into a cycle of despair. They marginalised by the same movements that were supposed to help them out. The mainstream feminist agendas forced them to quiet down about racism. They treated race as a stumbling block to the illusion of unified sisterhood. At the same time, men tried to suppress the women of colour within civil rights and Black liberation movements. Women were advised to suppress their gender equality demands, by the patriarchal anti racist movements. They wanted to establish a monolithic racial unity, to stand against white dominance. They were forced to choose between their race and gender identity as the patriarchal system feared the women who were able to create their own identity. They were too

Black for mainstream feminism but at the same time too female for the anti-racist movements.

These historical incidents sparked the rise of Black feminism and intersectionality. They realised human identities are intertwined and overlapped. It cannot be isolated or arranged in parallel hierarchical order, placing gender, class, sexuality or race above each other. Oppression acts as a medium that weaves all these together, which can shape and alter one another. We have to remember that a black woman faces double oppression through the layers of both gender and race identity.

This was not a passive oversight, but a tactical move. They believed that, if women were seen as a uniform group, their political demands would be more easily recognised and approved. But the fall of this entire image was because of the misrepresentation of universal women to their own image. By treating their own socio-economic privileges as a normative standard of gendered oppression. This changed mainstream feminism into a highly exclusive club that became a weapon to their own identity.

Evaristo addresses this historical critique and exposes the drawback of this universal categorisation of women through the character of Penelope. She considers herself as a radical feminist for standing up against her male colleagues for years. Falling under the pit of mainstream feminist ideas, she lacks intersectional awareness. Penelope unconsciously follows internalised racism and privileges unaware of the gruesome conditions of her coloured peers. Using the twelve polyphonic perspectives, she shatters the "universal woman" myth. She proves that Black British womanhood is a vast and diverse structure rather than a monolith.

During the 1970s, Black, lesbian, working class women had a very hard time to find a self of belongingness. They had to move between different activist groups, trying to fight for their basic rights. But everywhere they went, forced them to fit into hierarchical lines created by them to fit in. The Civil Rights Movements advised them to suppress their gender grievances and focus on racial liberation. They treated women's rights as a distraction from the concept of black unity (Springer 143). Dominated by Western white middle class women, mainstream feminism focused on escaping the suburban households and reaching new heights of corporate jobs. They ignore the daily struggles of the marginalised. Also in Gay Liberation spaces, are ruled by white men who don't know how the intersectionality of race and gender influence sexuality. These women were forced to make a choice, creating political homelessness in them. They were broken and scattered over different identities they wished to choose. The Combahee River Collective arose from the despair of this fragmentation and identity crisis. They declare their refusal to split themselves and state that "we find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously" (Combahee River Collective 210-18). Earlier periods, society didn't give much importance to Black women's oppression. They viewed them as if they were two different coats of "woman's oppression" on top of "racial discrimination," a simple addition problem. But the arrival of Collective changed this "identity math" by rejecting the (Race + Gender + Class) additional equation. They remind us that a marginalised person does not face oppression subsequently or in an order. All these various forces create a new chemical reaction, and this is called "Interlocking oppression." They are woven together and pulling out one

thread may result in falling apart of a person's reality. The Collectives hints that tearing apart white supremacy and patriarchy will help to dismantle the long existing capitalism.

She brings out these concepts through portraying the audition story of Amma and her friend Dominique. They do not experience identity in fragments but simultaneously. Both of them met each other at an audition for a feature film set in a women's prison. They were disillusioned at being put up for parts such as slave, prostitute or as a nanny. She states that they were historically marginalised.

Audre Lorde, an American writer and intersectional feminist, dismantles the Eurocentric impulse on dividing human identity through her theoretical framework. In her essays "There is No Hierarchy of Oppressions" and "The Master's Tool Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" challenges the Eurocentric, patriarchal desire to binarise and rank humans. Her theoretical approach centres on the absolute rejection of psychological and structural 'compartmentalisation. She argues that humans are complex and multi faceted. So, trying to separate their identities, to fit them into rigid societally constructed boxes is a form of structural violence. "I cannot afford the luxury of fighting one form of oppression only. I cannot afford to believe that freedom from intolerance is the business of only one particular group. And I know that if I fail to recognise my sisters at any step of our journey, then I am missing the fire of their faces."(Lorde 1986). Audre talks about how society demands you to slice your identity to fit into bureaucratic filing cabinets. Lorde's famous quote on not having the 'luxury' to fight against one form of oppression is an outcry on

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this predestined fragmentation. As the oppressive forces attack the same body, resistance should also be undivided.

In "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" warns that when marginalised communities start arguing over who is more oppressed, they are using the 'master's own tools. To control power, oppressive systems categorise people, rank them, pit them against each other and establish hierarchies. These are the master's tools: ranking, categorising and dividing. Building hierarchies within the resistant movements will only result in favour of the toxic oppressive hierarchies that already exist. Lorde posits that internal differences within a community is not a threat, but it creates a raw and resistant energy.

Evaristo turns Lorde's warning into an artistic style. She refuses to use the standard omniscient narrator who judges and organises the characters within rigid boxes but brings out polyphonic structure. Giving the twelve different characters equal spotlight and thoughts, Evaristo shows that there is no hierarchy between them or ranking their pain.

This internal tension is shown through the generation dialogue between Amma and her daughter, Yazz. Amma's views are shaped by late 20th century radical feminism whereas Yazz is a perfect example of the modern internet age of activism. Despite living in a progressive era, she succumbs to the psychological urge to rank and sort suffering. This only broke down when her university friend Courtney, a working-class white student, called out her behaviour. Courtney reminds her that privilege is relative and contextual, by talking about 'Privilege Olympics'. Evaristo uses this anecdote to prove that

rankings suffering will only create toxic hierarchies within communities. She successfully portrays Lorde's rejection of internal community hierarchies.

In 1989 Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term 'Intersectionality'. In her essay, "*De marginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Anti-discrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*," unmasks legal, corporate and government policies which stayed blind to the multilayer realities and identities. To prove her point she introduced a traffic intersection metaphor. Crenshaw puts forward a scenario where you are standing at a busy crossroad of multiple marginalised identities. Consider one side representing racism and another sexism. If a person is hit by cars coming from both sides at once, we cannot label it from a single vector. But the law forces us to look into a single vector. We can connect these situations with real life legal cases like DeGraffenreid v. General Motors. They were used by a group of Black women who faced unemployment. As the company hired black man and white woman, the court rejected their claim and forced them to choose either a race claim or sex claim. This shows how a single dimensional view leaves multi-layered individuals unprotected.

Crenshaw breaks down the theoretical framework into two dimensions; Structural intersectionality: It analyses how most of the institutional systems like hospitals, employment sectors fail to represent marginalised peoples because they can't come to terms with multilayered and overlapping identities and discrimination.

