

BLACK WOMEN'S OPPRESSION AND RESISTANCE IN EVARISTO'S *GIRL, WOMAN, OTHER*: A FEMINIST STUDY

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Abstract

*This study provides a reading of Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* in the light of Patricia Hill Collins' framework of the Matrix of Domination to see how the novel generates Black women's discourse. This study aims to analyse the operation of the matrix of domination whereby the complex and interlocking oppression of Black women emerges in every domain of power. This study also attempts to reveal the forms of resistance as depicted throughout the storyline. A qualitative method was applied as the approach of this study, as the data are in the form of words and utterances. The writer collected the data by close-reading and coding the utterances and the narrator's narration. The results of this study showed that the matrix of domination reappears in various forms of complex and interlocking oppression. Moreover, the study reveals the ways and strategies that Black women employ to resist entrenched interlocking oppression and reclaim cultural narratives through various means, including self-definition, educating Black daughters, and voicing Black aspirations and achievements.*

Keywords: *matrix of domination, oppression, resistance, black feminist.*

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas novel *Girl, Woman, Other* karya Bernardine Evaristo dalam kerangka *Matrix of Domination* Patricia Hill Collins untuk melihat bagaimana novel tersebut membangun wacana perempuan kulit hitam. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis operasi *matrix of domination* yang mana penindasan kompleks dan saling terkait terhadap perempuan kulit hitam muncul di setiap ranah kekuasaan. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga berupaya mengungkap bentuk-bentuk perlawanan sebagaimana yang digambarkan sepanjang alur cerita. Pendekatan kualitatif diaplikasikan dalam penelitian karena datanya berupa kata dan tuturan. Peneliti mengumpulkan data melalui metode *close-reading* dan pengkodean tuturan serta narasi pencerita. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa *matrix of domination* kembali muncul dalam berbagai bentuk penindasan yang kompleks dan saling terkait. Selain itu, studi ini juga mengungkapkan cara dan strategi yang digunakan perempuan kulit hitam untuk melawan penindasan terstruktur dan saling terkait dan merebut kembali narasi budaya melalui beberapa cara di antaranya: penentuan makna diri, mendidik anak perempuan kulit hitam, serta menyoroti aspirasi dan prestasi perempuan kulit hitam.

Kata kunci: *matrix of domination*, penindasan, perlawanan, feminist kulit hitam

A. INTRODUCTION

While reviewing university communications, including newsletters, an announcement was identified for an event titled “The Baggs Memorial Happiness Lecture with Bernardine Evaristo.” This lecture held particular significance, as it featured Bernardine Evaristo, the first Black woman and Britain’s first Black author to receive the prestigious Booker Prize. Having been held at the University of Birmingham, the event provided an opportunity to engage with Evaristo’s work and ideas. In preparation for the lecture, her award-winning novel *Girl, Woman, Other* was revisited to develop a deeper understanding of her literary contributions and thematic concerns. The lecture itself focused on the concept of happiness and its role in shaping individuals’ daily lives. During the session, Evaristo reflects on her creative process, acknowledging the challenges and complexities of growing up as a British African (Evaristo 2022). She highlighted that the novel was largely inspired by the lived experiences of Black individuals within her community. A close examination of *Girl, Woman, Other*

demonstrates how these experiences are embedded in the narrative, illustrating the ongoing struggle against societal stereotypes, the resilience necessary for navigating such challenges, and the celebration of self-identity embodied in the diverse characters portrayed throughout the text.

Oppression of Black women has existed for a long time since the enslavement period in Europe (Collins 2000, 47). In recorded history, Black-female slaves suffered more than black-male slaves because they were easy targets of the slave trade, sexually abused, and oppressed due to sexism in the workforce. During the period of slavery, people had to pay more money for a male slave compared to a female slave (Hook 2015, 31). Centering Black women's experiences is significant to give directional projection to the hierarchical power where Black women are often positioned at the bottom of the hierarchy within the work/family. They are not only suffering from oppression due to their race and class, but also because they are women. Their experiences do not simply challenge the notion of work as a public, male domain and a family as a private, women's haven. However, they also suggest a framework for understanding Black women's poverty (Collins 2000, 49).

