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DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

Racism in Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*
Rasismus v knize Bernardine Evaristové *Dívka, žena, jiné*

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ABSTRAKT

Kniha Bernardine Evaristové *Dívka, žena, jiné* sleduje příběhy dvanácti Britek napříč 20. a 21. stoletím. Tato diplomová práce analyzuje vyobrazení britského rasismu v uvedené knize, jeho různým podobám a vlivu na identitu a život jedince. První část poskytuje teoretický rámec zaměřený na koncept rasy, rasismus a jeho formy, postkoloniální pojmy jako je jinakost, liminalita a hybridita. Dále pojednává o historickém kontextu knihy a Bernardine Evaristové a jejím postoji ke své knize. Druhá část se zabývá analýzou konkrétních případů rasismu. Zaměřuje se na krizi identity britských občanů jiné barvy pleti způsobenou pocitů nepřináležitosti, tlakem společnosti, střetem kultur, internalizací rasismu a africkým dědictvím. Dále se věnuje rasismu v mezilidských vztazích, který se projevuje v rasových stereotypch a předpojatých komentářích. Práce pokračuje analýzou komplexnosti útisku a privilegií a pojednává o způsobu, jakým se rasismus prolíná se sexismem a třídní diskriminací. V neposlední řadě pohlíží na institucionální rasismus, se zaměřením na absenci antidiskriminačních zákonů v poválečné Británii, nerovnost v systému vzdělávání, zneužití moci policíí a škatulkování herců jiné barvy pleti.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

rasismus, *Dívka, žena, jiné*, postkolonialismus, intersekcionalita, krize identity, ženy jiné barvy pleti, jinakost

ABSTRACT

Bernardine Evaristo's book *Girl, Woman, Other* follows stories of twelve mainly British women throughout the 20th and the 21st centuries. This diploma thesis explores Evaristo's portrayal of British racism in this novel, its various forms and influence on identity and life experience. The first part provides a theoretical background, which presents on the notion of race, racism and its different types, postcolonial concepts of otherness, liminality and hybridity, novel's historical context, and Bernardine Evaristo and her approach to *Girl, Woman, Other*. The second part analyses the particular instances of race oppression. It explores the identity struggles of Black British citizens caused by feeling of non-belonging, pressure of society, clash of cultures, internalization of racism, and African heritage. Next, it deals with interpersonal racism reflected in racially biased stereotyping and prejudiced comments. The analysis further addresses the complexity of oppression and privilege and discusses how racism intersects with sexism and classism. Last, it looks into institutional racism, such as lack of anti-discriminatory laws in post-World War II Britain, inequality in education, abuse of power by police, and typecasting of Black actors in theatre.

KEYWORDS

racism, *Girl, Woman, Other*, postcolonialism, intersectionality, identity struggles, women of colour, otherness

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Introduction

Girl, Woman, Other is a multinarrative novel written by a British-Nigerian writer and activist, Bernardine Evaristo. It represents a contemporary Britain as well as its past through the storytelling of twelve interconnected British characters across the 20th and 21st centuries. Although the protagonists are very different – they differ in their origins, careers, racial identity, sexuality, or social status, they all struggle with their identities and society's oppression. The primary aim of the thesis is to explore Evaristo's portrayal of racism in Britain, its different forms, and racial identity crisis of her characters.

The diploma thesis will consist of two main parts – theoretical and practical. The first part will be divided into six chapters that will present the necessary theoretical background for the analysis. It will start with discussing the concept of race, defining racism and its various forms, introducing relevant concepts of postcolonial studies, explaining intersectionality, providing novel's historical context, and presenting the novel's author Bernardine Evaristo and her approach to racism and *Girl, Woman, Other*.

The second part will analyse racism portrayed by Evaristo in her novel, with the particular focus on Britain. It will be structured by the book's themes concerned with race and race oppression and the analysis will be divided into five chapters. The first chapter will outline the aims of the analysis and present the analysed material – *Girl, Woman, Other*. The following chapters will be concerned with identity struggles, interpersonal racism, intersectionality of oppression, and institutional racism, and will provide an overview of various realizations of race oppression. The thesis will end with conclusion of the analysis and proposition for further research.

Vast majority of literary sources as well as Evaristo herself uses the terms like 'Blacks', 'Black people', 'Black women' etc. The politically correct term 'people of colour' (or 'coloured people') is rather vague and its understanding sometimes varies among different countries and communities – for instance, it can mean mixed-race people, or any non-white people. For these reasons, this thesis will mainly use the terminology used in literature – i.e. 'Black people', 'Black community' etc.

Theoretical part

1 The concept of race

While focusing on the concept of racism, we must first direct our attention to the notion of race itself. Numerous research has been carried out to establish the correct understanding of the conceptualization of race and determine the variables used to specify the affiliation with given races. The following chapter will investigate what the term race means, as well as its establishment and the reasons behind it.

1.1 The understanding of race

The most common and encountered understanding of race among the general public is based on physical characteristics, such as the colour of the skin, eye shape, or hair type. However, multiple studies showed that this perception is not accurate. Peter Wade et al. maintain that people's beliefs of what race is vary not only based on their geographical region, cultural and social context but also in time. They claim that race does not have a distinct established definition and, in fact, it "has never in the history of its use had a precise meaning" (Wade et al.). The authors also further mention different ways of racial categorization. For instance, based on the continent the population is inhabiting (e.g. "the African race" or "the Asian race"), the linguistic affiliation (e.g. "the Arab race" or "the Latin race"), or religion (e.g. "the Jewish race") (Wade et al.).

Wade et al. emphasize that although the notions of ethnicity and race have some similarities and are often used interchangeably, they are not synonymous. They assert that features of ethnicity are dependent on culture and that ethnicity "refers to a sense of identity and membership in a group that shares common language, cultural traits (values, beliefs, religion, food habits, customs, etc.), and a sense of a common history" (Wade et al.). Therefore, while race is typically associated with physical characteristics, ethnicity tends to encompass more abstract features, such as culture or language. Also, Michael Banton highlights the importance of differentiating between the terms ethnicity and race. According to Banton, "race refers to the categorization of people, while ethnicity has to do with group

identification” (qtd. in Eriksen 47). In other words, ethnic identification is looking inwards – at us, whereas racial is looking outwards – at others.

Michael J. Bamshad and Steve E. Olson look at the general perception of race and examine this typical perception from a biological standpoint. The scholars consider the common factors used to divide humans into individual races, such as physical traits, geographical origin, and shared culture, and investigate their validity from the genetic point of view (80). In their research, the scholars highlight a few issues with how people organize their belonging into particular races. One of them is the vagueness in the definition and the discrepancy in understandings of race in different regions. As an example, Bamshad and Olson mention different recognition of skin colour in individual countries – “someone classified as “black” in the U.S., for instance, might be considered “white” in Brazil and “colored” (a category distinguished from both “black” and “white”) in South Africa” (80). This suggests that the perception of race is relative and differs across cultures and countries.

Another concern is that, even though genetic information can be used to assign people to individual groups, the issue is far more complex as “you might fit into one group based on your skin-color genes but another based on a different characteristic” (Bamshad and Olson 80). Therefore, the most commonly used factor to describe race – physical appearance – is not entirely reliable when considering genetic data because of the complexity and diversity of humans. However, Bamshad and Olson argue that ancestral geographic origin can be used in the genetic research of population and consequently distinguishing particular groups (80).

Giselle Corbie-Smith et al. explore how various investigators regard race and how it is reflected in their work (predominantly in the healthcare and medical field). The understanding of ‘race’ of the interviewed investigators differed and was considered from three viewpoints – as biological, social, or both biological and social constructs. Each investigator supported their standpoint with relevant literature. The results showed that there is not a united opinion of race. One group of investigators perceive race as exclusively biological, another as purely social construct influenced by environment and society, and the last group see race as a complementary combination of both biological and social concepts (Corbie-Smith et al. 1239-1240).

1.2 Origins of the concept of race

Charles Hirschman focuses his study on the origins of the concept of race, the recognition of race throughout time and its demise. Hirschman's study proposes two significant race-making institutions. The first mentioned is the transatlantic slave trade, which was the result of worldwide capitalism tendencies. Hirschman adopts a perspective from Edgar T. Thompson, which acknowledges that the concept of plantation, to which Africans were sold to the New World, was a race-making institution. As Thompson maintains:

The idea of race is a situational imperative; if it was not there to begin with, it tends to develop in a plantation society because it is a useful, maybe even necessary, principle of control. In Virginia, the plantation took two peoples originally differentiated as Christian and heathen, and before the century was over it had made two races. (qtd. in Hirschman 394)

Additionally, Hirschman explains that the hierarchy prevailing on the plantations between the white plantation owners and African slaves, combined with the apparent differences in physical and cultural traits, further strengthened the extreme racial segregation and disregard of human rights of Africans. The process of dehumanization also supported the financial exploitation of the Black slaves. (Hirschman 394-395)

The second race-making institution introduced by Hirschman is European imperialism. The author comments on the conquests led by the European powers, such as the Spanish, Portuguese, French or British, and how they resulted in depopulation and enslavement of the native population and exploitation of the land's natural resources – first in America, and later in Asia and Africa (395). In the Victorian Era, Europeans had an established domineering position over the colonized Asian and African territories and were able to create a rigid hierarchy with regard to power, class, status, and “because these divisions coincided with differences in color and other physical attributes between whites and the peoples of Asia and Africa, racism provided a powerful legitimation of imperialism” (Hirschman 395). Therefore, race served as a tool to differentiate Europeans from foreigners and to dominate and exploit their lands.

1.3 The purpose of racial categorization

The previous text has already discussed that the racial categorization of the human population has no valid definition and substantiation regarding the fields of biology or genetics. Looking at the social and historical context mentioned in the text above, we can deduce that the segregation of human beings into different races was based on artificially created assumptions to manipulate and push forward a convenient agenda.

Apart from the already mentioned examples, Wade et al. refer to the racist policy of apartheid in South Africa, in which race was a practical factor used to segregate the population and rationalize the inequality present in the society. In other words, race was used to adopt the ‘divide-and-conquer strategy’ and to control the large population. David B. Davis points out that racial segregation was meant to ignore peoples’ shared characteristics and their similarities, highlight the differences between certain groups, and consequently alienate those groups by creating the sense of ‘otherness’ – being different and not belonging to mainstream society (7). The concepts of the Other or otherness will be discussed further in the thesis.

2 Racism and features of racist ideology

In the simplest and most common way, racism can be defined as “a belief that humans can be divided into a hierarchy of power on the basis of their differences in race and ethnicity. With some groups seen as superior to others on the sole basis of their racial or ethnic characteristics” (Frideres). Moreover, race oppression can be realised in various forms – by an individual, group of people, or even organisations. The following chapter will further examine the understanding of racism and the roots of its ideology and explore the various forms of racism.

2.1 Defining racism

Race plays a central role in the racist ideology and, as implied in the previous chapter, racist thinking is what caused the differentiation of human races and subsequent racial segregation. Therefore, race originated in racism and was established on the desire to dominate and colonize another group of people (Ashcroft et al. *Post-colonial studies* 181). Ashcroft et al. propose defining racism as “a way of thinking that considers a group’s unchangeable physical characteristics to be linked in a direct, causal way to psychological or intellectual characteristics, and which on this basis distinguishes between ‘superior’ and ‘inferior’ racial groups” (*Post-colonial studies* 181). This definition portrays the harmful nature of racist ideology, which is based on both physical and intellectual stereotyping of groups of people.

Multiple researchers agree that the concept of race is a crucial factor or marker in racist practices. However, as Grosfoguel points out, a phenotype, or more precisely a skin colour, is not the only factor triggering racism and the different versions of racism are determined by the geographical environment and the culture of a given society. He distinguishes five elementary racial markers which are not mutually exclusive – “racism can be marked by color, ethnicity, language, culture and/or religion” (Grosfoguel 10). For example, one can experience colour racism, religious racism, or a combination of both.