Political intersectionality: They criticise how social movements and mainstream parties erase internal diversity. They force you to choose between your gender and the race identities. Antiracist movements led by men and

feminist movements by white women, both avoided gender and racial intersectionality.

Evaristo uses the character of Roland to portray the political intersectionality to life. He is a successful professor and public persona who finds the identity labels as restrictive. Because he is both black and gay, they try to present him everywhere as a trophy. Roland views his identity labels as mere 'footnotes.' He resists the Institutions attempt to mark him as a controllable for political convenience. He doesn't want to be put into a box. Whereas Grace represents the tragedy of having no label at all. Being born in England in the 1920s, with a mixed race British black identity, she faced extreme isolation. Grace was forced to live in a total structural invisibility. Evaristo interrogates the system's refusal to see multi-layered human beings for who they truly are, through the characters of Roland and Grace.

Patricia Hill Collins, an American sociologist, introduced the concept of Matrix of Domination in 1990. Collins analyses the total social organisation of power that controls intersecting oppressions in a society. According to her, power doesn't emit from a single source but is spread in our everyday lives through different structures. Collins divides these into four; The Structural Domain which includes big institutional setups that decide who gets resources and does not. The Disciplinary Domain consists of the bureaucratic management, rules, and paperwork. The Interpersonal Domain governs how people see themselves and how they interact with others. And finally, the Hegemonic/Cultural Domination is the most important one. Here they convince everyone that equality and social binaries are all normal or natural. They deny the fact that it is a well internalised structural violence. Language and literature

become the source of structural resistance. We cannot use traditional story formats to rupture a matrix of domination rather have to disrupt the very own language that shapes hegemonic power. This understanding of Collins Matrix of Domain leads to the emergence of Evaristo's 'fusion fiction' style. She found that the traditional English grammar filled the language with hard borders, to be bound inside a small box. She wasn't trying to stand out with her writing style but using her unique style as a weapon. It was an assault on the hegemonic matrix of domination that categorises people.

The standardised grammar rules, punctuations, linear paragraphing and all others were not just found to perfect English as a communicative tool. They served as symbols of colonial patriarchal policing to ensure their power dominance above marginalised. Bernardine Evaristo's writing style was a confrontation to this. This ideological standard grammar was used to create an inferiority within the colonised people in the name of 'civilising them and tried to destroy the rich subaltern traditions and enforced binary model thinking (for example right versus wrong, proper versus improper). These rigid rules became an exhausting process for those having multilayered identities like a black British subject. Creating anything within these boundaries is like squeezing an uneven reality into a container which was designed historically to make them seem like an alien.

In the novel, Evaristo projects that traditional punctuation system. Sometimes they act like a control system during writing, as they lead to a misinterpretation that every thought has an absolute beginning and ending. She posits that human experience cannot be presented in an orderly or neat package as they do not give any universal and single truth. Fusion fiction arises from this

active rebellion. Her theory was supported by using the strategies of 'abrogation 'and 'appropriation' in *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin.

Abrogation is the rejection of the belief that a sentence requires proper closure to be legible whereas Appropriation is the process which uses language as a medium to carry the weight of marginalised experiences. The continuous and fragmented combination of prose and poetry throughout the novel helps to give the readers a preview on the characters complex identities. She turns the language in the mode of survival from traditional grammars method of policing.

The traditional structure used linear fragmentation and other rules to frame and categorise thoughts. Bernardine Evaristo's 'fusion fiction' standard earrings these rigid rules to show how different parts of a person's identity connect. The entire novel's lines begin with the lower-case letters and are connected to each other without periods. She was trying to portray that it is impossible to separate a character's race, gender or background. It's these characteristics that make the novel more profound. The fluid writing style presents a parallel relation to Kimberlé Crenshaw's 'Theory of intentionality'. Evaristo turned the pages from the novel to a crossroad where everything collides. Following Crenshaw's rejection on compartmentalising identities, her writing style rejects the idea of constraining the multiple identities.

The opening lines of Amma's chapter introduce the fluid nature of the entire novel:

> Amma
> is walking along the prominent of the
> waterway that bisects her

city, a few early morning badges cruise slowly by

to her left is the nautical-themed footbridge with its

deck-like walkway and sailing mast pylons

to her right is the bend in the river as it heads east past Waterloo

Bridge towards the dome of St Paul's (Evaristo 1).

Evaristo guides the readers from slicing apart Amma's life into pieces. She blends Amma's surroundings, her inner thoughts and identity into one deep stream. It is a necessary approach to delve deeply into the. discrimination the characters face. Amma thinks back to when she started out in theatre and met her running mate, Dominique. Her memories contained a mix of sexism and racism together

> both were disillusioned at being put up for parts such as a slave, servant, prostitute, nanny or crimand still not getting thejobhey railed against their lot in a grotty Soho caff while devouring fried egg and bacon slathered between two slabs of soggy white bread washed down with builder's tea alongside the sex workers who plied their trade on the streets outside (Evaristo 6).

In the above lines, we find a complete lack of capital letters or full stops that used to symbolise a clean break on thoughts. The absence of capital letters and full stops forces the overlapping identities of discrimination to blend together. This helps readers to understand the characters on a more personal level and empathise with them. The text hints at how racial barriers and gender barriers to attack together without waiting in a linear sequence. It remains the readers that we cannot consume history through a single lens.

The presence of capital letters creates a hierarchy within the sentence. It gives a power for the start of a sentence, deciding what is important and not. Also, they elevated certain nouns and gave focus to individualism like the capitalised 'I'. Unlike the standard grammar in fusion fiction, there is no hierarchy. It gives a visual equaliser effect as the whole text is written in continuous lowercase. Everything has an identical visual weightage. The readers are not distracted by any preset concepts or any noun; they are given absolute freedom to have their own understanding. This unique writing style helps the individual selves from being isolated. They are not monolithic figures that are apart from the world but become highly relational characters. The lack of typography makes sure that equal attention is given to their identities as well as their environment and backgrounds which shapes the character to a well-rounded figure. Shifting the narrative from the visual layout of the page to the physical effect, helps to analyse the unpunctuated style in a more conclusive manner. Lack of punctuation even affects the literal velocity of the reading experience. Usually, readers used the to take a moment to breathe, pause and analyse the information intellectually when a full stop is seen. In conventional literature, these punctuations acted as resting points before moving forward.

Continuous downward flow of lines denies these resting points and forces you to process it while moving forward at the same time. This stops you from getting detached from the content. Also, the readers are able to understand and feel the exhausting nature of survival as they read non-stop. This typography forces the readers to interact with the text as an unfragmented section rather than fragmental pieces seen in traditional literature.