Collins (2000) argued that black women oppression includes three things: 1) labor exploitation that makes them work hard to earn a living, and sometimes they get paid for free, 2) oppression in politics, distinguishes rights and privileges between black and white women, and 3) oppression by controlling images, such as mammies, jezebels, and breeder women of slavery. Those kinds of oppression are becoming increasingly subtle, as they are often perceived as a system operating within industrial, work-environmental, and political contexts (Aguayo-Romero 2021; Harcourt 2022; Tate 2022). The power structure and social system have long enabled such oppressions to manifest across a wide range of contexts, and most likely overlap and intersect. For example, the depiction of such oppression can be seen through one of the main characters in Evaristo's *Girl, Women, Other*. Yazz has to deal with multiple oppressions due to her racial identity, and being treated badly due to her skin color. She is also oppressed due

to her unsettled financial state, as she races for a job during summer break and has to work hard after graduating to lay the groundwork for the future, because she must be at the top of her game (Evaristo 2019, 72).

The discourse on black women's oppression often references Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality. Crenshaw (1989) wrote her thoughts about the social and political structure that places black women in the most vulnerable of oppressions due to their race, class, gender, and sexual identities. She criticizes that we cannot see one of "women's experience" or "black experiences" because a woman must see it as "black woman experiences" as they intersect with race and gender (Crenshaw 1989, 140). To illustrate, black men have experienced racial oppression but still have gender privilege. Meanwhile, as Black women, their experiences are the same as those of black men due to discrimination based on race, but their experiences are also the same as those of a white woman based on discrimination by sex. In addition, Beale et al. argued (as cited in Hills, 2000:202) that black women experience injustices associated with intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation. Multiple forms of oppression are organized and socially situated (Collins 2002, 48). That is why we cannot see black women separately as one "black" or "woman" because black woman experiences multiple burdens of race, gender, and sexuality (Collins, 2019a; Henderson, 2019; Leath et al. 2023; Roach 2020).

The novel *"Girl, Woman, Other"* by Evaristo has succeeded in raising awareness about the oppression faced by black women, especially in the British context. The writer, Bernardine Evaristo, is the first black woman to win the 2019 Man Booker Prize. The story *Girl, Woman, Other*, is polyphonic literature that has multi-voiced issues. Twelve characters, mostly women, of Black and British descent, intersect with their identities (gender, class, nation, race, age, sexuality). The story begins with the central character, Amma Bonsu, a queer and feminist playwright who directed *The Last Amazon of Dahomey* which will open at the national Gallery. She recalls her early career in theater with Dominique, who is also black and queer. They

separated because Dominique's abusive relationship made her move to America and become a radical feminist. The story was followed by several chapters featuring black characters, including Bummi, Carole, and LaTisha, as well as the stories of mixed or light-skinned individuals: Penelope, Morgan, Hattie, and Grace.

Due to its potentialities, Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* can be approached by Collin's key terms. Collin is best known as a social critic and theorist, adopting and expanding concepts from a wide array of academic scholarship traditions. Her thoughts on Black feminist oppression extend beyond the concept of intersectionality, first coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late twentieth century. She coined the term intersectionality to describe how an individual can experience multiple forms of oppression and discrimination due to their overlapping social identities. However, Collins' key concept opens up space for black feminist thought by offering alternatives in interpreting the experiences of Black women. Instead of focusing on the social structure based on the social identity, such as race, class, gender, and sexuality, (Collins 2019b, 2) argued that black feminist thought at present heavily deals with oppression and privilege operating within the present society.