Hirschman suggests that racism is based on the hierarchical relationship between different groups of people and that it “is a structure of belief that the “other community” is inherently inferior and lacks the capacity to create a society comparable to one’s own” (389). This concept of ‘other’ can be meant in connection to language, skin colour or other

marker(s). Racist ideology sees otherness as a “part of the inherent character of different groups” (Hirschman 389). Various researchers accept the premise that the foundation of racism lies in establishing otherness.

Eickelpasch and Rademacher also acknowledge the process of othering as an essential tool used to implement racist ideology. They believe:

that any form of racism consists of at least two elements: knowledge and practices of exclusion. Only the ensemble of specific forms of knowledge and of specific practices of exclusion ensures the construction of Otherness which characterises all versions of racism, the Othering. (qtd. in Thomas-Olalde and Velho 37)

Basically, the knowledge represents how one group of people views the ‘other’ one, their biased assumptions and stereotypes, and the practices of exclusion indicate how the ‘other’ group is treated and the discriminatory behaviour they face.

2.2 Social Darwinism as rationalization of racist colonialist practices

As Ashcroft et al. maintain, being different or ‘other’ did not always equal being worse or something less. People with dissimilar physical appearances and cultures used to be treated without bias or prejudice and not as inferior human beings. However, Ashcroft et al. point out that “with the rise of European imperialism and the growth of Orientalism in the nineteenth century, the need to establish such a distinction between superior and inferior finds its most ‘scientific’ confirmation in the dubious analysis and taxonomy of racial characteristics” (*Post-colonial studies* 181).

Throughout the nineteenth century, Charles Darwin conducted his research, which Ashcroft et al. perceive as an important factor in keeping the imperialist superior thinking alive. Darwin’s work included studies such as ‘On the Origin of Species’ or ‘The Descent of Man’ and introduced, for example, the theory of ‘evolution’ or ‘natural selection’ (Desmond). It was based on the principle of competition in nature and the survival of the strongest. Darwinian theory provided the necessary tool to strengthen European imperialism, rationalize the hierarchical structures and racial differentiation in the society, and scientifically justify the discriminatory treatment of races regarded as ‘inferior’, despite Darwin’s work being considered controversial at that time (Hirschman 393).

Even though Charles Darwin himself was not directly engaged in formulating Social Darwinism, his study of evolution provided the theoretical framework subsequently used by the proponents of racial ideology – “Darwin had not intended his theories to be extended by analogy into the examination of racial groups, societies or nations” (McKillop). Social Darwinists used Darwin’s theories and implemented them into sociology and politics to strengthen the beliefs of white supremacy and colonialism. Social Darwinists included Walter Bagehot, William Graham Sumner, and one of its most prominent advocates – English scientist and philosopher Herbert Spencer, who introduced the phrase “survival of the fittest” as a rule of living in human society (“social Darwinism”). They saw different societies interacting in a way in which “the weak were diminished and their cultures delimited while the strong grew in power and cultural influence over the weak” (“social Darwinism”). In other words, they considered societies to work in a similar manner as organisms – the white European society being considered as more civilized, evolved and superior and, therefore, earning the right to influence, dominate and control the weaker and primitive Black population.

Furthermore, Ashcroft et al. point out that the Social Darwinist theories agreed with what he calls the “paradoxical dualism” of imperialist thinking – “between the *debasement* and the *idealization* of colonized subjects” (*Post-colonial studies* 183). Essentially, the paradox was that while the dominating ‘superior’ society felt the need and right to colonize and devalue the culture of the ‘inferior’ race, they also claimed the responsibility of the ‘white saviour’ role whose obligation was to civilize and educate the primitive and savage ‘lower’ race. Charles Hirshman calls Social Darwinism the “pseudo-scientific theory of European superiority” and he claims that it is one of the three transformations that divided European people from ‘other’ nations and, therefore, gave rise to the racist ideologies – the other two being the transatlantic slave trade and the exploitation of slaves on the New World’s plantations, and the expansion of European colonialism in the nineteenth century (392).

2.3 Forms of racism

As the chapter already established, racism is a system of beliefs that include the conviction that not all human beings are equal, primarily based on their differing physical appearance

and culture, and that the ‘superior’ group, i.e. the European white society, has the ingrained right to dominate and colonize the ‘inferior’ non-white communities. Based on how those racial oppressions are implemented in practice, we can distinguish different types of racism. For instance, whether racial discrimination is inculcated in the political system and thus is happening on the level of various institutions or whether the racial bias and oppression are on the personal level. The remaining part of this chapter will discuss and characterize the different forms of racism.

Some researchers use the concept of institutional racism synonymously with systemic racism or structural racism, whereas others use institutional racism as an umbrella term incorporating the notions of systemic and structural racism. Regardless of the different usage of the term, institutional racism refers to inequalities in treatment and racial oppressions that are occurring within social institutions – such as political, educational, or judicial (“institutional racism”).

Shirley Better describes institutional racism by comparing it to individual racism. The main difference is that, in individual racism, racial stereotyping and prejudice relate to the personal attitude of an individual, while institutional racism involves racial discrimination and inequality in institutions such as schools, hospitals, businesses, city councils, etc. (11, 13) According to Better, “institutional racism denotes those patterns, procedures, practices, and policies that operate within social institutions so as to consistently penalize, disadvantage, and exploit individuals who are members of nonwhite racial/ethnic groups” (11). As the most common practices of the institutional racism Better mentions “neglect”, “discrimination”, “isolation”, “segregation”, “exclusion”, “exploitation”, “physical attacks”, or “genocide” (12). Most probably, the major reasonings behind the institutional racial oppression are the idea of reinforcement of the white privilege in a society and the intention of economic exploitation of the non-white population (Better 11).

An example of institutionalized racist policies is the system of Apartheid in South Africa in the twentieth century. Apartheid policies mainly included segregation based on skin colour and manipulation and exploitation of the Black population (Noah 19-20). For instance, the Apartheid laws encompassed the prohibition of interracial sexual relationships. However, the unequal treatment of different races was visible even in the way how people

involved in those relationships were prosecuted – a white man sleeping with a Black woman received just a warning, but in a reverse situation, Black men were mostly accused of rape (Noah 21-22).

Another form of race oppression is interpersonal racism, which is concerned with discriminatory behaviour on a personal level, and even though its purpose and practices are different and realized on a smaller scale than institutional discrimination, the effects on the victim are not any less harmful (Rucker and Richeson 14). Julian M. Rucker and Jennifer A. Richeson define interpersonal racism as “holding negative attitudes toward members of different racial and/or ethnic groups” that can be caused by either intentional or unintentional racial prejudices of an individual (14).

Interpersonal racism is connected to the already mentioned individual racism. Elizabeth Brondolo et al. describe interpersonal racism as “a component of individual-level racism” that is concerned with the racist behaviour occurring in interpersonal relations, regardless of the context (367). In other words, interpersonal racism can be understood as practices of individual racism implemented in people’s interactions. The practices of individual racism include “negative verbalizations”, “use of pejorative name-calling”, or “hostile actions” (Better 12). Furthermore, Brondolo et al. acknowledge that interpersonal racism can manifest in two ways – explicit (in which an individual is direct in their oppressive behaviour and may even mention one’s race as the reason for the hostility) or implicit (which is more subtle and may, for example, concern distancing and ignoring) (367).

The third form is internalized racism, which happens on the intrapersonal level or within the discriminated group and may be characterized as “the acceptance of negative stereotypes about one’s own racial group” (Willis et al. 384). As Brondolo et al. point out, the acceptance of those stereotypes may be a conscious but also an unconscious process (370). However, the acceptance of negative stereotypes about the race one belongs to is not the only manifestation of internalized racism. Another example is “a rejection of the cultural practices of one’s own ethnic or racial group” (Brondolo et al. 370). For example, renouncing one’s language or traditions and accepting the culture of the dominating race. Further, Brondolo et al. suggest that from the data and research available, a possible reason for

internalizing negative beliefs about one's own race may be interactions with people of a different race and a desire to establish and maintain good rapport with them (372).

3 The key concepts of postcolonial studies

As Ashcroft et al. establish, postcolonialism essentially “deals with the effects of colonization on culture and society” (*Post-colonial studies* 168). However, they also highlight that its original and elementary range of focus expanded over time and, nowadays, it includes disciplines such as politics, economy, history, or sociology (Ashcroft et al. *Post-colonial studies* 169). In other words, postcolonialism is concerned with the aftermath of European imperialism, mainly involving cultural but also political and economic struggles and their impact on society.

The following chapter will focus on two fundamental concepts of postcolonial studies – the notions of otherness and liminality. The first part will deal with the construct of the postcolonial Other and its origins, and the second part will concentrate on the concept of liminality and its relation to identity struggles.

3.1 The Other, otherness, and the process of othering

Jean-François Staszak defines othering as “transforming a difference into otherness so as to create an in-group and an out-group” (25). He explains the in-group as ‘us’ (or the Self), which is characterised by the sense of belonging, and the out-group as ‘them’ (or the Other), which stands in opposition with the in-group and, therefore, indicates the non-belonging (Staszak 25). Therefore, to further investigate the process of othering, we first must explain these two groups and examine the relationship between the Self and the Other.

In his work *Of Other Spaces*, Michel Foucault suggests that throughout history, the space we are living in is based on oppositions and it is rather heterogenous, and therefore, there are always spaces within it juxtaposed to one another – for example, sacred and profane, private and public, or cultural and useful spaces (Foucault and Miskowiec 22-23). Foucault calls the other spaces heterotopias, which are in some way different, and even suggests the possibility that the organization of colonies may have been based on similar principles (27). It is believed that Foucault’s research indirectly influenced postcolonial studies and was instrumental in the work of other scholars who dealt with the notion of otherness, even though he did not directly invent or explore the construct of the Other. Charles Villet proposes that colonies are heterotopias of the colonizing country – they are

opposed to the colonizers' superiority, power, and culture through othering and dehumanizing processes, which serve as a justification of the colonial discriminatory practices. The sense of otherness persists even after colonies achieve independence, influencing their culture and sense of identity (Villet 13).

As already mentioned in the previous text, the Other is an expression used to signify a person or a group of people that do not belong to the 'typical' and 'normal' community. The Other can be also described as 'them' or the 'out-group', and these terms already suggest the distance present between the Other and the 'typical' – the Self. The Self is correspondingly called 'us' or the 'in-group' that fits the 'normal' standards (Staszak 25).

While discussing the issue, Oscar Thomas-Olalde and Astride Velho attribute the Other the quality of otherness, which basically means being different from a norm (36). Moreover, they emphasize the need for otherness to remain undetermined in order to be effective as it creates a possibility "to make use of the discursively produced difference as a dispositive" (Thomas-Olalde and Velho 37). Likewise, Staszak claims that the out-group is defined by the otherness when being compared to the in-group, but, in addition to that, he also highlights the absence of its own identity as being crucial aspect in characterizing the out-group and describes this lack of identity as being "based upon stereotypes that are obviously simplistic and largely stigmatizing" (25). On the other hand, Staszak explains that the in-group creates its own identity by distinctly alienating itself from those characterized as the Other, and consequently creating one or even more out-groups (25).

Concerning the relationship between the Self and the Other, Staszak describes it as being asymmetrical and interdependent. The asymmetrical relation is evident in the power distribution between these two groups, in which the in-group is the dominant party and the out-group is the dominated and potentially discriminated one – "only the dominant group is in a position to impose the value of its particularity (its identity) and to devalue the particularity of others (their otherness) while imposing corresponding discriminatory measures" (Staszak 25). The other aspect of their relationship is their mutual dependency. According to Staszak, the out-group's otherness and the in-group's identity "are two inseparable sides of the same coin" (25). In other words, the Other's existence is determined

by the otherness in relation to the Self, and the Self's identity is based on differentiating itself from the Other.