Breaking down the visual layout of *Girl, Woman, Other* requires looking into traditional novel performances in a book. In conventional Western novels, text was printed in a standardised format of linear layout. They wear orderly arrangements from the left margin to the right margin tightly. This format showcases an order, stability and a linear progression of the plot. It hints on the existing ideas during the period of conventional writings. They assure the readers that life happens in a straight and predictable line without any overlapping frames. Bernardine Evaristo completely shatters all these pre-existing notions. The whole book is a combination of novel and free-verse poetry. Instead of following the dense format of text, she organises her words in the loose stanza-like groups which are surrounded by open white space. The blank papers become an active storytelling tool, supported heavily by 'enjambment'. It is a poetic device where a single line connects to the next line without any punctuation. This helps to break the linear rhythms and jump across decades, cities and perspectives without needing any transition phrases.

> Amma then spent decades only on the fringe, 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 (Evaristo 2).

Analysing how these lines are arranged, the brakes between the lines highlight the dual reality. The line" spent decades only on the fringe" portrays the isolation she faces. It throws light into the painful reality of being an outsider. But the next line shows her defiance stance against the marginalisation she is facing. She uses a physical line break to separate the marginalisation and the resistance instead of a period or comma. This allows both realities to exist

at the same moment. Evaristo follows Audre Lorde's philosophy of rejecting internal hierarchies. In traditional novel sittings the omniscient narrator's voice shadowed the minor characters opinions. Fusion fiction style ensures that every voice is heard with equal importance. The physical line breaks help to give every perspective and stances it's on dedicated space without undermining each other. The white space between stanzas makes sure that no identities overshadow another

. Fusion fiction helps to create a borderless language. Taking the word 'border' from the context of literature to the world we live in, function as territory marks and control who belongs where. Border serves the same purpose in a traditional grammar text. They are used to discipline the structure and to keep thoughts apart in different groups. Collin's matrix of domination can be resisted using this concept of border lessens. The matrix of domination keeps everyone separated using the system's power. Evaristo's writing style doesn't give a chance to be bound to these rigid box systems.

In *Girl, Woman, Other* the identities are never subjected to isolation. The appear fluid and connected to one another resulting in weaving all the 12 characters together. In standard novels an end of a chapter eventually leads to the introduction of a new character, leaving the old character to be forgotten. There is a wall between the two characters. This makes the readers unable to connect with them. Evaristo rejects this. All the characters in the novel are separated by the generational gaps, background differences, different class and political views. But at the same time, they are bound together. The book transitions from one character to another seamlessly without any harsh brakes. This is because of the fluidity of the language.

This structural fluidity creates an enormous intersectional solidarity. Throughout the novel Evaristo shares the idea that the liberation of a marginalised group cannot occur alone. Positioning her unique writing style as a weapon she refuses to isolate individual stories. Intersectional solidarity advocates that we cannot lift up one generation while abandoning the previous one. Isolating the characters from each other won't help in finding solutions.

Bernardine Evaristo's 'fusion fiction' acts as a bridge between the oral story telling traditions of Black culture and the formal standardised rules of classic Western literature. The mainstream literature was under the strict watch of traditional grammar rules. They were expected to look highly polished. Even when the writers use a street slang or dialect, they are portrayed as an anomaly by keeping it in quotation marks. They were treated as less important to the content.

Evaristo presents Stuart Hall's view on identity through her writing style. Stuart Hall rejected the notion that cultural identity is something fixed in past and are inherited in his essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." He argues that identity is not something that gets developed into a finishing product on its own. It is continuously growing. Rather than who you are, it is about who you are actively becoming (Hall 222). She notes that modem Black British identity is very complex and old structured grammar rules doesn't have the caliber to portray them to its full capacity. This multi layered identity is rich in historical roots, modern city slangs and diverse cultural voices. This structural voice format gives the novel settings and the characters more life, adding a warmth to it. For decades, British English was used as a measuring stick to rank the intelligence and standard of a civilisation. This suppressed vernacular languages

and cultures. It became evident that, if you want your stories or your ideas to be taken seriously, you have to shape them according to the standards of the rigid structure. The existence of fusion fiction itself became an act of rebellion against oppressive policing. She refused to filter or shape the way her characters express themselves to get a pass to mainstream literary society.

The writer forces the modern English novel to change shape to fit them. She encouraged the use of languages that once segregated marginalised communities and turned it into vibrant and flexible. Her visual layout created immense possibilities to include everything together. Evaristo's fusion fiction gave opportunity to street slang, immigrant actions, and many others which were once seen as unpresentable.

To subvert the traditional novel, it is not enough to just change the language. We need to be aware of the power distribution within the groups and control the power transferring. The fluid nature in language structure helps us to turn the book into a space where no character power-trips the other or dominates. This points out Mikhail Bakhtin's famous theory of "polyphony". The term literally means multi-voiced Ness or having many voices. It doesn't mean having a lot of characters in a book. This concept is encouraging a different way of narrating a story. Here the author steps away from the limelight and allows the characters to be presented as independent individuals with their own thoughts and views over everything. Unlike the traditional novel setups, in a polyphonic novel - the author doesn't act like a dictator. They don't dismantle the reader's image of the characters. The crucial point that gives an upper hand on polyphonic novels is that all these voices are treated as equal. It is similar to

a choir music that involves a large number of singers who perform different melodies at same time but create a complex harmony.

Bakhtin presents the opposite of polyphony as monologist. It is explained as single voiced-ness. To recognise the significance of polyphony, we need to look into how traditional novels embodied the narration. Every famous classic English novel always features a 'God-like' narrator who knows everything. This narrator is present invisible but has access to all character's internal thoughts and secrets. They possess an air of superiority, far above the characters. This figure always tries to shape the reader's perception of characters and plot. The traditional setup hides a power dynamic structure. As the narrator speaks with absolute authority, they become an ideological gatekeeper. They quietly become the baselines who decide what is considered normal, universal, or correct. This baseline was created by the patriarchal white, wealthy, and Eurocentric worldview that has the ability to change the entire population's perception on many things. Their narration is believed to be the perennial truth, which gave them the power to navigate the readers to a world they created.

The narrator has the ability to make the readers judge every character's value through their privileged lens. The marginalised characters that appear in these monologic books do not have the ability to speak for themselves. Monologist is a structural reinforcement of colonial power. It mirrors the readers of this single, elite voice who can judge and define the realities of everyone else. The minorities trapped inside this structure are described as 'the other'. They are flat objects which are meant to be evaluated by the dominant.

Evaristo completely destroys this monologues narration in traditional novels by depicting twelve distinct polyphonic viewpoints across *Girl, Woman,*

Other. Standing against single-voiced nature in a novel result in destroying the conception that there is only one correct way to experience modern Britain. If there was a monologic narrator in this book, she would be forced to choose a central character from the existing twelve. Choosing a central character in a monologic tradition means favouring the characters political stances and lifestyle.