Among Collin's key concepts is the matrix of domination. This framework is mainly concerned with how power structures interlock and perpetuate multiple and overlapping oppressions based on race, class, gender, nationality, and more. The matrix of domination provides details on how "structural, hegemonic, disciplinary, and interpersonal domains of power reappear across quite different forms of oppressions" (Collins 2000, 47). In her recent article, Collins reinforces that intersectional critical theorising faces challenges in defining how it understands and uses the experience and community as two factors that might shed light on social action as ways of knowing, constituting an important case for studying how subordinated groups empower themselves within contexts of domination (Collins 2019b, 157). This way, Collins signifies that the community is a pivoted domain in which power structures operate and the interlocking oppressions are ingrained.

Previous studies on Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, and Other* highlighted a single category of oppression alone. Rezi, I., Femmy, D., & Mariati, M. (2020) discussed how gender and sexual oppression are portrayed in the novel. Using gender oppression theory, it revealed the oppressions through 1) sexual harassment, 2) sexual abuse/assault, 3) intimate partner abuse or domestic violence. This study also suggested that Black women are more vulnerable to such sexual abuse and oppression. Reading Evaristo's novel, specifically examining the form of the fourth wave of feminism, was done by Strauss (2023). The study highlighted how the narrative presented in the novel laid a foundational framework for post-feminism and the fourth wave of feminism in literary texts. It presented the view of the present transnational feminist movement. Meanwhile, in terms of the theoretical approach, Ghasemi & Heidari (2020) conducted a study on Toni Morrison's *Beloved* in light of Collins' theoretical stance, highlighting how the novel shatters the concept of controlling image as referred to by Collins.

While many important studies on Evaristo's novel focus on a single category of oppression or a specific feminist movement, studies on how the interlocking oppressions and the matrix of domination remain nascent. From a theoretical standpoint, Collins' notion about black women's oppressions through the matrix of domination has not been employed in the reading of Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*. This study attempts to address the gap by presenting an analysis of Black women's oppression in the light of Collins' concept of the matrix of domination. In addition, this study moves away from categorizing oppression to expanding the complexity due to the interlocking system of oppressions and resistance that emerged through the main characters' experiences.

This study is expected to give a reference to Black feminist thought by Patricia Hill-Collins. In particular, it provides a more nuanced reading and interpretation, offering a broader framework of the interlocking system of power that causes the multilayer oppression of black women, as depicted in Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*. The overarching discussions, ranging from the matrix of domination to the complexity of resistance by Black women, are expected to contribute

to Black feminist scholarship in the landscape of critical literary studies.

B. THE INTERLOCKING DOMAINS OF POWER AND THE MATRIX OF OPPRESSION

1. The Domain of Power Appeared in Different Forms of Oppression

Central to Collins' framework of intersectionality is the four dimensions of power structures, each with its own typical form and goal. Rather than considering each domain in a separate box independently, Collin stated that each domain co-constitutes the interlocking system of oppressions to Black women. The data findings reveal that each domain is manifested through the micro-interactions and daily activities of the main characters, as depicted in the novel.

a. Structural domain

The structural domain operates to organize power and oppression. It is the organization of the economic, political, and legal systems that distribute resources and opportunities. Some evidence on how the structural domain operates within the context of Black women's work opportunities can be identified through the experiences of the characters below.

“You can’t work here, they said, when
Clovis asked down at the quay you
can’t eat here, they said when we
entered a little chaff you can’t drink
here, the barman said when we entered
a pub, all eyes on us you can’t sleep
here because your colour will come off
on the sheets, said the woman who had
a sign for lodgings in her window”
(Evaristo 2019, 225)

The quotation from the novel above signifies that the domain of structure impedes Black women from accessing public services and

facilities such as a cafe or pub. It is the structure of the society that is fragmented and categorised by racial privilege, which disables the minority group from getting opportunities in daily social life. The social exclusion and marginalisation can push the black women into further repression (Sharma and Kumar 2022, 843).

The exploration of the selected quotation from the novel reveals another form of structural domain manifested through the social daily life of Black women. One account of how the planned and designed structural domain can be seen from the Black women is that they are getting a low salary, as described through Bummi's mother, who gets a low salary compared to her male fellow worker.