Additionally, the relationship between the Self and the Other can be characterized as a somewhat paradoxical one as "in order to maintain authority over the Other in a colonial situation, imperial discourse strives to delineate the Other as radically different from the self, yet at the same time it must maintain sufficient identity with the Other to valorize control over it" (Ashcroft et al. *The empire writes back* 102). In other words, the construct of the Other is based on the idea of the Self – for example, on one's own beliefs, culture, or experience, and therefore the Other and Self share a certain amount of similarities. But simultaneously, the Other is marked as fundamentally different from the Self.

Charles Mills discusses the identity and relationship of the Self and the Other in their connection to skin colour and observes that "whiteness is defined in part in respect to an oppositional darkness, so that white self-conceptions of identity, personhood, and self-respect are then intimately tied up with the repudiation of the Black Other" (58-59). Mills further analyses how the association with a particular race plays a dominant role in affirming one's identity. As an example, he mentions the aspect of poverty and explains that "no matter how poor one was, one was still able to affirm the whiteness that distinguished one from the subpersons on the other side of the color line" (Mills 59). In other words, as long as one is able to assure their belonging to the white in-group, the economic position is not that significant, and they are still able to claim their superior racial status.

Most simply, othering can be defined as a process which establishes the sense of the Other – "making difference" and "transforming a difference into otherness so as to create an in-group and an out-group" (Dervin 187; Staszak 25). Staszak acknowledges the formulation of difference and its following stigmatization as a fundamental principle of the process of othering (25). He also points out that the said difference does not necessarily need to be based on reality; its primary aim is to reject and cancel the identity of the Other (25). Nevertheless, the difference is only relevant as it is between the in-group and the out-group – therefore, in othering "the difference among the members of each group is underestimated, when the difference between the members of one group and the other is overestimated"

(Staszak 25). By this principle, othering creates the hierarchical relationship between the dominant in-group (the Self) and the dominated out-group (the Other) (Staszak 25).

Fred Dervin's framework inspects othering as closely related to the concept of stereotypes and introduces two types of stereotypes – "autostereotypes, which are linked to people's in-group; and heterostereotypes, which are related to an out-group ('the Other')" (Dervin 186). Dervin further conveys that stereotypes are constructed by generalization and oversimplification and serve as tools to hierarchize and differentiate groups of people (186).

From all the information mentioned, one may conclude that the primary focus of othering is the Other and disclosing its otherness. And even though the Other is a crucial element in othering, the Self is equally important. Othering allows the Self to establish its own identity by differentiating from the Other (Dervin 187). Hence, stereotyping and othering not only alienates and separates the out-group but also secures the superior position of the in-group. Therefore, within the postcolonial framework, othering can be defined as "a process in which, through discursive practices, different subjects are formed, hegemonic subjects – that is, subjects in powerful social positions as well as those subjugated to these powerful conditions" (Thomas-Olalde and Velho 27). The process of othering is fundamental when discussing (post-)colonialism and crucial for the understanding of racist thinking.

Although Edward Said does not mention nor refer to the otherness or the Other, his concept of Orientalism is closely related to othering and based on similar principles. Said briefly defines Orientalism as "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (3). According to Said, Orientalism divides the world into the Orient (the East) and the Occident (the West) and emphasizes the gap between the familiarity of the Occidental West and the foreignness of the Oriental East (43). Moreover, Said points out that Orientalism possibly indicates the West as the strong one and the Orient as weak and that these characteristics of strength and weakness "are as intrinsic to Orientalism as they are to any view that divides the world into large general divisions, entities that coexist in a state of tension produced by what is believed to be radical difference" (45). This division and distribution of power is supposed to rationalize and justify the control and domination of the Western culture.

Staszak draws a parallel between the notions of Self and Other and Said's concepts of Occident and Orient. He identifies the West as the powerful and dominant group which constructs the otherness of the East and establishes its own identity by putting itself in opposition to the barbaric and savage behaviour of the East – by this, “the West (...) gains the right, if not the duty, to dominate the Orient, to save it from despotism, superstition, misery, vice, slavery, decadence” (Staszak 28). In addition, Ashcroft et al. uphold that “the significance of Orientalism is that as a mode of *knowing* the other it was a supreme example of the *construction* of the other, a form of authority” (*Post-colonial studies* 153). This essentially indicates that the Oriental image is not static but was created over time by Occidental stereotyping and that the East and West's relationship is asymmetrical in terms of power.

3.2 Liminality, hybridity, and its relation to identity

As Ashcroft et al. comment, the term ‘liminality’ originated from the Latin word ‘liminal’ which can be translated as a sill of threshold. The liminality or the liminal space refers to the feeling of ‘in-betweenness’, or transcultural space. The transcultural space indicates a zone with no imposed culture and identity, characterised by its diversity and multiculturalism (Baranay 6). Within this space, “strategies for personal or communal self-hood may be elaborated, a region in which there is a continual process of movement and interchange between different states” (Ashcroft et al. *Post-colonial studies* 117). The threshold represents a boundary between two different spaces, for instance, between the outside world and the private one or between the foreign and the familiar, and it suggests the image of changing and crossing between these spaces (Chakraborty 145). However, sometimes “individuals who are caught in between two stages of development, who do not hold clearly defined positions within their social system, feel marginal, excluded, without identity or influence” (Chakraborty 146). In other words, sometimes the change or transformation from one side to another cannot fully occur, and one remains trapped in the liminal space of the threshold.

Liminality is especially significant in postcolonial studies as “it identifies the interstitial environment in which cultural transformation takes place” and describes the feeling of being in between different identities, cultures, or discourses (Chakraborty 146). For example, the liminal space can represent the position of the colonized between the out-

group (the Other) and the in-group (the Self) – “between colonial discourse and the assumption of a new ‘non-colonial’ identity” (Ashcroft et al. *Post-colonial studies* 117). It is suggested by Ashcroft et al. that the liminality and the transition between the two states mitigate the polarizing process of othering and blurring the rigid border between the colonized Other and the colonizing Self (*Post-colonial studies* 117-118).

However, Ashcroft et al. also highlight the complexity of the transition from one identity to another and describe it as “a constant process of engagement, contestation and appropriation” (*Post-colonial studies* 117). Appropriation is generally explained as an action of taking or adopting something – for example, culture, art, political system, or language. Within the context of postcolonialism, appropriation can be described as “the ways in which post-colonial societies take over those aspects of the imperial culture (...) that may be of use to them in articulating their own social and cultural identities” (Ashcroft et al. *Post-colonial studies* 15). In other words, appropriation is a dynamic process of forming a post-colonial identity and reshaping culture.

The concept of liminality is closely related to hybridity, which refers to establishing an entirely new identity by combining and merging two cultures, native and colonial, that occurs in various spheres – for instance, linguistics, politics, or cuisine, and ignores the original hierarchical structure between a colonizer and its colony (Ashcroft et al. *Post-colonial studies* 108-109). While liminality may tend to have rather negative connotations with feelings of exclusion, non-belonging, or lacking identity, Homi K. Bhabha describes hybridity as a “celebratory sign of diversity and mixedness” (x). He does not necessarily see hybridity as something negative but recognizes hybridization as a process which supports multiculturalism and decolonization. Furthermore, Bhabha emphasizes that:

Hybridity does not come as a force from 'outside' to impose an alternative a priori ground plan on the pattern of the present. Hybridity works with, and within, the cultural design of the present to reshape our understanding of the interstices - social and psychic - that link signs of cultural similitude with emergent signifiers of alterity.
(ix)

In other words, Bhabha believes that hybridization is not imposed on culture but rather comes from within the culture as an internal force, and hybridity mirrors the dynamic

character of interactions between the familiar and foreign cultures and their similarities and differences – for example, between the colonized and colonizing cultures.

Chakraborty agrees that hybridity, in the colonial context, is not perceived as negative nor abusive and describes it as being a central concept in the postcolonial discourses – hybridity “is celebrated and privileged as a kind of superior cultural intelligence owing to the advantage of in-betweenness, the straddling of two cultures and the consequent ability to negotiate the difference” (148). Chakraborty recognizes the hybridity as a “bridge” between the Self and the Other that brings them closer together and as a shared culture between the colonizer and the colonized which creates a new hybrid identity (149). Even though Staszak does not directly mention hybridity, he discusses a similar process of fighting othering and refusing the imposed segregation, which is based on embracing both (or all) identities as one can belong to more than one culture (26).

4 Intersectionality

Intersectionality was originally developed in feminist theory and can be shortly defined as “a concept that describes the interaction between systems of oppression” (Weldon 193). It was initially introduced by the Black feminist movement, which argued that Black women’s experience of discrimination is unparalleled and under-represented (Weldon 193-194). Black women recognized two crucial aspects influencing their identity and everyday life – being Black and being a woman. S. Laurel Weldon observes that intersectionality emerged “out of efforts to specify how race *and* gender relations shaped social and political life” (193-194). Essentially, Black women maintained that their experience cannot be compared neither to Black males nor white females, as the oppression they encountered was different and combined elements of both racism and sexism.

Even though intersectionality was established by Black feminism, the idea further transpired into other categories. Olena Hankivsky describes intersectionality as a framework that “promotes an understanding of human beings as shaped by the interaction of different social locations” and recognizes the need for a more nuanced approach to explore a person’s individual experiences, which are shaped by multiple factors (2). Therefore, nowadays, it deals not only with the concepts of race and gender but, for example, also with class, sexuality, age, religion, or disability. These factors intersect with one another and together construct different life conditions, opportunities and disadvantages.

Furthermore, Hankivsky recognizes several principles on which intersectionality is based – complexity of human life, dynamics and variability in time and space, or changeability based on context (3). Firstly, to properly look into a person’s life experiences, we cannot look through the lens of a single category and must consider multiple factors. A Muslim woman cannot be seen only as a follower of Islam or only as a female human being, but always both. Secondly, the experiences of a person are not static and can change – for example, people get older or migrate both within and between countries, and therefore, their life conditions are changing. Lastly, the context also plays an important role as an individual can encounter both oppression and feelings of privilege, as the experience depends on the social setting and situation.

Staszak discusses intersectionality in its connection with othering. He highlights that one person is inevitably experiencing multiple othering processes at the same time and these simultaneous processes determine the severity of discrimination (Staszak 26). Staszak further suggests that “intersectionality might present challenges when fighting discrimination” as individuals have distinct identities (26). For instance, the discrimination a Black straight man faces is different than the one of a Black gay man, as his identity is shaped by both racist and homophobic othering processes.

This chapter discusses the diversity of human experiences – not only the negative ones but also the positive ones. People are complex beings, and their identities are shaped by multiple factors that are causing the differences in their lives. Therefore, when discussing oppression and privilege, we need to consider multiple features of identity and the contextual factors influencing a person’s experience, as one’s disadvantages and opportunities are determined by several social categories.

5 Outline of the historical context of *Girl, Woman, Other*

In order to properly explore and understand the various cases of racism and oppression addressed in the novel *Girl, Woman, Other*, it is crucial to outline the historical context as it shaped society and influenced people's life experiences. Even though the novel is set in contemporary Britain, more precisely in the 2010s, the author travels in time through retrospective moments as her characters recall memories of their past and previous experience. The earliest recollections are from the beginning of the 20th century and concern the character of Grace and partially her daughter Hattie. In the early 20th century, the number of Black people among the British population was relatively small. Blacks were mostly only passing through and not permanently settling in Britain – for example, as merchants, sailors, or students (James 347). However, despite their small presence, Black communities were treated with hostility and condescension, as is reflected in Grace's story. Nevertheless, Evaristo mainly focuses on the second half of the 20th century and contemporary times in the remaining stories of her characters – Winsome as a part of the Windrush Generation, a young teacher Shirley and an aspiring actress Amma in the 1980s, or a career-driven Carol and young adult Yazz in the 21st century. Therefore, this chapter will follow the most important events and landmarks that influenced the life of Black British citizens and are relevant to the novel's themes concerned with race and racism. It will discuss the situation in post-World War II Britain and the Windrush Generation, race riots and civil rights movement caused by the lack of anti-discriminatory laws, the Thatcherite era, and contemporary times.