All characters in the novel regardless of their age, class, and race stand on the exact same level of structural importance. The novel doesn't have any categorisation because the story has no margins and no one is pushed to the margins. This helps in creating an open space where communities can build a shared, democratic voice.

Before the arrival of the concepts of polyphony, fusion fiction, and intersectional identities traditional Western literature rose under the guise of double standards. When a story is written by or about a middle class, heterosexual white man, it is received by the readers with applause. Also, if the plot revolves around a white male protagonist who faces a crisis, a moral fall or a heartbreak, the book gets a higher rating in the market. They even get studied and analysed as a universal symbol. The readers irrespective of their race, gender or background are expected to connect with his perspectives. They are compelled to resonate with the protagonist and his choices.

But this narrative changes, the moment the plot centres on a Black woman or anyone from queer identity. They will never be related with universality ideas, not even as a human being experiencing life. They are pushed away from the eyes of the public, labelling them as diversity literature or multicultural fictions to remind them that they can never be mainstream. This

structuring places the white, straight, male viewpoints as the 'Centre', considering them as the default. At the same time the coloured and queer narratives became the 'Margins'. The dominant groups are privileged to represent the total human race whereas the margins represent the minority. They have to shoulder the burden of representation. When a white author creates a less liked character, they are taken as individuals. But when the same is done by a marginalised writer, the character becomes a reflection of the entire community resulting to face huge backlash. If they are shown as too perfect, it falls into the cliché category. This psychological burden becomes a fundamental trap.

Evaristo escapes this trap subtly by avoiding the single protagonist power. To free herself from the binary constraints she adopts a polyphonic narration with twelve characters. The equal representation of all the characters and their valued viewpoints take away the pressure. Since there were so many of them, they could present their true self without concealing anything. Their character spectrum varied from one extreme to another. We can read the story through travelling inside each character's mind. As we experience the story from the perspective of each character, Evaristo is making sure that the tradition of the centre breaks apart itself. With the twelve characters acting like poles that hold up the plot, none of the characters are pressured to face the burden of representation. The readers are also unable to categorise them as main plot or subplots because every single character presents a story that is never inferior to others=

The narrative style of the story can shape how it is read and perceived. In earlier traditional novels, we focused on the so-called hero alone and

considered others as supporting figures who were judged on the basis of how they treat the hero. Evaristo thwarted this stable narrative to add multiple perceptions. She completely decentralised the novel form to create a diverse path.

Chapter Three

Disrupting Societal Binaries in *Girls, Woman, Other*

Amma and Dominique's lives in the 1980s were far from a cool retro trend or a vintage subculture. It was a period of staying safe and surviving. The radical lesbian feminist attitude of their early days can only be understood by stepping away from the fashionable language of twenty-first-century internet activists. During this period, British society was under the harsh rule of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Her period of governance came to be known as Thatcherite Britain. Under her leadership, the government actively suppressed intersectional identities.

Black queer women in this era lived in constant fear. On one side, there was the outbreak of HIV/AIDS, a tragedy that the government quietly underplayed before the public. It even passed a law in 1988 called Section 28. This law gave legal support to the spread of homophobia. According to Section 28, it was illegal to promote homosexuality or queer relationships in schools or local governments. The mainstream feminist movements, dominated by heterosexual white middle-class women, tended to treat Black women's thoughts and experiences as invisible. Amma and Dominique's choice of radical feminism was not about following a trend or a career path. It was a form of resistance against a world that never gave them a sense of security or basic human rights.

At its core, their resistance was about breaking down the rigid rules set by society. They opposed the unfair binaries that divided them into public versus private, safety versus danger, and centre versus margin. These binaries manipulated society into branding them as protectable or disposable. Their very

existence became a disruption to the white conservatives of the twentieth century. Instead of hiding away, they unapologetically flaunted their identities as Black, lesbian, radical feminists. Amma's early theatre works served as battlegrounds where she pushed back against societal rules. Most of her early works were unfunded, but they revealed authentic art stripped of public stunts and luxury. They were not performed in elite interiors, yet she pushed through, gritting her teeth to reveal her art.

She used her art as a weapon. Financial and social necessity forced her to turn her artistic pride into a shield to protect herself. Her plays shattered the old rules that separated performers from spectators. She pushed passive spectators towards the performers, making them feel involved. To engage the audience, she based the characters on the real-life Dahomey Amazons. The fierce female army was portrayed in a grand manner, highlighting its valour. She did not tone down the characters' Black womanhood to make the audience feel comfortable. Instead, the play showcased the energy of the legendary all-female army. The performers broke the fourth wall and forced the crowd to acknowledge actions that fuelled racism, knowingly or unknowingly.

Even though she enjoyed the whole process of creating a masterpiece, the truth was that it was both mentally and physically exhausting. The description of her messy daily life helps us understand the extent of Amma's radical nature. The script sheets scattered across the room, the heavy typewriters, the unheated rehearsal rooms, and the makeshift theatres all revealed physical exhaustion while also showing her drive to create something meaningful. She turned her art into both a shield and a weapon. She used it to protect her community, but at the same time, she pointed that weapon towards

hostile governments. Amma made sure that the stories of Black lesbian women were noticed within British cultural history. She proved that small grassroots art can be as powerful as art performed in luxurious theatres.

Some may critique Dominique's choices and call her narrow-minded, but in reality, they were a survival strategy. After being constantly attacked through different identities, she chose to run away from societal constraints. She retreated into women-only spaces to find security. This radical lesbian separatism helped her feel protected. She was not running away; it was a form of resistance. History books may leave out the part where Dominique is gentle and has a likeable side. She was able to find peace in small everyday activities. She was trying to protect herself from the outside world's malice by creating a third space where women could feel safe and heal together.

When the narrative arc transitions from the 1980s to a generation shaped by the digital arena of the 2010s and 2020s, we can see a massive generational shift by comparing Amma and Yazz's generations. As time has changed, the ways in which women fight against unfair societal rules have also changed. Yazz is a smart and bold character. The way she sees the world is totally different from Amma's perspective because the circumstances Yazz grew up in are much easier and safer than those Amma faced, when she had to do everything to keep herself alive and visible. Back in the day, Amma had to cross every river just to be noticed, while Yazz now shows her resistance inside a cosy, air-conditioned campus where she is always safe. As time has passed, feminism has developed and changed its tools. Amma's feminism was related to the physical body; this was a form of somatic survival. In Yazz's case, however, her feminism is about calling out privilege. It is a form of intellectual survival.

Here, we compare the changes in feminism across a large time leap by placing the mother's and daughter's ideas about feminism in relation to their surroundings and lives. This is not to criticise or mock Yazz for preaching feminism while having a safe fallback atmosphere. Rather, it points out the irony that Amma's physical struggle in the 1990s bought Yazz the safety and stability to fight against oppression with brains instead of fists.