"Until she came home shaking her head,
saying, dat man, im tell me say no free
lunch-o" (Evaristo 2019, 142).

It is the nature of the interlocking domain of power that enables women to be mistreated because of their race, gender, or a combination of both (Collins 2002; Leath et al. 2023; Tate 2022). Nevertheless, at other times, it is more subtle. It is not always easy to unravel the reasons behind a lower salary. However, it is often found that black women always get a low salary or not at all (Collins 2002, 7). Moreover, such a structural domain specifically hinders several characters in the novel from getting a job:

Bummi:
"Especially with her name and nationality
attached to it and that job rejections would
arrive in" (Evaristo 2019, 146).

Olivine:
"Olivine went from being un-castable in
Britain because she was so dark"
(Evaristo 2019, 32).

Dominique and Amma;

“Both were disillusioned at being put up for parts such as a slave, servant, prostitute, nanny or crim and still not getting the job”

(Evaristo 2019, 15)

Evaristo depicts some characters getting jobs based on the concept of the negative stigma of Black women as follow.

“A director whose play featured semi-naked black women running around on stage behaving like idiots”

(Evaristo 2019, 11)

Black women do not have the privilege to choose the area of work or job roles they would like to take. It is one of the impacts of believing that black women are hoochie and uncivilised. Hoochie is a modern term for Jezebel. The label of Jezebel means a sexual animal, never satisfied and always wanting more (Collins 2002, 34). Meanwhile, black women are also seen as not smart because they are uncivilised, which is why they are fit to act stupid. The stereotypes they hold are judgmental, making black women fit to play stupid roles in a scene.

“An audition for a feature film set in a women’s prison (what else?) both were disillusioned at being put up for parts such as a slave, servant, prostitute, nanny or crim” (Evaristo 2019, 15).

From the quotation above, it can be reflected some stereotypes of Black women: 1) Black women, historically, are slave (Hooks, 1982), making black women suitable to play the role of their bitter historical character, 2) Black women are “mammy” which means they work as domestic servants for a white family. That is why they are

suitable to play the role of servant and nanny 3) Black women are hoochie and jezebel. That is why black women always end up with prostitution. 4) Black people are uncivilised; that is why they are always associated with crime.

b. Disciplinary domain

The disciplinary domain is concerned with addressing and mitigating coercion and persecution as sustained efforts to maintain them. It is rules, surveillance, and norms that regulate behaviour in institutions. Normalising misbehaviour to Black women exemplifies how norms can regulate particular attitudes and behaviour in an institution. The experience of being mistreated by her colleagues is depicted as follows:

“Penelope Halifax (Biology, Head of Sixth) who ignores Shirley’s (dwindling) attempts at greeting in the school corridors” (Evaristo 2019, 225).

In addition, her colleague warned Shirley not to use direct verbal language; instead, she coughed while pointing to Shirley to get on with what it was or just shut up.

“She ploughs on, ignoring pointed coughs telling her to get on with it or shut up” (Evaristo 2019, 196)

An institution is a site where the disciplinary domains often operate to oppress black women. Another case can be evident of the disciplinary domain as follows:

“In a country, known for its terrible record on human rights, even though she’d told them she was there to meet a team from their national bank, and presented the documentation to show them, which they

refused to look at even her body was invaded” (Evaristo 2019, 119).

The quotation above reflects a time when Carole started her first career year. She went to the bank for a financial settlement. Instead of checking Carole’s documents, the bank officer harassed her body so terribly that it left her in a state of long-term trauma.

It is not limited to formal institutions in which the disciplinary domain becomes a site of interlocking oppression that often occurs. Family, the very first institution, which is supposedly children-friendly operates such a power of domination, causing oppression for anyone having “unacceptable” and non-binary orientation. The quotation below captures how Bibi (a trans woman) got rejected by her family as she believed that her soul was trapped in a man’s body.

“I was Kicked out, don’t contact us again,
you are sick in the head, you are no longer
our son, and let’s get one thing straight you
will never be our daughter” (Evaristo 2019,
322).