5.1 The Windrush Generation and post-World War II Britain

Nowadays, what is understood by the term 'Windrush Generation' is a large wave of Afro-Caribbean immigrants coming to the United Kingdom from 1948 to 1972. As Shelene Gomes and Arthur Torrington mention, it was named after a German ship 'Empire Windrush' that brought over a thousand West Indians to the UK, and although it was not the first ship that moved people from the West Indies colonies, the Empire Windrush transported the biggest number of passengers (179-180). The influx of West Indian migrants significantly diversified the predominantly white society and caused a growth of the multicultural population in Britain.

Probably the most fundamental reason for the massive migration from colonies to Britain was the passing of the British Nationality Act of 1948, which “represented a means to redress the fading image of Britain’s imperial legacy through the institutionalization of a transracial, trans-regional citizenship category that bolstered the perception of imperial and Commonwealth uniformity” (Perry 58). The Act granted established colonials as British citizens and created a new shared status, ‘Citizenship of the United Kingdom and Colonies’ (Perry 56-57). It was a pivotal moment in postcolonial Britain as the citizenship policies shifted towards more inclusive and equal treatment of the overseas territories. Therefore, calling colonials coming to the United Kingdom as immigrants is not somewhat accurate as they are legal British citizens.

The increase in migration can also be attributed to World War II, with the Windrush Generation notably contributing to reconstructing the country after the war. Perry argues that one of the reasons was the post-war labour shortage in the United Kingdom, which resulted in the recruitment of foreign European and colonial workers (67). Therefore, the Windrush Generation helped with the restoration of the British post-war economy and provided necessary manpower in different sectors – for example, the construction industry, healthcare, and transportation. Additionally, a significant factor is the presence of numerous Caribbean servicemen during World War II. Directly after the war, the West Indians returned to their homelands, but some decided to return to the British Isles in 1948 (Gomes and Torrington 180). Their decision to settle in the United Kingdom may have several reasons – for example, economic opportunities or personal connections to British culture and society.

However, the number of people of colour coming from the former colonies and the expansions of British multiculturalism raised concerns among the predominantly white and more conservative part of British society. Even though granting the shared British ‘Citizenship of the United Kingdom and Colonies’ (CUKC) was a step indicating a significant change in the attitude of the British Empire and its shift towards a more inclusive approach, it could not erase hundreds of years of white supremacy and racial oppression. The anxiety and fear of multiculturalism resulted in the passing of the Commonwealth Immigration Act in 1962, which was meant to appear as “a race-neutral policy that vetted migrants on the basis of their employment credentials and prearranged job prospects” (Perry

20). In reality, it was institutionalising discrimination based on race and disadvantaged people of colour in settling and getting employment in the United Kingdom.

5.2 Race riots, protests, and the civil rights movement

As already mentioned, the growing immigration of Commonwealth settlers sparked a wave of discontent among the British population, which resulted in the introduction of several more restricting regulations concerning immigration processes, accommodation, and employment of people of colour in the United Kingdom. Perry points out that the tension became particularly noticeable in the 1950s, during which coloured residents were facing restricted access to housing “on the basis of race and or national origin” (83). Therefore, the housing discrimination of the incomers was not only racist but also xenophobic. Commonwealth migrants were allowed to stay in areas of the cities designated for them, and, as Perry argues, this furthered the development of districts with high concentrations of people of colour – for instance, Brixton or Notting Hill (84).

These areas were known for racial tensions and frequent conflicts between the white and coloured/foreign citizens. In 1958, there was a series of attacks in London’s Notting Hill led by anti-Black activists against its coloured residents – one of them being West African Seymour Manning (Perry 89-90). The ongoing anti-Black violence with the main motto to “Keep Britain White” resulted in a series of the Notting Hill Race Riots in 1958 (Perry 90). Race conflicts flared up in the streets as the area’s Black community reached their limit and decided to fight against the unequal treatment and racial violence. The series of riots gradually calmed down, partly because of the police intervention and media coverage (Perry 90-92). The news reports exposed racism and, by advocating for racial justice, laid the foundation for future reforms.

Another landmark in the British civil rights movement was the Bristol Bus Boycott in 1963. The protest, which consisted of boycotting the Bristol Omnibus Company, was triggered by denying West Indian Guy Bailey a job interview despite his sufficient qualifications (Mansour). Mansour emphasises that at that time, there were no anti-racist or anti-discriminatory laws in the United Kingdom. The coloured community challenged the company’s racist policies and refused to travel with their buses until the company complied.

The boycott, which lasted from April to August, was successful and led to the cessation of the racially discriminatory employment practices of the company (Mansour).

The continuous public protests, race riots and their international news coverage challenged British institutionalized racist policies and discriminatory practices. Perry argues that the negative media attention was highly undesirable for the British government because “whereas the nation touted values of tolerance, multiracial inclusiveness, and racial progressivism, news of “race riots” told a different story that stood diametrically opposed to this narrative of the nation” (92). Therefore, in order to save its public image as a multicultural and anti-racist country, the United Kingdom needed to introduce some legislative changes and social reforms. The first significant step was passing the Race Relations Act in 1965. It officially declared public racial and national origin discrimination as illegal and established a National Race Relations Board to deal with cases of racial discrimination (Perry 192). The Race Relations Act and other legislations added in the following years were designed to fight and prevent any discrimination and provided the necessary protection against social injustice.

5.3 The Thatcherite era

The Thatcherite era in Britain concerned primarily the 1980s that marked the rule of Margaret Thatcher’s government. The period was defined by the ideology of the ruling Conservative Party, with Margaret Thatcher as the first female British Prime Minister. Pettigrew argues that the Conservative’s main premise of the voting campaign was their approach opposing the immigration and claims that Thatcher’s anti-immigration stance was one of the main reasons she won the election in 1979 (94). The several economic and immigration policies introduced during the rule of Thatcher’s government considerably disadvantaged and harmed racial and national minorities.

The Conservatives introduced the British Nationality Act in 1981, which substantially changed policies concerned with British citizenship and immigration. The Act “abolished the category of CUKC, all but abolished the status of British subject, and introduced a definition of citizenship exclusively for the United Kingdom” (Hansen 207). In short, it redefined British citizenship and established more precise criteria for acquiring citizenship status, which influenced the process of immigration indirectly. Thatcher’s

government further introduced policies that included privatization, a decrease in funding for social services, for example, healthcare or education, or deregulation, which resulted in an increase in unemployment and inflation (Young). Even though those policies were not explicitly racist or anti-Black, they negatively impacted already marginalized communities.

5.4 Contemporary issues

The beginning of the 21st century was marked by a series of Al-Qaeda terrorist attacks on September 11 in 2001. Even though the attacks happened in the USA, they managed to shape worldwide politics, economy, and society. The main consequences of the attacks include the USA's decision, supported by NATO, to declare war on terror against Al-Qaeda and the rise of Islamophobia in Western societies (Kulik). The feelings of fear and anxiety caused by the terrorist attacks fuelled negative stereotyping, prejudice and hateful behaviour towards Muslims, as Western society began to connotate Islam with the terrorism of the radical extremists.

The situation of the 21st-century Britain is, once again, marked by society's growing need to protect Britishness caused by the massive flow of immigrants to the United Kingdom and people's discontent with the multiculturalism of the British population. This distress related to the influx of immigrants through the European Union's open borders and financial commitments to other countries of the EU, such as supporting Greece during its economic crisis in 2009, led to the rise of Euroscepticism and the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Wallenfeldt). The British public saw the EU's regulations as restrictive and endangering British sovereignty and wanted to gain more control over immigration matters and other state affairs.

6 Bernardine Evaristo – the author’s perspective

Bernardine Evaristo is a British writer, activist, and academic of English-Nigerian origin. She is a Professor of Creative Writing at Brunel University London, and she is an advocate for women’s rights and the inclusion of writers of colour. Her activism is visible in several projects and in the choice of themes in writing. Her work consists of various genres – for example, non-fiction memoir (*Manifesto: On Never Giving Up*, 2021), literary criticism essays and articles (On a childhood shaped by racism: ‘I was never going to give up’ in the *Guardian*, 2021; ‘They are totally smashing it!’ on the artistic triumph of older Black women in the *Guardian*, 2022), poetry works (Lara, 1997; *The Emperor’s Babe*, 2001), plays (*First, Do No Harm*, 2020), and fiction novels (*Blonde Roots*, 2008). (“Bernardine Evaristo”)

As an author, Evaristo explores many diverse ideas, plays with innovative language and different forms, and does not follow stereotypical conventions. Through her work and multi-genre writing she aims to investigate topics such as multiculturalism, mixed-race, inter-generational relations and gender and race oppression. In her words: “as a storyteller, I like to mix things up temporally, spatially and stylistically – to cross the borders of genre, race, culture, gender, history and sexuality” (“Author statement”). A typical feature of her works is intersectionality as she discusses issues such as racism, gender oppression, prejudice, identity struggles, or contrastive perspectives and differences between generations.

In her interview with Ingrid von Rosenberg, Evaristo mentions Black history, women, and Black women as three topics that she is interested in the most and explores in all her work. Evaristo further explains that in the literary field, she experiences gender and race “as a complex, intertwined and dynamic network of ideas and positions that must grow together” (von Rosenberg 29). For this reason, the themes concerned with the previously mentioned topics are, for the most part, intersected in Evaristo’s work. However, Evaristo highlights that she does not express her opinions directly in her stories – “my politics informs my work at a deeper, less obvious level, where it needs to remain” (von Rosenberg 27). She rather implies them through her characters’ life experiences and the situations they encounter throughout the story.

The novel *Girl, Woman, Other* resulted from Evaristo’s frustration with the underrepresentation of Black people in mainstream culture, especially the absence of Black

women. She aimed to give voice to the voiceless Black women of different ages, origins, and identities. As she has emphasized:

I wanted to put presence into absence. I was very frustrated that black British women weren't visible in literature. I whittled it down to 12 characters – I wanted them to span from a teenager to someone in their 90s, and see their trajectory from birth, though not linear. There are many ways in which otherness can be interpreted in the novel – the women are othered in so many ways and sometimes by each other. I wanted it to be identified as a novel about women as well. (qtd. in Sethi)

Otherness is one of the main themes of her novel, and she explores various othering processes Black women are experiencing through multiple perspectives of her characters. Moreover, Evaristo decided to write *Girl, Woman, Other* in an experimental new form, for example, rarely using full stops or not following the chronological linearity of events. The main purpose of this was to capture the characters' emotions in an authentic way and accurately represent Black women's experiences (Sethi).

Practical part

7 Outline of the practical part

Bernardine Evaristo's cross-sectional novel *Girl, Woman, Other* explores, among other things, postcolonial struggles and racism in the United Kingdom through a wide range of characters of different backgrounds and origins. Therefore, the primary purpose of this thesis is to explore Evaristo's portrayal of racism. The main aims of the practical part are to investigate the impact of race on the identity and life of the marginalized Black community and to identify different types of racism and its various forms. Moreover, the main focus will be on race and racism in the UK, as the author and her characters are British citizens, thus reflecting the situation in Great Britain. Further, it will be structured according to the novel's themes concerned with race and racism. However, since they are closely interconnected, sometimes, there are instances of overlapping in which certain racist behaviours can be classified as different forms of racism.