Yazz represents Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectional feminism. Crenshaw explains how different forms of discrimination overlap with one another, causing them to compound and make conditions even worse. Both Amma and Dominique faced intersectionality. They were trying to survive in a society that disliked them for being Black, women, and lesbians all at once. Yazz's generation turned this experience into academic terms and course books, relying on the pain and suffering of older generations.

After many years, protesting in streets and public spaces became rarer. The use of language and institutional behaviour became sources of resistance against oppression. Their resistance was carefully structured and expected to be followed. The establishment of safe spaces was designed to let people relax without fear. They also implemented trigger warnings and privilege checks. Amma and Yazz experience oppression in completely different ways, creating tension. Amma faced and fought discrimination through her body and art. Meanwhile, Yazz examines these forms of unfairness through a more academic lens. Yazz tries to win arguments by using complex vocabulary, treating language as both a weapon and a shield, just as her mother used art. The most ironic contradiction in all these arguments is that Yazz speaks boldly but never dares to give up the comfort of home and work for what she advocates.

They both speak in two completely different languages about the same thing, as their visions do not align with each other on the concept of feminism in their age. Amma feels that the raw, radical movement has turned into something less authentic, while Yazz thinks her mother's 1980s movements were too rigid and justifies her position through modern queer theory. She criticises them for ignoring fluid identities. Her hyper-intellectuality is not a symbol of superficiality; it is her own way of protecting herself from an oppressive society. The university serves as a safe place for her, similar to Dominique's 1980s separatism. The only difference lies in the structure. Dominique built her fortress through physical walls and kitchens, while Yazz built her protective walls through codes and digital networks.

By comparing two different eras, the novel proves that social binaries are disrupted in different ways and change over time.

Looking into Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*, we find that the generational and emotional gap between Amma and Yazz does not emerge through face-to-face dramatic confrontations. Society forces us to view history through rigid binaries. Its oppressive force divides and labels us into different boxes, creating new binaries such as the "old generation" versus the "new generation." This results in the false idea that older feminism and modern intersectional feminism are natural enemies. Evaristo shatters this false division by pushing against traditional grammar rules and introducing a unique writing style called fusion fiction. She removes the use of periods and capital letters to draw a parallel with the idea that the past does not end but continues through the present, as seen in Amma and Yazz's views on feminism in their respective life periods. In traditional writing, full stops tell the reader that a particular

thought is complete and that a new one has begun. If Evaristo had used periods in the layout, it would suggest that Amma's 1980s survival struggle has nothing to do with the privileges that Yazz experiences.

Avoiding capital letters helps break the existing traditional hierarchy in the text. Evaristo gives Amma's raw slogan of physical survival and Yazz's complex academic terms the same priority by following the lowercase-letter rule. This style proves that modern feminism does not replace the old one; instead, present ideas continue from the past. Evaristo states that generational division is a myth because Yazz's current privilege of sitting in a cosy room and enjoying freedom is the fruit of what Amma fought for in the 1980s. This further solidifies the truth that the past and present are more interconnected than we can see and decipher.

The lack of traditional punctuation affects the breathing rhythm while we are reading. Usually, when we read a book, a period acts as a stop sign that signals us to take a breath or rest. However, in fusion fiction, there is a lack of periods. The fluidity of the lines forces our lungs into a breathless, continuous rhythm. Since we cannot pause, readers are forced to stay emotionally connected to the characters' emotions. This breaks the fourth wall between the readers and the characters, creating a bond between them. The unpunctuated style forces Yazz's academic criticism to be measured equally with Amma's days during the 1980s movements. Since the arguments are made in a borderless manner, they are bound together even when they clash. Fusion fiction helps destroy the artificial war between Amma and Yazz. The book proves that Yazz's stubborn mode of defence against oppression can be seen as a continuation of Amma's historical rebellion.

The impact of class and race on families across generations is portrayed in the novel through the characters of Bummi and her daughter Carole. The strained relationship between mother and daughter throws light on a saddening social division: the working-class immigrant mother who exhausts her own body to survive versus the highly educated daughter who climbs into the elite world of banking. To fit into the elite structure and in search of belonging, Carole trades away her authentic culture. She loses herself in the process of trying to fit into the moulds created by others. She even chooses not to have any relationship with her mother.

Bummi's entire life is built upon the identity of a working-class immigrant. Her daily routine includes waking up early, travelling across London, and cleaning the houses of wealthy people. This continuous manual labour helps put food on the table for her and Carole. Evaristo's description of Bummi evokes pain in readers. Her whole body is evidence of the heavy manual labour that she has been doing for as long as she can remember. Her hands are rough from coming into contact with bleach and other chemical cleaning products. She has chronic pain in her shoulders from lifting vacuum cleaners. Her coats always carry the smell of other people's homes, which she one day wishes to have for herself. For her, money is not a symbol of status; it is something that can shield her from hunger and debt. She faces all these struggles, driven by a maternal instinct to give her daughter every opportunity that she herself did not get.

Carole's daily life is completely opposite to Bummi's. Her manicured hands never had to touch chemicals in order to fit into elite spaces; her shoulders are burdened by the impostor image she carries rather than by a vacuum cleaner;

and the scent of expensive designer perfume draws a stark contrast with the depiction of her mother. Unlike Bummi, for Carole, money is something that hides the working-class identity she despises. Money evolves from being a basic shield against hunger into a validation card, a symbol of status, and a source of power. She struggles to create an image of perfection to prove that she belongs in a world that has historically excluded women who look like her.

The rapid rise in society forces Carole to face the most ironic and painful paradox: the pressure to shed her Black and working-class roots in order to achieve so-called corporate "success." Corporate society is dominated by white, male, and upper-class power. She feels that, to gain recognition from her colleagues and bosses, she must erase her Nigerian and humble identity. She has to change herself. In elite institutions, a working-class or immigrant accent is considered low class, so she changes her accent to avoid being dismissed. Carole's chemical straightening of her hair highlights the intersection between patriarchy and white supremacy. It points out their role in corporate grooming. Her natural hair is treated as a violation of institutionalised Eurocentric standards of beauty. The contrast between Bummi's idealism of mutual aid, which aims to share and survive collectively, and Carole's corporate logic points towards the structural core of the novel. By adopting the corporate mindset, Carole becomes part of the very system that exploits people like her mother.

This results in the creation of emotional tension between them. Looking at her daughter, Bummi feels a mix of maternal pride and gut-wrenching heartbreak. She worked herself to the bone so that her daughter would not have to face what she went through. Yet now she cannot recognise her own daughter, as Carole is transforming into one of the wealthy employers whose houses she

cleans. Carole is trapped psychologically: she has finally managed to escape poverty, but she is detaching from her mother and her own identity. Carole does not follow Eurocentric standards because she wants to abandon her mother or their native culture; rather, she is not given any other choice.