From the exploration of the texts above, it can be inferred that what Collin recalled as interlocking oppressions does exist. The axes of domination do not stand alone; they co-constitute to produce multiple forms of oppression. Black women experience a distinct form of oppression and suffering, which is racist, sexist, and classist, because of their dual racial and gender identity and their limited access to economic resources (Aguayo-Romero 2021, 101). Black women are at risk of sexual victimization and harassment; they experience multiple layers of oppression due to the interlocking system of power. Such disparities can be understood from an intersectional framework that highlights how multiple forms of oppression are interconnected and produce injustice (Flores et al. 2018, 308).

c. Hegemonic Domain

The function of the hegemonic domain is to legitimize and legalize persecution. It is cultural narratives and ideologies that naturalize domination and marginalize others. The cultural narratives are produced in the form of stereotypes and prejudice, justifying Black women in negative social labelling. These stereotypes are perpetuated to maintain the hegemonic power, undermining Black women's personhood and agency. Based on Collins' framework of controlling image, Evaristo's work depicts the perpetuation of cultural narratives imposed on Black women that both justify and naturalize the oppressions. The controlling image functions hegemonically as portrayed through the characters' experiences below.

“Carole would forever be known as the student with the mad African mother”
(Evaristo 2019, 117).

Carole's mother is stereotyped as a mad woman when she came wearing Nigerian clothes to university, attending Carole's graduation. The social identification by giving a negative stereotype to Black women can be understood from the controlling image framework, as Collins referred. The images imposed on them can lead to oppression, reducing complex individuals to one-dimensional determination.

In addition, Carole is called a ghetto in public school because she is black.

“Students refer to her in passing as so ghetto” (Evaristo 2019, 118).

The term ghetto is used by society to describe black people. According to Jacobs (2017, 72) “Black women sometimes called much more demeaning names, such as “ghetto,” “hood rat,” or even “bitch.” Black women are pressured to either conform or resist the controlling image, which both carry social penalties. However, Collins (2022, 36) argued that human experiences and their connection to the social self-differ from the commonsense understandings of individual identity,

whereby an individual remains he or she regardless of the social context in which he or she is located. In this sense, whatever images are imposed on Black women do not clarify the true identity of who they are. Another controlling image can be seen from the experience of the character below:

“Amma was shorter, with African hips and
thighs perfect slave girl material one
director told her” (Evaristo 2019, 15)

Amma's African-American characteristics refer to a slave. This is related to the history of Black ancestors who became slaves. Whites often bring up the bitter history they experienced. Black women are still seen as slaves, which is painful to tell. As Collins's framework of controlling image, it is the cultural narratives that normalizes the labelling and body shaming that produce oppression to Black women.

d. Interpersonal domain

The interpersonal domain strives to manage and organise the communication and perceptions of people. It is in everyday interactions, small aggressions, refusals, and small-scale violence that power is enacted face-to-face (Collins 2002, 54). In Evaristo's *Girl, Women, Other*, it can be reflected how women's black bodies become targets of sexual abuse and harassment as experienced by Carole and LaTisha. Trey, a white man, raped them while they could not escape from Trey's domination.

“Feeling alien body parts on and in parts of
her body that were so private, so gross, she
hadn't even felt them herself it was hurting”
(Evaristo 2019, 113).

“She struggled to move out from under
what felt like a block of concrete, and I

don't want to, not yet, get off me, please,
Trey, she said" (Evaristo 2019, 159).

Both Carole and LaTisha felt terrified and did not want to speak about the terrible cases. It is because, if black women get raped, society believes that it is their fault. As explained in the novel, "Everyone said it was Sheryl's fault for wearing slutty clothes when it happened to her in the same park in Year 8, was it Carole's fault? (Evaristo 2019, 114). From the quotation above, we could sum up that black women are the targets as raped and are likely to be blamed for their sexual assault.