Girl, Woman, Other is a polyphonic novel consisting of intertwined stories of twelve mainly female characters. They have various family and cultural heritage, ages, careers, gender identities and sexual orientations, but they have one thing in common. All of them are dealing with similar issues, such as racism, sexism, or classism, and each of them is fighting for their fundamental and equal rights in their own way. They are mothers, daughters, girlfriends, grandmothers, and all of them are victims of some sort of oppression. The lives of the co-protagonists sometimes overlap, and the struggles of injustice and discrimination they face are somehow related. However, their life experience, upbringing and current environment differ very much. As the review of *Girl, Woman, Other* in the Guardian comments:

Their experiences, backgrounds and choices could not be more different. There's Amma, a lesbian socialist playwright, and non-binary Morgan, who uses the internet to navigate their gender identity – but also Shirley, a teacher who feels alien in Amma's community, and Winsome, a bride who has arrived from Barbados to an unhappy marriage. Many of the characters are close – friends, relatives or lovers –

while others simply visit the same theatre on the same night, or argue with each other on Twitter. (Frazer-Carroll)

The versatility of characters depicted in Evaristo's book provides a solid corpus for the analysis of racial identity and racism.

Evaristo's writing style in *Girl, Woman, Other* is an experimental fusion of prose and poetry. She practically does not use standardized sentencings and rarely uses capitalization and punctuation. She indicates individual utterances with how she organizes text into lines and paragraphs. Moreover, she uses the text organization to convey and emphasize the powerful emotions of her characters. For this reason, the in-text citations of direct quotes will be mostly realized in a non-standard way in order to preserve the original structure and prevent any misunderstanding – when necessary, no matter the length of the quotation, it will be treated as a long quotation.

8 Identity struggles

Probably the most crucial theme in *Girl, Woman, Other* is the matter of identity struggles. The title itself introduces the concept of Other, through which Evaristo suggests one of the difficulties her characters are dealing with. Even though her characters come from diverse backgrounds and lead different lives, all of them deal with some form of exclusion and marginalization – othering. As already explained in the theoretical part, constructing otherness was a form of alienating and controlling groups of people solely caused by being different from the dominant society. The fundamental principle of othering was dismissing foreign culture and traditions and, therefore, rejecting the identity of the Other (Staszak 25). Characters in the novel have different origins, upbringing, or personality – they are British-born, immigrant, Black, mixed-race, straight, gay, etc. However, at some point in their lives, they all face othering – whether it is by society, family, friends, or themselves.

Othering has a great influence on self-identifying – regardless if it concerns the inner feeling of self and self-worth or forming a public image and how one is viewed by the community. Evaristo portrays various identity struggles of her characters and experiencing feelings of liminality and non-belonging. She examines the importance of family and heritage in shaping one’s sense of identity and explores it from the perspective of the first generation of immigrants and the already British-born or British-raised second generation. As the principal concern of this thesis is race and racism, the focus will primarily be on racial identity struggles.

8.1 Feeling of non-belonging

Feelings of standing out, being underrepresented, different and other are integral to the experiences of immigrant minorities. They very often differ in language, culture and traditions of their homeland, religion, or physical appearance. In the new country, they may experience some form of identity crisis caused by the confrontation with the new environment and society. Immigrants frequently encounter alienation and marginalization based on their otherness and come across hostile behaviour, stereotyping, discrimination, and institutional oppression.

Evaristo depicts the experiences of the first-generation immigrants in Britain mainly through the characters of Bummi, Winsome and her husband, Clovis. They deal with name-calling, property destruction, employment rejection, dismissal of education, restricted access to housing etc. Those issues will be discussed in more detail in further chapters; however, they all contribute to the immigrants' feelings of isolation and non-belonging to the new country. The fitting depiction of the reality of coloured immigrants is Winsome's unsettling description of her everyday experience:

I heard people cuss as they passed me, very few were friendly
I was served last in whatever shop I went into, even when I was first in the queue
cars deliberately drove into puddles when I was pushing Shirley in her black
bassinet and the two boys was attached to harnesses either side of me
I was the one to find a dead rat on our doorstep
I was the one to live with GO HOME daubed in white paint on our front door until
Clovis painted over it
I was the one who had to spend my evenings alone and scared they was going to
throw a petrol-soaked rag through the window. (Evaristo 263)

The text illustrates the harsh immigrant reality, especially in the times of the Windrush Generation, which Winsome and her husband were part of. In those times, there were no anti-discriminatory laws to protect the incoming settlers. Therefore, the open hostility and discrimination, targeted aggression, and vandalism were left unpunished and created even more challenges for those who came to the British "motherland" in search of a new life. The vivid intimidation and prejudice against coloured immigrants severely influenced their identity and compromised their sense of belonging in the new society.

The first generation of immigrants often endured oppressive treatment in order to establish a secure and comfortable future for their children and provide them life with opportunities they themselves did not have. However, the first generation generally was unable to identify themselves with Britain, the new country, and its culture, society and customs, and as a result was left with feelings of longing for their homeland and isolation in Britain. For instance, in their senior years, Winsome and Clovis decide to return to Barbados, where they are no longer defined solely by their otherness and can re-establish connections

with their country of origin and compare their experience with other returning immigrants. On the other hand, Bummi continues her life in Britain while maintaining a profound connection to her Nigerian heritage, such as her accent and pronunciation, clothes and traditions. Despite strongly valuing her Nigerian heritage, she and her husband decide not to follow the Nigerian tradition, and they name their daughter Carole to lessen the challenges she may face throughout her life as a descendant of Nigerian immigrants.

8.2 Pressure of society to represent otherness

In othering, the main focus was on its differences, i.e. otherness, from the dominating Self, and such differences were exaggerated, whereas the individuality of each member of the other group was disregarded (Staszak 25). Therefore, the identity of individuals belonging to the Other was burdened with its affiliation to the whole group. Their otherness was the primary character feature through which they were perceived, overshadowing any individual traits and distinctiveness of their personal identity. There are various types of otherness that are not mutually exclusive, through which people can be defined and categorized by society – for example, race, religion, gender, sexuality etc. Evaristo depicts the hardship of the pressure to represent the Other communities by the characters Shirley and Roland.

Shirley starts her career in education in the 1980s as a young Black woman with ambitions of becoming a great and influential teacher for the next generations. Her aspirations indeed become true, and she is well-regarded by both her pupils and superiors:

Shirley

was praised by the headmaster, Mr Waverly, as a natural teacher, with an easy rapport with the children, who goes above and beyond the call of duty, achieves excellent exam results with her exemplary teaching skills and who is a credit to her people

in her first annual job assessment

Shirley felt the pressure was now on to be a great teacher and an ambassador for every black person in the world. (Evaristo 222)

The passage demonstrates the complexity of a Black person's identity and the pressure coming from the expectations to represent themselves not only as individuals but also to

become role models and advocates for the marginalized Black community – “her people”. Shirley was burdened with the responsibility to excel, positively represent, and debunk the negative stereotypes imposed on Black people.

Similar struggles and experiences are visible in the story of Roland, a successful author and university professor who also happens to be gay and a descendant of Gambian immigrants. While participating in a BBC debate, he was essentially dragged into an argument with a Brexit supporter and forced to act as a multiculturalism and Black race ambassador. Even though he manages to win the argument and dismiss the imposed racist remarks, he is left unsettled and agitated from the inflicted obligation to represent the whole community:

Roland had been given the last word, he should have felt triumphant except he was pissed off that he’d had to engage with *race* and was, in the aftermath of a debate that went viral (of course *that* one did), seen as a spokesman for cultural diversity which he resolutely is *not*. (Evaristo 412-413)

He further describes the pressure of being Black as the burden of representation, wherein the identity of Black people is confined by their skin colour and family origin, often leading to the oversight of their personal traits, characteristics and opinions. He comments:

in any case, neither his blackness nor his gayness are the result of conscious political decisions, the former is genetically determined, the latter psychically and psychologically pre-disposed. (Evaristo 415)

The fundamental point in this statement is the aspect of consciousness. The main issue is why should he, as a Black gay man, be defined by his otherness, which is not in his power to control. He puts this imposed representative identity in contrast with white identity. He emphasizes that white people are not pushed to represent the whole race and are able to express themselves solely by their unique identity as individuals.

8.3 Clash of cultures of second-generation immigrants

Second-generation immigrants are those who were either born to immigrant parents or raised from an early childhood in a new country. This generation often experiences the feeling of

liminality – being trapped in the threshold space between the family’s cultural heritage and the mainstream culture of the new country’s society. In order to escape this state of in-betweenness, they are either forced to renounce one of their identities or blend them together creating a completely new and unique identity. Evaristo focuses on the identity crisis of the second generation in the story of Carole.

In her life, the character of Carole struggles through various stages of self-identification while constructing her sense of self and establishing her place in society. Carole is born to Nigerian immigrants and, after her father’s death, is raised by a single mother Bummi, in the poverty of public housing. She decides to escape the harsh reality of her childhood neighbourhood by studying hard to receive a quality education and to secure her future. Her hard work pays off, and she is accepted to the University of Oxford, where comes the first racial identity crisis as she enters the majorly white and wealthy student community. Initially, she is ashamed of her origins and relieved that her typically Nigerian-looking mother is not able to accompany her as she arrives at the university:

her mother couldn’t get the day off work and anyway, it was just as well because she’d wear her most outlandish Nigerian outfit consisting of thousands of yards of bright material, and a headscarf ten storeys high, and she’d start bawling when she had to leave her only child for the first time

Carole would forever be known as the student with the mad African mother that first week she counted on one hand the number of brown-skinned people in her college, and none as dark as her. (Evaristo 131)

After leaving her neighbourhood, Carole realizes her otherness, which makes her uncomfortable and insecure. She contemplates leaving university and coming back home just to avoid the out-of-place feeling. However, her mother advised her to embrace both of her identities:

you must find the people who will want to be your friends even if they are all white people (...)

you must go back and fight the battles that are your British birthright, Carole, as a true Nigerian. (Evaristo 134)

Her mother encourages Carole in her hybrid identity – as a British-born citizen and a descendant of Nigerian heritage. Throughout her university years, she established a group of friends and discovered new cuisines, architecture, and music – slowly assimilating to the new environment. However, “Carole amended herself to become not quite them, just a little more like them” (Evaristo 137). In other words, she blended her Nigerian upbringing with the culture of British whiteness.

Eventually, Carole starts to gradually reject her Nigerian roots as she realizes that conforming to the standards of the white-supremacist society and adjusting to their values and customs opens more doors for her and provides greater opportunities:

she then had her tight curls straightened, Marcus said he preferred her hair natural,
she told him she’d never get a job if she did that

(...)

forget the fact she’s got Vivaldi’s Four Seasons as her ring tone, the public face of
her musical taste

sometimes

Carole loves dancing like a warrior queen to frenzied beats of the warpainted
shamanistic godfather, Fela Kuti. (Evaristo 137, 141)

She decides to conform to the white standards, however, primarily in her appearance and attire and how the public perceives her personality and appearance. In fact, in the privacy and comfort of her home, she still returns to her Nigerian legacy, such as listening to the Nigerian singer Fela Kuti. It is important to acknowledge that, although Carole’s assimilation into white British society could be perceived as a manifestation of her internalized racism, she does not really agree with the norms imposed by the society. She only complies with them for the sake of the greater good – for instance, getting a successful career and securing financial stability. In a secure and private environment, she allows herself to enjoy her family heritage.

Carole’s public rejection of her Nigerian identity, such as traditional clothes, pronunciation, or eating with her hands, causes great distress to her mother. She expected Carole to return to the principles of her upbringing and to preserve the Nigerian lineage. This intergenerational conflict represents the complexity and dynamics of immigrant families, in

which the children are caught between their parents' expectations of continuing in the tradition of their roots and succeeding in and integrating into the society of a new country.