Bernardine Evaristo uses her unique structural framework to analyse Carole's internal psychological reality. Carole's busy work life is examined alongside Evaristo's fusion fiction to draw a parallel between Carole's psychological reality and the characteristics of this structure. The unpunctuated prose disrupts the breathing pattern and creates a racing rhythm. This breathlessness connects with Carole's struggle to catch her breath while becoming a jack of all trades and performing mental gymnastics. This is required for a Black woman to protect herself and maintain her footing. In a standard novel, a capital letter tells the reader when a thought starts, a comma gives a short pause, and a period marks where that thought ends before another begins. Evaristo puts away all these restrictions. Since there is no punctuation, the characters and the reader are not able to take a proper breath.

This literary structure matches Carole's code-switching. This is not just a casual change for her. The shift between different languages and cultures is necessary for her to blend with a higher social group. In standard novels, there is a clear border between what characters think and what they say. Most of the time, authors use quotation marks for spoken words and italicised font for inner thoughts to separate them. Evaristo refuses this separation. Carole's private thoughts and polished public words are mashed together into the same line. She is never at peace and is always stressed by her job. There are times when she has to stress over a casual remark from a white manager. Everything creates

exhausting friction. In an elite, white workspace, mistakes made by the privileged are often laughed off, but a marginalised person faces extreme scrutiny.

The absence of punctuation takes away the time to rest and become refreshed. Similarly, Carole does not have the chance to relax. Her identity as a Black woman from a working-class background keeps her on edge. She is not stressed only because investment banking is difficult, but also because of the double-layered discrimination based on her gender, race, and class. Because of the fluid nature of the structure, her thoughts flow together. Evaristo rejects the idea of separating challenges into neat boxes and dealing with them individually. Since the thoughts are not separated, they appear as heavy, tangled masses. The banking pressure and identity pressure are also fused together, proving that intersectional oppression cannot be separated into neat structures. Her highly valued résumé may look easy to achieve, but the inner truth of her stress and achievements tells another story.

The final layer of Carole and Bummi's story focuses on the rift that upward mobility causes between a mother and daughter. Evaristo questions a society that teaches that every success is a pure and joyful victory. She rejects this belief by presenting the raw friction between Bummi and Carole. They celebrate Carole becoming independent and climbing out of poverty. Simultaneously, Evaristo exposes the hidden casualty of the journey, explaining how they lose more than they gain. She tells readers that it costs them the precious bond between a mother and daughter. Evaristo reveals how a daughter's professional triumph becomes a cultural tragedy for the family.

The emotional distance between mother and daughter occurs because of deep misunderstanding. When Bummi looks at her daughter now, she sees cultural betrayal rather than a successful child who deserves everything. Carole's expensive suits, chemically straightened hair, and polished British accent make it harder for Bummi to recognise her. To Bummi, who holds on to her cultural heritage even after facing isolation, Carole is a great shock.

Rather than trying to incorporate foreign culture in order to blend in, Carole's transformation looks more like an attempt to erase her roots. Bummi is both agonised and disappointed by Carole's behaviour. It feels as if Carole is trying to wash away the skin that birthed her. Similarly, Carole looks at her mother through the cold lens of her new corporate life. She views Bummi as rigid and unadaptable. Bummi cannot blend with society. Meanwhile, Carole is unable to keep pace with her mother's traditional values and expectations. They become strangers.

Evaristo does not leave them stranded on opposite sides. She uses these intense emotions to destroy the oppressive binary of "success versus authenticity." It is often said that marginalised people are asked to choose between success and authenticity.

Those who choose authenticity remain at the bottom of the economic ladder. Those who choose success are made to erase their identity. It is like choosing between the soul and survival. The novel refuses this choice and redefines what true success looks like. It is not measured by financial stability. It appears in the moment when they look past the masks and become each other's support.

By weaving their stories back together, Evaristo shatters the concept of binary. With the economic and class binaries discussed, the novel shifts its focus from corporate structure to human categorisation. Here, we discuss binary division through Morgan's personal journey of figuring out identity. Morgan chooses to abandon the birth name Megan and the female identity assigned at birth in order to openly embrace a non-binary identity. This is not a modern trend but an act of survival against a society that forces every person to fit into the boxes it sets. Morgan states that the traditional gender system is like a prison with a set of rules. It forces people to behave and act the way they are told instead of focusing on how they feel inside. By changing their name and using they/them pronouns, Morgan completely rejects the idea that one has to choose a side to be a complete human being.

The author does not leave Morgan's story incomplete but connects it with the ninety-three-year-old great-grandmother, Hattie. From a very young age, society instils certain preconceptions into our minds.

Morgan and Hattie seem very different, as the walls of time, age, and language separate them. Still, they are connected through Hattie's relationship with nature. She supports Morgan's identity subtly by talking about nature. Hattie reminds us that nature does not care about rigid human categories. Life in the forest and river keeps changing and remains connected. It is comforting to know that Morgan's journey is supported by Hattie. Morgan's identity is not something made up by the internet. They are simply using modern words to describe a freedom that has always existed.

Morgan's rejection of the gender binary is not just a topic discussed in the plot; it is built into the very style and structure of the book. Bernardine

Evaristo's refusal to use periods results in the text becoming fluid, promoting the idea of non-binary existence. From a young age, we are taught to write using traditional grammar, and standard grammar has a double-sided system. A period is like a boundary wall. It shows that a thought is either completely finished or has not started yet. It helps split our thoughts into isolated boxes. Similar to gender laws that keep people under the control of two divisions, the grammatical system relies on strict borders.

By avoiding periods, Evaristo stands firmly against the old laws of literature. She lets words move freely without restrictions. Thoughts and feelings flow outward, gliding effortlessly over one another. The text refuses to pick a side or settle anywhere. It does not follow start-and-stop rhythms. Instead, it opens a free space where many different truths can exist at the same time without being sliced into pieces. This proves that the unique layout is not merely a stylistic choice.

Modern society loves to separate the two generations of Morgan and Hattie. This gives rise to the binary of ancient versus modern. Society tells us that the modern world is about digital screens and shifting definitions, while the ancient world is portrayed as outdated, stubborn, and stuck in the past. However, the interaction between Morgan and Hattie dismantles all these preconceived ideas. Evaristo portrays their bond in a heartwarming tone, turning all assumptions into dust. When we see their conversation in the novel, we find that they do not clash at all. Despite the huge age difference, they share similar views on humans and nature. Both of them are different expressions of the same blood, resilience, and understanding of what it means to stand against society's expectations.

Despite the huge age difference, Hattie does not judge Morgan's modern vocabulary or pronouns. She is far more progressive than many people in their twenties. Her lifelong relationship with nature has taught her that life is fluid and always changing. By bringing them together, Evaristo makes the past and present hold hands. This proves that the ancient and the modern are not binary opposites but continuous forces.