Back in the slavery era, black women were portrayed as sexually aggressive and hypersexual in the eyes of the masses. Slave owners got off free for sexually abusing their slaves. That is why people call them Jezebel. The label of Jezebel means a sexual animal, never satisfied and always wanting more. People still believe the images until now, and they label black women as Jezebels.

As Collins (2002) states, "The Jezebel image reinforces racial oppression by justifying sexual assaults against Black women". She also describes how music, videos, movies, and magazines contributed to portraying the black woman as Jezebel. The effect of stereotypes makes them suffer. It is proven that the law's protection only regulates white female sexuality, but black women are outside the law's protection. As Crenshaw (1989, 159) stated, "This white male power was reinforced by a judicial system in which the successful conviction of a white man for raping a black woman was virtually unthinkable". This case makes black women the right target for the terror of rape.

Another account that also serves the interpersonal domain can be reflected through the main character's experience of being mistreated by her colleagues. Shirley, who works as a teacher, is the only one who has dark skin. In the workspace, she consistently receives unpleasant treatment from her colleagues. Alleyne (2004, 6) stated that there is a nature of workplace oppression. The interlocking nature of oppression makes it clear how power and domination are enacted through the daily lives of the main characters, as depicted in the novel. Shirley's presence is ignored and even avoided due to her being dark and different from

others. Historical records reveal a range of forms of oppression, from the most overt to the most subtle (Ohene-Nyako 2023, 129).

“Tina Lowry (PE), who removes herself whenever Shirley sits next to her” (Evaristo 2019, 196).

Black women also experience lack of support from their surroundings, even though a normally supportive response is expected. Silent avoidance instead serves as an interpersonal domain, potentially producing mental oppression. The quotation below depicts a situation in which Shiley entered the room and joined everyone in the schoolroom.

“A thrilled, hushed, stillness animates the room” (Evaristo 2019, 196).

Shirley also experienced a small amount of aggression from her colleague as depicted in the setting below:

“Roy Stevenson (Physics) who let the door slam in her face three times for her to be sure it really was intentional” (Evaristo 2019, 196).

Black people have lived under the domination of white society, which has led to their discrimination in workplace interactions. This is related to a society that considers racial differences in the stereotype that black women are evil and white women are good. The case of oppression in the workplace echoes Collins’ framework of intersectionality, by which an individual experiences oppression not only due to their racial identity, but also other dimensions such as class, gender, sex and other factors that contribute to the interlocking system of oppression (Collins 2002, 138).

2. Resistance to the Oppressions

Based on the data findings, the main characters in the novel face complexity in their struggle against daily oppressions. The fact that they experience an interlocking system of oppression suggests an intense and self-driven motivation to deal with those uneasy situations. From the plots of the novel, it conveys several key points that go beyond words and intentions. Resistance against the interlocking system of domination and oppression are powerfully embodied through the efforts and actions of its main characters.

a. Self-Definition and self-valuation

Black women are always seen as a negative stereotype as a result of the cultural domination narratives. Black women's negative self-perception shapes their perception of the world and themselves (Blackman Carr and Barlow 2023; Collins 2000; Henderson 2019). Upon resisting the negative attribution imposed on them, self-definition and valuation are ways to reject the cultural narratives that often disadvantage them. Black women created their own standard to value themselves. When Black people succeed in defining themselves, they debunk the stereotypes that are detrimental to them and prove that they are not true. In order to resist the stereotypes imposed on them, several characters in the novel attempt to redefine their identity through the qualities as portrayed:

1) Attractive

Society believes black women's skin tone, hair, and body type are not attractive enough. However, the character of black women rejects and describes those black women as beautiful with their uniqueness.

"You have to ask yourself if you've been
brainwashed by the white beauty ideal,
sister, (Evaristo 2019, 74).

"Yazz reassures her that Somali women are
the most beautiful in the world, and that

includes you too, Waris” (Evaristo 2019, 49).