8.4 Internalized racism

Sometimes, the pressure of the Britishness and racist ideology of the white-supremacist society is so strong and omnipresent that the negative attitudes and stereotypes about people of colour transpire into their own communities. Members of the marginalized and oppressed groups adopt, either consciously or unconsciously, those stereotypes and implement them in their own lives – how they perceive themselves and other members. Evaristo delves into different cases of internalized racist thinking – acceptance of white beauty standards and pressuring white passing.

White or also Western beauty standards are dominating society, for example, through media or advertisements, and “pressure women and girls to conform to a fair-skinned, youthful, thin, toned, able-bodied and physically ‘good looking’ woman” (Mckay et al. 1). Women of all ages are bombarded with expectations of the perfect physical appearance, which ignore the diversity of humankind. This essentially leads to the normalization of the Eurocentric beauty ideals and their subsequent internalization. Furthermore, the internalized white beauty standards may transmit into how Black people see themselves or how they perceive other members of their race. Even though there are more stories in which Evaristo indicates the appropriation of the Western beauty standards, such as the already mentioned Carole and the straightening of her natural afro hair, there are two notable characters – Dominique and Waris.

Dominique is a second-generation Guyanese immigrant and actress who, up until she meets African-American Nzinga, is known for having a girlfriend prototype – a white blonde. During their relationship, Nzinga points out to Dominique that her dating history with only white and blonde girlfriends may potentially indicate her internalized racist beliefs, through which she does not perceive the looks of Black women as beautiful and attractive:

Nzinga had suggested her relationship history of blonde girlfriends might be a sign of self-loathing; you have to ask yourself if you've been brainwashed by the white

beauty ideal, sister, you have to work a lot harder on your Black feminist politics.
(Evaristo 79)

Nzinga emphasizes that internalized racism is deeply rooted in Black women and stresses the need to recognize it and get rid of the hidden self-hatred. Her words lead Dominique to some serious doubts concerning her past relationships and consideration of reasons for choosing solely white blondes to date.

However, Waris tends to point the white beauty standards towards her own physical appearance. Waris, a friend of Yazz and thus a member of the youngest generation, is a daughter of Somali immigrants. She strongly opposes victimization and wears a hijab as a political statement in British society. Despite that, she still somewhat subconsciously adopts the Western ideal of beauty and perceives her own body and attractiveness through its lens:

Waris says she's ugly without her 'face on', even though Yazz reassures her that Somali women are the most beautiful in the world, and that includes you too, Waris Waris says she's fat, even though she's perfectly normal-sized, pinching her thighs so hard they go mottled then showing Yazz her 'cellulite', which is non-existent, Waris, it's just flesh being squeezed so tightly it nearly pops. (Evaristo 57)

The text implies Waris' dissatisfaction and insecurity with her natural look, which does not correspond with the prescribed Eurocentric norms, such as being skinny or having a light complexion.

Another example of internalized racism is white passing. Passing is a term concerning moving across a certain border between the dominant and dominated group, for example, concerning race or class, in order to avoid discrimination and obtain more privileges (Belluscio 1, 9). In short, white passing occurs when a mixed-race person with light skin is able to be perceived as a member of the white race and subsequently escape society's racism. Evaristo depicts the attempts to be accepted as whites through the dynamics of Hattie's family.

Despite the fact that Hattie greatly appreciates her culture and takes pride in her racial identity, her children, Ada Mae and Sonny, seek social acceptance and try to escape the Black discrimination and reject their Black heritage. They distance themselves from their

Black identity by marrying white people and whitening the family tree. The dismissal of their Black identity is already manifested in their childhood:

Hattie saw that neither of her children liked being coloured and she didn't know what to do about it

Ada Mae painted herself as a white child in her drawings, and from the age of twelve Sonny never wanted to be seen with his father beyond the village, hated having to go to the cattle fairs with him as a teenager and he begged her not to bring his father to school events. (Evaristo 356)

Evaristo further describes the harsh and challenging experiences of how they were treated by their peers – pinching and scratching them to see if they bruised and bled the same as whites or trying to scrub off the dark colour of their skin. These traumatic incidents most probably led to emotional distress and shame over their Black identities. Moreover, the family's negative attitude towards the Black race is shown when Hattie's granddaughter Julie marries a Black man from Malawi. They do not easily accept him and oppose their relationship as "the family was becoming whiter with every generation and they didn't want any backsliding" (Evaristo 350). For them, Julie's marriage to her Malawian husband undermines their efforts to free the family from Blackness and pass for white.

8.5 Confrontation with African heritage

From her teenage years, Penelope knew about the fact that she was adopted but had no reason to question her identity and origins. Her fair-skinned physical appearance suggested she belonged to the white race, and she took great pride in her superior position in society. At the end of the story, she is convinced by her daughter to undergo a DNA test, which allows one to determine one's ancestry and possibly reveal biological parents or other relatives. The test results came as a great shock as they unveiled her 13% African heritage and only 17% British DNA, and she is left devastated by her affiliation with the savage race:

her African ancestors were probably nomads roaming over the continent killing each other before the British demarcated regions into proper countries and thereby imposed discipline and control. (Evaristo 448)

It is an ironic twist presented by Evaristo, as Penelope, the protagonist who prides herself on her pure British heritage and looks at other races with disdain, is confronted with her true origins, which include African ancestry. Penelope's lifelong feelings of white supremacy, racial stereotyping and prejudice are challenged by her discovery, prompting her to question her self-identity. With her daughter's help, she is able to contact her birthmother, Hattie, and arrange their meeting at Hattie's farmhouse. The main shift in Penelope's thinking comes when she sees her:

 this metal-haired wild creature from the bush with the piercingly feral eyes
 is her mother
 this is she
 this is her
 who cares about her colour? why on earth did Penelope ever think it mattered?
(Evaristo 452)

In this moment, Penelope is confronted with the reality of meeting her biological mother and realizes the unimportance of racial categorization and hierarchy. The racist beliefs become irrelevant when she sees Hattie not through the perspective of race as an inferior coloured woman but recognizes her as her relative – her mother. It is one of the climactic moments of the novel as the discovery of Black heritage fundamentally redefines her racially biased mindset and shows the insignificance of skin colour and race.

9 Interpersonal racism and its subtle forms

Interpersonal racism mainly consists of negative stereotyping caused by either conscious or unconscious prejudice towards another race (Rucker and Richeson 14). It usually takes more subtle forms and is realized on a smaller scale than institutionalized racism. This chapter will focus on the manifestations of racism in interpersonal relationships included in Evaristo's novel, such as racial prejudice and stereotyping, microaggressive comments, and its impact on the marginalized community. Evaristo describes this behaviour both from the perspective of a racist and a person enduring the oppressive stereotyping.

9.1 Racial prejudice and stereotyping

Some comments and behaviours may not initially seem racist, but in reality, they carry the racist ideology. They are based on the negative stereotypes which “influence [people's] behavioral inclinations” or cause the internalization of these negative attitudes by the marginalized communities (Zhang 2). Evaristo also includes those stereotyping comments in her novel. For example, Carole deals with such comments in her university years when being labelled as looking “so ghetto” or “when a student sidled up after a lecture to ask for some ecstasy”, expecting her to be in possession of drugs because of her skin colour (Evaristo 132-133). Furthermore, during her career, she encounters prejudiced comments disguised as compliments when people are surprised by her eloquence. These subtle remarks indirectly condescend to one's identity, abilities, and place in society and are followed by the lingering feeling of hurt.

Racial prejudice and stereotyping of the Black race are represented in the interracial relationship of Carole and Freddy, particularly in the attitude of Freddy's upper-class family. His parents openly express their desire for him to find a suitable bride – “he said his parents wanted him to marry someone whose lineage, like theirs, could be traced back to William the Conqueror” (Evaristo 149). They prioritize the superior white race, appropriate socio-economic standing, and level of prestige of their future daughter-in-law in order to preserve the family status. For this reason, they treated Freddy's relationship with Carole – a Black Nigerian woman from a poor neighbourhood, with objections and disapproval. However, we learn from Freddy that as they got to know Carole, over time, they changed their attitude towards her union with Freddy – “they'd warmed to the idea of Carole, once

they saw how classy, well-spoken and successful she was (most importantly for his mother, how slim and pretty, too)” (Evaristo 186). Their racial prejudice is visible in their surprise over Carole’s success, physical attractiveness, classiness, and eloquence. Nevertheless, the confrontation of their stereotypes with reality does not change their overall way of thinking, and they treat Carole as an exception among the uneducated, violent, low-class community. Despite their acceptance of Carole, they are still biased in their perception and treatment of her mother, Bummi:

Freddy’s father, Mark, looked uncomfortable, said little at the dinner, Carole sat there with a fake smile plastered on her face the whole time
Pamela, his mother, smiled at Bummi as if she was a famine victim, when she started explaining the meaning of *hors d’oeuvres* to her, Freddy told her to stop it, Mummy, just stop it. (Evaristo 186)

It shows the superficiality of the old-fashioned, snobbish white society and the conditionality of their acceptance. They welcome Carole and acknowledge her value only after they have deemed her as English enough – a well-behaved and educated woman with appropriately sounding English pronunciation and a successful career.

On the other hand, Freddy and Carole’s interracial relationship was initially rejected even by Carole’s Black mother. Bummi was devastated by Carole’s choice of a white husband, and she “had been prepared to hate Freddy on sight” (Evaristo 185). She perceived him as a threat to the Nigerian heritage of her family:

she said how upset she had been when Carole told her she was marrying a white man, it was the beginning of the end of the pure Nigerian family line
their children will be mixed, and their children will look white
to be wiped out in two generations
is this why we came to England? (Evaristo 185)

She felt that, by not marrying a Nigerian man, Carole betrayed her family and culture. She expected Freddy to force Carole to reject her heritage and impose Englishness on her and their future children. However, once she met him, she recognised that her negative attitude

towards her future son-in-law from a white upper-class English family was unfounded. She realised that Freddy was eager to learn about Carole's culture and traditions:

Freddy likes to watch Nollywood movies with her, jokes he's an honorary Nigerian and he simply adores eating her food, especially the yam porridge she makes for breakfast when they stay over, and Carole was even eating it again, which was a miracle (...)

Freddy has turned Carole into a more relaxed and jolly person. (Evaristo 185-186)

Freddy does not impose his racial and socio-economic superiority on them, but on the contrary, he shows interest in their heritage and supports their Nigerian legacy. Moreover, Bummi notices how happy and at ease her daughter is in Freddy's company. Through the interracial relationship of Carole and Freddy, Evaristo shows that racial bias can be directed towards both sides – white and coloured. Moreover, she shows different ways of how people react when their stereotyping and generalizations are confronted with contrasting reality; sometimes, it leads to the re-evaluation of their beliefs and opinions (Bummi), and other times, they remain in denial and maintain their biased beliefs (Freddy's parents).

Another character subjected to stereotyping is Waris. She is a young Black woman, a daughter of Somali immigrants and a follower of Islam wearing hijab. She acknowledges how the Al-Qaeda terrorist attack in 2001 in the USA changed the perception of Islam's faith and treatment of Muslims throughout the world. She points out how every terrorist attack made by Islamist extremists affects the everyday reality of regular Muslims. It leads to an increase in verbal abuse and harassment of Muslims – she mentions being shoved and spat at in the streets. She recalls cases of name-calling, for instance, as a 'dirty Arab' despite being of Somali and not Arab origin. Throughout her life, she is confronted with different stereotyping and offensive remarks:

that terrorism is synonymous with Islam
that she's oppressed and they feel her pain
if anyone asks her if she's related to Osama bin Laden
if anyone tells her she's responsible for them being unemployed
if anyone tells her she's a cockroach immigrant
if anyone tells her to go back to her jihadist boyfriend

if anyone asks her if she knows any suicide bombers
if anyone tells her she doesn't belong here and when are you leaving?
if anyone asks if she's going to have an arranged marriage
if anyone asks her why she dresses like a nun
if anyone speaks slowly to her like she can't speak English
if anyone tells her that her English is really good. (Evaristo 60)

Such comments demonstrate people's ignorance and prejudice toward society. This generalization and subsequent othering of the community alienates them from the dominating Western society and reinforces the negative attitudes, hostility, and patronizing behaviour towards them (Staszak 25). The negative stereotypes include thinking that being Muslim equals supporting terrorism, wearing hijab is an enforced oppression and not a choice, or being non-white means speaking bad English or being uneducated. By Waris' experience, Evaristo illustrates how the West's othering of Muslims as dangerous, savage, or extreme damaged their position in society and stigmatized them as a threat.