As we arrive at the end of *Girl, Woman, Other*, the book stops following the characters separately. Suddenly, the whole scene becomes more vibrant, bringing everyone into one massive scene. It is the after-party of Amma's play, *The Last Amazon of Dahomey*, at the National Theatre. Throughout the novel, the stories and characters are kept separate. It feels like watching different shows on different channels. However, Bernardine Evaristo makes the climax more exciting by bringing all the characters into one room at the same time. The meeting gives the feeling of a family reunion after a long period of separation. The only difference is that it is a completely unplanned meeting.

To fully understand the importance of this scene in the novel, we should consider the significance of the location. It is not a random spot. The National Theatre is a heterotopia. Here, different people, generations, and stories stand next to each other even if they do not mix in everyday life. The presence of all these characters together in the same place, especially inside the National Theatre, breaks society's rules. All these women have been pushed to the edges of society for decades. Getting the chance to present a play in such an elite institution is itself a breakthrough. To top it all, the first meeting between the women in such a space also shows that all their resistance against oppressive society has worked for the better. A space that used to shout "keep out" is now

filled with the loud voices, laughter, and energy of Black women. They break the wall that once kept them outside.

Evaristo honestly writes about the synergy and harmony between them. Just because they are all in the same area does not mean they all have to get along well with one another. Instead, she shows what happens when completely different people run into each other.

When Yazz runs into Carole, she looks at Carole through pure university theory. To Yazz, working at a multibillion-dollar company looks like selling oneself out. Carole's appearance and Eurocentric thoughts only alienate her further. For Yazz, real change occurs in the streets, not in corporate rooms.

Carole looks at Yazz with tired and mature wisdom. She knows that debating politics in a warm and luxurious place is a privilege she never had. For Carole, breaking into a white, male corporate world is not betrayal but a necessary fight that helps her financially. Evaristo shows this inner monologue to remind readers that there is no single right way to survive. Both women are fighting against the oppression they face, but their backgrounds influence the results of their fights to a certain extent.

The free-flowing and unpunctuated style turns the book itself into a party. Since there are no periods to control the flow, the whole conversation among the twelve characters becomes a giant stream. It does not have a proper ending like those in standard novels. Here, Evaristo lets their voices overlap. She proves that they do not have to be exactly the same to be deeply connected, as their differences weave them together.

The moment when Hattie, the ninety-three-year-old family elder, stands face to face with young, modern activists like Yazz and Morgan is striking.

In standard society, we are given the idea that a huge age gap becomes a stumbling block to finding a kindred spirit. Therefore, we expect this meeting to be fruitless because they seem to belong to completely different universes. We expect them to speak in different languages, have conflicting values, and judge each other.

However, Evaristo uses this meeting to completely tear down the generational wall created by prejudice and misinformation. They connect with each other perfectly, without any clash between the old way and the new way. When modern activists talk about social issues, identity, gender fluidity, and breaking social boundaries using new terminology, Hattie does not get angry or confused. Even though she does not use their modern vocabulary, she already understands their truth on a deeper and more spiritual level. Hattie has spent nearly a century watching change in nature and has survived a world that tried to box her in. She does not need a book or technology to understand that identity is fluid. She has seen the world practise fluidity for almost her entire lifetime. Young artists look at her as an inspiration, not as an outdated relic. She is seen as a living bridge to their own history. They acknowledge that the source of the modern freedom they experience comes from her generation. It comes from the endurance, grit, and survival mentality of their elders.

By keeping intergenerational conversation free of periods, Evaristo structurally collapses time itself. The past and the present melt into a single continuous sentence. The text proves that these generations are not separated by time.

It is at the very end of the novel that Bernardine Evaristo leaves us with a brilliant memory. Flipping to the last page of the novel, we notice that there is

no final period. The structure continues without an end; the book does not have a full stop. The missing period is not a grammar mistake but a deliberate action. Evaristo refuses to close the book with a dot of ink, leaving the entire novel open-ended and telling us that the lives of these twelve characters do not stop just because we have run out of pages to read. The conversations are still going on. Their ideas are still overlapping at the afterparty, and their identities are still growing, shifting, and evolving.

If the book ended with a hard stop, we could set it down on a shelf and walk away. It would be like a museum object that will not be touched again for a long time. It would be treated as frozen in time. Evaristo refuses to let us do that. By ending it on an open note, she passes it to us. The open ending forces us to realise that the struggles these women face, including racism, sexism, classism, and the pressure to conform, are not neatly resolved. They are ongoing and living problems that continue into our daily lives.

The structural openness acts as a direct validation of the marginalised identities in the text. Evaristo subverts tradition by denying the text a final period

Chapter Four

Conclusion

The ideas set up in Chapter One built around Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality and Patricia Hill Collins's matrix of domination are not just sitting alongside the book analysis in Chapter 2. Instead, the history and theory of Black feminist thought directly predict and explain the multi-voiced, crowded world of Bernardine Evaristo's characters. To view *Girl, Woman, Other* as a mere sociology textbook or a hollow exercise in avant-garde style is to completely miss the point. The novel is a brilliantly unified project where form and content are totally fused. The book isn't just a container holding marginalized stories; the structure itself is specifically designed to let those stories breathe on their own terms.

Chapter 1 showed that you can't understand the lived experiences of Black British women through just one lens, like race or gender alone. Chapter 2 proved that their literary versions refuse to be boxed into traditional, predictable character arcs. Putting these two points together proves the main argument here: the very layout of fusion fiction is inherently intersectional. When Crenshaw argued that legal and political systems try to force identity into separate, mutually exclusive boxes, she exposed a massive flaw in how institutions categorize people. Evaristo runs into the exact same issue with the traditional, Eurocentric design of the novel. Standard realistic fiction, with its reliance on a single main character, chronological timelines, and clear hierarchies between major and minor figures, forces a choice about whose perspective rules the world. It naturally defaults to a single, dominant story. By

contrast, Black British feminism demands a storytelling setup that can handle contradiction, multiplicity, and things happening all at once. The text answers this call by throwing out the old, rigid rules of the novel. This fluid layout allows twelve distinct characters to co-author a shared reality where no single voice is elevated above the rest.

To see how this works in practice, you have to realize that in *Girl, Woman, Other*, the medium really is the message. Evaristo's signature "fusion fiction" style skips full stops, avoids capital letters at the start of sentences, and flows across the page like verse. This isn't a superficial gimmick to look modern; it is the literal infrastructure of intersectionality made visible on the page. Because clauses bleed into one another without strict grammatical borders, the syntax mirrors how race, gender, sexuality, and class all overlap simultaneously in real life. In standard writing, a period creates an artificial wall a clean break that separates one thought or identity marker from the next. Evaristo's open grammar physically stops the reader from compartmentalizing these traits. The way the words are put together forces us to realize that a character's race, womanhood, and class status don't take turns affecting their life; they are experienced all at once, in a single, continuous flow of consciousness.