To resist the negative labelling on them, Black women refuse to follow the white standards of beauty. Defining themselves as black women who are beautiful with their characteristics is not only showing the strength and the pride of their own identity, but also a resistance form, rejecting the single universalizing standard of the whites. “Black is Beautiful,” the slogan initially associated with black activism, permeated black society, having a profound impact on black people’s sense of pride and beauty in broader contexts (Nash 2013). This can instill a sense of pride in black beauty.

“Yazz was allowed to wear exactly what she liked” (Evaristo 2019, 39).

Defining their standard of beauty signifies resistance to the long-standing beauty narratives across a racist society. It carries a profound message that Black women should be proud of who they truly are. They no longer want to care about how they look from other people’s point of view. The term “black women’s self-expression normally appears in public spaces as “mad about something.” They rejected and moved away from such controlling images. They do not care if they use silver hoop earrings, chunky African bangles, and pink lipstick, whether wearing Nigerian outfits, they categorically reject the controlling images and believe that it is their freedom and their uniqueness.

2) Intelligent

Black women are always associated with someone who is not educated. They reject this and prove that many black women also have intelligence as portrayed:

“She went on a mission to educate herself in black history, culture, politics, feminism,

and discovered London's alternative bookshops" (Evaristo 2019, 16).

"Her morning mantra in the bathroom mirror I am highly presentable, likeable, clubbable, relatable, promotable and successful" (Evaristo 2019, 124).

This is a form of resistance to controlling images; black women are not capable of. They are refusing the identity that the dominant culture assigned to them.

3) Proud of Being Black

In the form of self-love, of course, black women must be proud of themselves and reject all forms of oppression directed at them. When that happens, black women will not be consumed by the ideal of white, which is impossible for them to achieve. The pride of being black is also shown by Bummi and Carole as shown:

"My point is that you are a Nigerian no matter how high and mighty you think you are no matter how English your future husband no matter how English you yourself pretend to be" (Evaristo 2019, 139).

4) Rejecting Discourse Black Are Bad

As a form of self-definition as black people, Nzinga firmly rejects the discourse that black people are always a metaphor for all that is bad. Meanwhile, white becomes a metaphor for all things good. As shown:

"Nzinga—of not wearing black socks (why would you step on your own people?), and don't ever use black garbage bags, she instructed, as for blackmail, blackball, black mood, black magic, black sheep,

black-hearted, I never wear black
underpants, for example, why crap on
myself?” (Evaristo 2019, 77).

Meier (2004, 861) stated that the brightness (lightness vs. darkness) of a stimulus word should produce facilitation of interference depending on the valence (good vs. bad) of the word in question. Many people have believed that all pretty objects, good behaviour, and kind people are white because white people have positive images. In contrast, black is not always associated with being bad and harmful. People easily judge something related to colour because colour evokes a metaphor. The fact that it is challenging for black women to navigate the controlling image, racial stereotype, beauty standard, and contributing effects that influence Black women getting along in a society (Williams et al. 2024, 864).

b. Educating Daughters to be Independent, Smart, and Resilient

Amma, the Director of Theater, has a girl named Yazz. As a mother, Amma understands that it is not easy to live as a black woman. She understands that she is the one who must mold her child in the pattern of thought and behavior before others destroy her. For this reason, her children get freedom, letting her decide how to dress. Amma taught her to ignore what other people say as long as it is about negative stereotypes. Amma tries to raise a child to like herself and have positive feelings.

“Amma wanted her daughter to be free,
feminist and powerful later she took her on
personal development courses for children
to give her the confidence and articulacy to
flourish in any setting big mistake”
(Evaristo 2019, 40).

Educating daughters as a form of resistance to oppression can also be seen from Bummi, who educates her daughter Carole to be

prosperous and competent. Society believes that black women do not have a proper education and are not smart. With Black girls, the task is to assist them in building a strong sense of self that defies the stereotypes and messages that they are ugly, worthless, and inconsequential. It enables them to fortify themselves against a racist and sexist society.

“Clever Mama, who taught her to send X
and Y off into complicated calculations”
(Evaristo 2019, 109).