Another case of racial bias and stereotyping is shown through the character of Penelope, who represents racist beliefs. She is a high school teacher with the ideology of white race superiority, which is highly influenced by her upbringing with racist parents. Initially, teaching brings her joy, and she takes satisfaction from helping children in her neighbourhood:

at first she'd enjoyed teaching the disadvantaged children of the area whose parents had an inter-generational history of paying taxes in this country, even though she knew most of them wouldn't go on to great things
she felt a sense of responsibility towards her own kind, and didn't like it at all when the school's demography began to change with the immigrants and their offspring pouring in
in the space of a decade the school went from predominantly English children of the working classes to a multicultural zoo of kids coming from countries where there weren't even words for please and thank you
which explained *a lot*. (Evaristo 297-298)

However, there is a shift in her attitude as the area becomes more immigrant-populated and the school increases in its diversity and multiculturality. She feels committed to teaching the truly English children whose family has a long lineage of Britishness but regards the coloured children of immigrants with disdain. She perceives and treats her pupils with double standards as she expects low performance, lack of manners and improper behaviour from children coming from Black communities. By calling the school a ‘multicultural zoo’, she essentially dehumanizes them as she considers them primitive, savage, ill-mannered, or lazy.

9.2 The consequences of stereotyping

This type of stereotyping and racism can be especially harmful as it concerns children who are still developing and shaping their identities. At a young age, people are particularly prone to the influence of the environment and the pressure of society. As already mentioned, racial bias may lead to the internalization of these negative stereotypes. This is illustrated in the conversation between LaTisha and her father, an immigrant from Montserrat, during which he recalls his challenging school experience:

when he complained of the cold, the teachers said he had behavioural problems
when he spoke patois, they thought he was thick and put him in a class the year
below, even though he was top of his class back home
when he was naughty with his white schoolmates, he alone was singled out and sent
to the Sin Bin
when he got angry at the injustice of it all, they said he was being abusive
when he stomped out of the classroom to let off steam, they said he was being
aggressive
so he decided to be, threw a chair at a teacher, narrowly missing him the first time
but not the second. (Evaristo 195)

He was forced to deal with teachers’ low expectations of Black youth, which presumed him as aggressive, unintelligent, violent, or disruptive. Since they constantly assumed the worst of him, he decided to conform to the negative expectations – when people already perceive immigrants and coloured communities in this unfavourable way, he as well may act

accordingly with those stereotypes instead of constantly fighting the prejudice and proving people wrong.

LaTisha's life story may as well be considered a representation of internal self-identification with the stereotypes about marginalized poor Black communities. The turning point in her life is when she is abandoned by her father, who leaves his family for another woman, which triggers LaTisha's wild teenage years – neglecting school, having unprotected sex with multiple partners, alcohol and drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, etc. The shift in her behaviour and internalization of the stereotypes is most probably caused by the traumatic event of her father leaving. Her life becomes the stereotypical image of a poor Black woman – in her early twenties, she is a single mother of three children with three different fathers, working at a supermarket with an unfinished high school education. However, another trauma pushes her to improve her life. After being raped by her high school crush, which resulted in her third pregnancy, LaTisha is determined to fight for a better future for her family. Despite all the challenges and hardships, she manages to transform her life:

 this is the New LaTisha

 the one who got herself two 'A' levels at evening school (...)

 who's nearly thirty and settled on being single for as long as it takes to meet a man
 who's right for her and her kids. (Evaristo 213)

Although she is unable to change the past, she decides to learn from her previous mistakes and takes control of her own life for the sake of her children. Through the development of LaTisha's character, Evaristo shows alternative ways of succeeding in life and dealing with society's prejudice. Success means different things to different people, and in LaTisha's case, her success is indicated through careful dating, attending online courses at the Open University, working hard, and being promoted to a supervisor position.

10 Racism intersecting with other forms of oppression

This chapter will be dealing with the notion of intersectionality and how Evaristo addressed it in her novel. The diversity of her characters provides an opportunity to portray the complexity of a person's identity and experience. Through their stories, she depicts the relativity of oppression and privilege and its dependence on the context – “privilege is about context and circumstance” (Evaristo 72). She provides insight into how race, gender, or class intersect and how it influences people's lives. In her novel, Evaristo provides a wide range of characters with complex identities, who are very likely guaranteed to experience intersecting oppressions at some point in their lives, even if it is not included in the book – e.g. Amma and Dominique are both Black, women and homosexual, Morgan is Black and non-binary, or already discussed Waris, a Somali Muslim woman. Furthermore, the author uses the story of Yazz to explain the differences in experiencing discrimination and privilege and to highlight the necessity of a contextual approach while discussing oppression.

Yazz, a protagonist belonging to the youngest generation, is a devoted feminist and racial activist with a revolutionary attitude to life. She has a tendency to rate people according to their oppression – who is more privileged and who is more discriminated. She describes the issue as a “conundrum” as the extent of privilege is dependable on the circumstances and current situation and, therefore, is not static and can change over time. This can be observed in what she says to her friend Courtney:

people won't see you as just another woman any more, but as a white woman who hangs with brownies, and you'll lose a bit of your privilege, you should still check it, though. (Evaristo 65)

Essentially, she points out that despite Courtney being a part of the white race, she becomes less privileged by her association with marginalized people of colour. They further discuss the diversity of oppression and privilege among their friends. Nenet is brown and of Egyptian origin but comes from a very wealthy family. Yazz is black, but her parents have successful careers as a professor and a theatre director, Courtney, despite being white, comes from a poor family and grew up on a farm, and Waris, a Muslim daughter of Somali immigrants, is established as the least privileged one:

yes but I'm black, Courts, which makes me more oppressed than anyone who isn't, except Waris who is the most oppressed of all of them (although don't tell her that) in five categories: black, Muslim, female, poor, hijabbed she's the only one Yazz can't tell to check her privilege. (Evaristo 66)

Through the conversation of Yazz and Courtney, Evaristo introduces American author Roxane Gay, known for her essay collection *Bad Feminist*, in which she presented the concept of 'privilege Olympics':

Courtney replied that Roxane Gay warned against the idea of playing 'privilege Olympics' and wrote in *Bad Feminist* that privilege is relative and contextual, and I agree, Yazz, I mean, where does it all end? is Obama less privileged than a white hillbilly growing up in a trailer park with a junkie single mother and a jailbird father? is a severely disabled person more privileged than a Syrian asylum-seeker who's been tortured? (Evaristo 66)

By this, Evaristo emphasizes how some turned oppression into competition in which people rival who faces more challenges and, therefore, leads a harder life. There is no clear and definite way to determine who is the one more oppressed – a white living in poverty or a rich Black, a white woman or a Black man. The issue requires an empathetic and considerate approach, as the comparative attitude may have a demeaning effect on other's struggles and downplay their life experience.

Carole's life story offers a compelling portrayal of the intersection of different factors and their impact on her experience. There are three main categories that have a significant influence on how challenging her life is – race, being Black Nigerian; class, coming from a poor household; and gender, being female. As a coloured daughter of immigrants from a poor neighbourhood, Carole needed to work harder to get accepted into the University of Oxford, and even there, she faced challenges of marginalization by both her race and financial status:

they [posh students] made her feel crushed, worthless and a nobody without saying a word to her without even noticing her

nobody talked loudly about growing up in a council flat on a skyscraper estate with a single mother who worked as a cleaner (...)

nobody talked loudly about never having been on a plane, seen a play or the sea, or eaten in a restaurant, with waiters

nobody talked loudly about feeling too uglystupidfatpoor or just plain out of place, out of sorts, out of their depth (...)

when she heard another student refer to her in passing as ‘so ghetto’, she wanted to spin on her heels and shout after her. (Evaristo 132)

The contrast between Carole’s reality and the experience of the white and wealthy majority of the Oxford community prevents her from truly fitting in. The condescending behaviour and stereotyping remarks of the posh students make her feel inadequate and isolated. Despite that, she pushes through – makes friends, studies hard, and earns her degree. However, even as a graduate of a prestigious university, she needs to navigate through other obstacles thrown her way, caused by being a Black woman entering the world of finance dominated by white men. Through the course of her career, she is confronted with both gender and racial stereotyping and people’s expectations of a Black woman:

she’s used to clients and new colleagues looking past her to the person they are clearly expecting to meet

she will stride up to the client, shake his hand firmly (yet femininely), while looking him warmly (yet confidently) in the eye and smiling innocently, and delivering her name unto him with perfectly clipped Received Pronunciation, showing off her pretty (thank-god-they’re-not-too-thick) lips coated in a discreet shade of pink, baring her perfect teeth as he adjusts to the collision between reality and expectation. (Evaristo 117)

Carole has to deal with patronising behaviour not only from her male colleagues but also from her clients, as they do not expect a Black woman to be in this high position. In every situation, she is prepared for the condescending attitude of her co-workers and their implicit diminishing of Black women’s importance and abilities. Evaristo also masterfully describes the fear of being defined as a woman and labelled in a certain way. Carole is suffering from very strong and painful periods and every month, she takes a dose of painkillers to be able

to go to work and not show her weakness, and at some point, she even considered a hysterectomy in order to avoid menstruation. She is struggling with fitting into prescribed standards, and she is controlling her behaviour and appearance to prove that she, as a Black woman, has the same capabilities as men and white society.

Another struggle Black women are facing is their hypersexualization by white society. It shares certain similarities with Said's Orientalism, as the objectification and portrayal of Black women as exotic, weak, and primitive share elements of the West's depiction of the Orient. The sexualization of coloured women is represented in the story of Grace, a mixed-race daughter of an English woman and an Abyssinian man. She describes the behaviour of men towards her at the beginning of the 20th century:

Grace is right fed up of men who fancy their chances when she's alone with them,
calling her a temptress, a tease, a seductress
when she resolutely is not
it can happen anywhere, even at the castle, in the servants' back corridors or when
she's working alone in empty rooms. (Evaristo 386-387)

She points out the constant need to be vigilant in order to prevent unwanted advances and avoid situations that could ruin a woman's reputation. The blame for rape would fall on the woman, as Black women were usually described as flirtatious or promiscuous and, therefore they were blamed by society for tempting and seducing the man.

The sexualization and exoticification of women of colour is also visible in Grace's relationship with her white husband, Joseph. Even though Joseph is in love with Grace, he still manages to objectify her into the alluring image of the embodiment of mysterious exoticness – calling her Queen Cleopatra or the Lady of the Nile. In their marriage, he inflicts his own fantasies onto her:

they made love with the gas lamp dimmed
she was his expedition into Africa, he said, he was Dr Livingstone sailing
downriver in Africa to discover her at the source of the Nile
Abyssinia, she corrected him
whatever you say, Gracie. (Evaristo 393-394)

He basically disregards her own identity to maintain his projection of a mysterious and exotic idea of a Black woman. This illustrates the hierarchy present in interracial relationships and the unequal power distribution where the Black woman is treated in a condescending and dismissing way and majority of the power is held by the white male spouse.