This technique becomes incredibly clear in how the book handles the inner lives of its characters, seamlessly sliding between completely different minds. Take the generational and political clash between Carole, a high-flying corporate vice president, and her mother Bummi, who runs a cleaning company. In a conventional novel, their conflict would play out through confrontational dialogue bounded by quotation marks or be separated by neat chapter breaks.

Evaristo's fusion fiction, however, lets their voices blend and separate on the exact same page without punctuation holding them back.

Carole's corporate ambition and her habit of changing how she speaks to fit into white corporate spaces melt directly into the rhythmic style of Bummi's Nigerian British motherly worries.

Skipping full stops allows the text to map how generational trauma, upward mobility, and leaving a homeland all fuse together in real time. The reader experiences Bummi's past sacrifices and Carole's current workplace loneliness not as separate plot points, but as a single, ongoing psychological reality. The grammar reflects an emotional truth: Carole can no more escape her mother's history than a phrase in the novel can escape the line right before it.

Furthermore, this fluid style ensures that a mix of many voices completely overrides a single dominant viewpoint. By organizing the novel into groups of three, called triptychs, Evaristo intentionally avoids focusing on just one protagonist. The text refuses to pick a single experience as the "authentic" way to be a Black British person. Instead, it places radical 1980s theater directors like Amma right next to non-binary online activists like Morgan and elderly countryside grandmothers like Hattie.

As these twelve lives cross paths, brush past one another, or come together at the final theater party, the layout becomes a living example of Hill Collins's matrix of domination. The novel shows that power is entirely relational. A character who lacks power in one area (like Bummi dealing with racism as a house cleaner) can turn around and pressure someone else in another area (like Bummi struggling to accept her daughter's sexuality). This multi-

voiced setup ensures that every single character gets equal narrative weight, creating a fair, balanced text where no single point of view takes over.

Ultimately, this synthesis lets us define Evaristo's structural style as an intersectional aesthetic - a revolutionary framework for modern fiction. Traditional storytelling relies on leaving things out. It requires cutting away different paths, ignoring minor characters, and smoothing over messy histories just to keep a single line of plot moving forward. Evaristo's tapestry of voices completely rejects that idea. Her style creates an open space where deep differences, political friction, and broken histories can live together without being flattened into a fake, simple picture. It proves that a novel can hold itself together not by making everyone the same, but by showing how everyone is connected. *Girl, Woman, Other* sets a new standard, demonstrating that to truly tell an intersectional story, an author must be willing to dismantle the very grammar that traditional novels have stood on for centuries.

By using this fluid style, *Girl, Woman, Other* does something much larger than just expanding what contemporary stories can talk about, it completely redefines what a British novel can be.

Historically, the traditional British literary canon that is stretching from Jane Austen's domestic realism to the social novels of the post-war era has acted as an unacknowledged gatekeeper for national identity. It relied on stable class hierarchies, isolated settings, and strict language rules to define what it meant to be British and who belonged. When marginalized characters did show up in these spaces, they were almost always pushed to the sidelines, treated like background noise or symbolic tokens instead of complex, fully realized human

beings. Evaristo completely disrupts this legacy. By mapping a full century of overlooked Black British life from Grace and Hattie's deep ancestral roots in 1890s Northumbria to the hyper-urban, digital world of modern London she forces the British novel to expand its boundaries.

This disruption isn't just a cultural critique; it's a total reshaping of how we think about narrative space. Evaristo argues that Britain's history can't be honestly told as a neat, single timeline centered around one dominant group. Instead, she maps out a multi-layered world where the margins have always been essential to the national fabric. By putting queer, working-class, immigrant, elderly, and non-binary characters at the center of their own overlapping lives, the book challenges the old Eurocentric claim on universal human experiences. It proves that a Black lesbian theater director in London or a Nigerian house cleaner can anchor a national epic just as well as any traditional literary figure. The boundaries of the British novel expand not because a token voice was invited into the room, but because the walls of that room were torn down to reveal the massive, connected world that was already out there.

The real philosophical power of Girl, Woman, Other is its relentless refusal to see the world in black and white. Modern society loves binaries: insider vs. outsider, straight vs. queer, male vs. female, tradition vs. modernity. These pairs aren't neutral; they are designed to rank one over the other. Evaristo uses her fluid, unpunctuated style to show that these clean splits fail to capture how messy and beautiful real life actually is.

Through this formal fluidity, the novel offers a clear path toward a much more inclusive, adaptable understanding of who we are. It shows that identity isn't a fixed monument; it's a continuous process of becoming.

We see this clearly with Morgan, who transitions from Megan into a non-binary identity. Morgan's story is a direct critique of the rigid gender binaries we take for granted. But instead of treating Morgan's journey as an isolated, ultra-modern exception, the text beautifully connects their digital-age fluidity back to their centenarian grandmother, Hattie, who lives a rural life rooted in old farming traditions. When Hattie and Morgan connect, Evaristo refuses to set up a cliché battle between old-school tradition and progressive youth. Instead, their bond bridges a hundred years of history, showing that both the elderly matriarch and the non-binary young person are part of the exact same continuous line of human survival and adaptation.

This thematic fluidity shows up in the language itself, which constantly operates in a space of "both/and" rather than "either/or." The book shows us that someone can be fiercely proud of their African heritage while being deeply rooted in British culture, or that someone can navigate the cold world of corporate capitalism to escape poverty. By presenting these contradictions without forcing a neat resolution, Evaristo normalizes inner conflict as a core part of being human.

This approach also reshapes how the novel handles political clashes within communities. In the chapters tracking Amma, Yazz, and Dominique, we see the real friction between the radical, second-wave structural feminism of the 1980s and the intersectional, internet-driven fourth-wave feminism of today. A

lesser novel might have picked a side, turning the book into a rigid debate where one generation is right and the other is wrong. Evaristo is much more empathetic. She holds space for both perspectives, treating their friction not as a destructive failure, but as a sign of a living, breathing community. The characters argue, clash over labels, and misunderstand each other, but they remain deeply bound by love, history, and a shared struggle.

The final destination of this journey unfolds in the book's last scene at the National Theatre. This gathering serves as a brilliant microcosm of a utopian public space - a glimpse of what society could look like if we stopped thinking in defensive binaries. As these incredibly different characters share the same room, their differences don't melt away into an artificial, colourblind sameness. Instead, their unique individualities are held in a beautiful, shared balance.

The book ends not with a definitive period, but with an open space, leaving us with the realization that identity is a deeply relational network. We are who we are because of, through, and alongside one another. By replacing the rigid architecture of the traditional novel with this fluid, non-binary tapestry, Evaristo doesn't just give us a new way to read literature; she hands us a blueprint for how to truly see, understand, and value one another in a deeply fractured world.

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