In addition, Bummi, as a black mother, teaches her daughter how to handle the daily assaults of racism. This needs to change in their mindset so that they can better ignore the ridicule. Bummi teaches that they should not feel attacked immediately.

“Don't assume people don't like you
because of your race, Shirl, maybe they're
having a rough day or they're bad tempered
people” (Evaristo 2019, 195).

Black women have always been a target of sexual assault. Hence, Black women's mothers understand that they must have self-defence against the target of crime. Young women of colour were taught ways to armour and protect themselves against racism at an early age. This is exemplified in the character of Waris' mother, who trains her daughter to protect herself. As shown:

“Waris herself learned mixed martial arts
alongside her mother” (Evaristo 2019, 57).

Women, a group who are at risk of oppression, often become victims of multiple domains of power. It is a patriarchal society system, putting women as subordinate to men. It is the male gaze, objectifying women's bodies as they are referred to as to-be-looked-

at-ness (Febrianto and Udasmoro 2024). It is the white male domination, making black women more vulnerable to such complex oppression. Therefore, preparing daughters with sufficient self-defence skills has been pivotal for them, resisting any potential harassment and sexual abuse.

c. Voicing their aspiration and debunking stereotypes

Culture and society can be a potential arena of resistance, opening space not only for the enactment of domination but also for the resistance to act. Living with the complex struggles of navigating the interlocking systems of power and oppression, Black women are depicted as creatively creating counter-narratives through cultural performance. This is like what Amma does by participating in the theatre and by writing stories about black women knights, as explained:

“They would be a voice in theatre where there was silence black and Asian women’s stories would get out there they would create theatre on their own terms it became the company’s motto On Our Own Terms or Not At All.” (Evaristo 2019, 21).

In addition to arts and performance, the form of resistance can be reflected through the significant involvement in education as illustrated by Shirley. She takes a role as a teacher not only to focus on herself and her career. It is her dedication to fight for negativity around educational issues and to racial uplift. This way, she manages to take her role as educator seriously, as proclaimed:

“She isn’t going to be a good teacher but a great one who’ll be remembered by generations of working-class children as the person who made them feel capable of achieving anything in life a local girl made

good, come back to generously pass on”
(Evaristo 2019, 189).

Reflecting upon the history of the slavery era and powerlessness, black people don't have easy access to education. At the end of slavery, black people realised that they must take action to contribute to activism, especially in education. They support education as teachers or educators to encourage people to become educated, changing the condition of the people. William (2024, 869) stated women and men alike were believed to have “important roles to play in building black communities. It proves that black people contributed to changing the conditions of the people.

Black women are known to have difficulty getting a position in the bank (Collins 2000, 45). However, they are still trying to get that position. Carole, during her initial career stage, with all determination and persistence, broke the stereotype that black women are incapable of doing professional jobs when finally, she got the dream position as shown:

“She recently became a Vice President, one
of several hundred in this bank” (Evaristo
2019, 111).

Through Carole's aspiration and strong will, she can forge a path for other Black women, enabling women of colour to pursue higher education and speak their voice through achievements. As a result, they can secure a respectable position within an institution, breaking the entrenched stereotypes that often undermine their personhood's qualities.

C. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that Collins' matrix of domination is not a distant abstraction concept. However, it is deeply embedded in the fabric of daily life, generating complex, interlocking oppressions of Black women. Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* unpacks a lived reality of

intricate interactions that shape the lives of British Black women. Through the narratives and the characters, the novel renders how the matrix of domination operates through micro-interaction in the workplace, family, education, and social settings, targeting Black women based on intersecting identities. Evaristo's novel moves beyond simply mapping oppression. She tries to center resistance as an integral, dynamic force within the matrix itself. Through the characters' acts, Evaristo showcases a range of strategies, including art performance, reclaiming narratives, economic savvy, and sexual autonomy, for navigating the complex interlocking oppressions. This analysis thereby contributes to the nuanced critical literary exploration that both validates the theoretical model of intersecting oppression and enriches it by foregrounding the complex forms of resistance that constitute Black women's resilience and self-determination.

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