However, intersectionality does not concern only Black women, despite being introduced by the Black feminist movement. Even Black males are affected by the intimidating public image perpetuated by the media and society that portrays Black men as a threat. The society othered Black men as dangerous, violent criminals, thieves, rapists etc. The Black male experience is described through Shirley's family, as her brothers and husband are exposed to white society's menacing preconceptions of Black men from a young age. This dehumanization of Black citizens is outlined by Shirley's husband Lennox:

he was a good student at secondary school but soon understood he was seen as a bad person outside it

an enemy of the nation on account of his skin colour. (Evaristo 230)

He highlights how, from a young age, black boys have to be especially careful about what they are wearing and how they are behaving so they would not be perceived as a threat. Through Lennox's story, Evaristo further delves into the problem of police harassment and violence that was an integral part of Black men's reality – "all black men had to learn to handle it, all black men had to be tough" (231). However, a more detailed description of the racial oppression caused by law enforcement will be provided in subsequent chapter, which addresses institutional racism.

11 Institutional racism and inequality

Racism rejects equality of races and is based on discrimination against members of non-white communities. Whenever such beliefs are implemented in political systems and various institutions, we talk about institutional racism, which “reinforces inequalities between groups—e.g., in wealth and income, education, health care, and civil rights—on the basis of the groups’ perceived racial differences” (“institutional racism”). Evaristo explores several instances of institutionalized racist ideology – discrimination in employment and housing, inequality in education, police harassment, or racial typecasting of actors, which will be further discussed in this chapter.

11.1 Lack of anti-discriminatory laws in times of the Windrush Generation

The struggles of the Windrush Generation immigrants come up in Winsome’s conversation with her granddaughter, in which she recalls her early life in England shortly after arriving from the West Indies. Winsome and a fellow Caribbean immigrant, Clovis, get married and start their life in London, renting a room in shared housing and working long hours in a factory with chemicals. When Clovis decides that he wants to pursue a career as a fisherman, he insists they move to the south of England. Although the living conditions in London were far from ideal or comfortable, immigrants were still able to make a living. However, upon their arrival in the south, they are met with open hostility in the racist English countryside:

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 caff
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, people was that rude and
ignorant back then, they spoke their mind and didn’t care that they hurt you because
there was no anti-discrimination laws to stop them
the only thing you can do is leave here and never come back, the policeman advised
us when we went to complain. (Evaristo 261-262)

This passage illustrates the harsh reality and treatment of people of colour in the conservative and ignorant south of England. Because of the lack of anti-discriminatory laws, such as the Race Relations Act passed in 1965, there was nothing preventing people from their hateful and inhospitable behaviour. Winsome remembers as they travelled through the south and people were stopping to stare at them or even calling them ‘monkey people’. On the basis of their otherness, signified by their darker skin colour, they were denied job opportunities and housing, they were thrown out of restaurants and pubs, and when they turned for help to law enforcement, the police told them to leave.

After living for a while in the countryside and experiencing its racial discrimination, Winsome confronts her husband and convinces him to move back to London. In the story of Winsome and Clovis, London holds somewhat paradoxical symbolism. On one hand, they leave London as they have to work in low-income, long-hour jobs and still not being able to secure comfortable and private accommodation. On the other hand, after living in the southern English countryside and being confronted with the openly hostile and discriminatory treatment of coloured people, they see London as a place which is more open, diverse, and tolerant and which provides more opportunities for a better life.

11.2 Inequality in education

Evaristo introduces several examples of racist ideology and white supremacy in British schooling. The first, probably the most subtle, element of racial superiority is observed by Shirley at the beginning of her teaching career at secondary school. As she walks through the school corridors and classrooms, she notices various wall decorations: posters, diagrams, drawings, and a map – “a map of the world that makes Britain rival Africa in size, testament to the colonial cartographers who got away with it for centuries, even now, it seems” (Evaristo 219). What shocks her is that, even in the late 20th century, the colonial legacy remains still present even in such seemingly small things as inaccurate maps, which indirectly impose British supremacy. Ashcroft et al. mention cartography as a tool used by the British Empire in the colonization of foreign lands – “the construction of maps, whose existence is a means of textualizing the spatial reality of the other, naming or, in almost all cases, renaming spaces in a symbolic and literal act of mastery and control” (*Post-colonial studies* 28). He points out the lack of subjectivity and desire to push the imperial agenda in

not following the geographical accuracy in the process of mapping. The disproportionate portrayal of the United Kingdom, a country that is depicted as big as an entire African continent, symbolizes its imperial power and dominance over African territories.

The second example of racism in British education is the different and biased treatment of coloured children by not only their peers but also teachers. The double standards and prejudice are clearly noticeable in the school experience of Winsome and Clovis' children. White children were both verbally and physically abusive towards their Black classmates, and without any consequences or punishment – they were calling them Sooty or physically attacking them. However, aside from being bullied by their classmates, the coloured pupils were tormented by some of their teachers:

they was getting caned and made to stand in a corner of the classroom with their faces turned to the wall by teachers who picked on them
it wasn't us, Mummy, they'd complain, it wasn't us. (Evaristo 264)

Winsome recalls that they often returned home crying after being unfairly disciplined instead of their white classmates or receiving punishment without any real reason. One time, she even witnessed as her son was attacked in front of the school by two older boys and defended himself:

as I rushed towards him Mr Moray the headmaster got there first, grabbed Tony by the scruff of his blazer and marched him back into the building
the two bully boys laughed, dusted themselves off, picked up their satchels, walked scot-free out of the gates. (Evaristo 265)

Once again, the Black boy was chastised for violent behaviour and the real perpetrators were left unpunished. Even as an adult who witnessed the whole scene, she was powerless as a Black woman against the authority of a white teacher.

Another case of institutionalized racist policies in the educational system is the dismissal of foreign education. Bummi and her husband, Augustine, are both university graduates who left Nigeria and moved to Britain in search of job opportunities. However, they soon realize that English society is not very welcoming and feels threatened by the possibility of immigrants stealing their jobs. Bummi observes:

that her first class degree from a Third World country would mean nothing in her new country especially with her name and nationality attached to it. (Evaristo 167)

Despite successfully graduating from Nigerian university, Bummi and Augustine are unable to find jobs that would appreciate their qualifications since society does not recognize their academic education and considers their degrees invalid. Therefore, they are forced to seek employment in low-income positions – Bummi as a cleaner and Augustine as a taxi driver.

After Augustine's death, which was caused by his untreated heart condition combined with working night hours and eating low-quality food, Bummi makes the resolution to fight for her place in the white English society and decides to build her own cleaning company:

she was going to become someone who employed others, rather than someone waiting to be employed

she was going to become the proprietor of her own cleaning company, which would be an Equal Opportunities Employer. (Evaristo 170)

She manages to overcome the challenges and succeeds in making her dream come true. She sets up a cleaning services company and fights racial inequality by providing job opportunities for the discriminated communities and employing first-generation immigrants.

11.3 Racism in law enforcement

This section will continue with the issue already touched upon in the chapter discussing intersectionality of oppression, namely the harassment of Black men by the police. Evaristo brings light on the reality of Black men through the life story of Shirley's husband, Lennox. Black boys and men are instructed from a young age how to look and behave in order to not come across as threatening or dangerous to avoid assault by policemen, as the media and the white society constructed the stereotypical menacing image of a Black male criminal. Lennox recalls his experience as a teenager and what it means to be a Black man in a predominantly white society:

to be stopped and frisked by the cops, which began when he was twelve and looked fifteen, terrified when these grown men manhandled him in the street in front of

everyone, tried hard not to cry, sometimes did
their parting shot, on your way, Sunshine, you're lucky this time
it was scary, creepy and emasculating (...)
every time it happened I was relieved that I wasn't beaten up or killed in a police
van or cell. (Evaristo 230-231)

Police violence has a profound influence on the quality of human life – it increases risks of mortality and physical harm and also largely impacts a person's mental health, such as causing depression, PTSD, or even suicidal tendencies (DeVylder et al. 533-535). Therefore, apart from the obvious bodily harm coming from being physically assaulted by the police, the institutionalized bias against Black men also causes emotional damage. It instils fear, feelings of anxiety and unsafety, and distrust towards law enforcement. This trauma possibly influenced Lennox's choice of career – he decided to become a lawyer, and he is now able to defend himself against the abuse of power by the police.

11.4 Typecasting of British actors in theatre

Typecasting is a stereotyping practice employed in the casting processes, which is based on always giving “an actor the same type of character to play, usually because he or she is physically suited to that type of part” (“Typecast”). The stereotypical role casting labels actors and restricts their ambitions and job opportunities. This practice is particularly harmful to non-white actors as their skin colour, or other distinctive features of physical appearance predetermine them for a limited number of roles. Evaristo delves into the issue of racial role stereotyping in theatre in the story of Amma, a Black actress and playwright. She and her friend Dominique are constantly “being put up for parts such as a slave, servant, prostitute, nanny or crim” (Evaristo 6). Both are confronted with demeaning and biased treatment on their acting journey:

Amma was shorter, with African hips and thighs
perfect slave girl material one director told her when she walked into an audition
for a play about Emancipation
(...)
in turn a casting director told Dominique she was wasting his time when she turned

up for a Victorian drama when there weren't any black people in Britain then she said there were, called him ignorant before also leaving the room (Evaristo 6-7)

The constant objectification of Black women and perpetuation of racial stereotypes in the industry leads to their disillusionment and realization that the situation is not going to improve unless they contribute to the change. They establish their own Bush Women Theatre Company in order to fight for their rights:

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 14)

They set the company's standards and policies in accordance with their own rules and preferences since remaining in the white mainstream entertainment industry would either mean failing in their careers or betraying their beliefs and principles to succeed. Their company's production fights against racial typecasting and gives voice to marginalized women of colour.

The Bush Women Theatre is a symbol of resistance against oppression. It confronts the mainstream National Theatre and its stereotyping of Black women and discriminatory practices. Moreover, Amma's activism and the establishment of the Bush Women Theatre is an autobiographic feature of the novel. It represents the author's own experience, as she herself was an activist and co-founder of the Theatre of Black Women in the 1980s (Sethi). Eventually, Amma becomes a director of the National Theatre in London as the first woman in this position. The opening night of her play *The Last Amazon of Dahomey* is one of the novel's climactic moments as the co-protagonists attend its premiere in London. The play and its characters, Black female warriors, symbolize the novel's characters and their unity in fighting racism and other oppression.

Conclusion

The primary aim of the diploma thesis has been to analyse Bernardine Evaristo's portrayal of racism and its various forms in her polyphonic novel *Girl, Woman, Other*. The first part provided a theoretical framework relevant for the thesis' analysis. It explained the notion of race, racism and its different forms, relevant postcolonial concepts, such as the Other, otherness, liminality, and hybridity. Furthermore, it presented intersectionality, outlined the novel's historical context from the 20th to 21st century, and introduced Bernardine Evaristo and her perspective on racism and *Girl, Woman, Other*.

The practical part included the analysis of racism in Britain portrayed in the intertwined stories of Evaristo's characters. It started with a brief chapter outlining the analysis and presenting the primary material – *Girl, Woman, Other*. The outline was followed by a chapter dealing with racial identity struggles of people of colour and immigrants in Britain. It discussed different phenomena causing identity crisis of Blacks – feeling of non-belonging caused by othering, pressure of society to represent their otherness, clash of cultures of second-generation immigrants, internalization of racist beliefs, and confrontation with their African ancestry. The next chapter discussed interpersonal racism, its different realizations, such as racial bias and stereotyping, ignorance, prejudiced comments, abusive name-calling, and the consequent acceptance of stereotyping by the oppressed individual. Another chapter addressed the complexity of oppression and privilege and the intersections between racism, sexism, and classism. The last chapter dealt with institutional racism – Evaristo's description of the lack of anti-discriminatory laws in Britain after the World War II, inequality and double standards in education, abuse of power by law enforcement, and typecasting of Black actors and actresses in theatre.

The diversity of *Girl, Woman, Other*'s characters and the wide variety of the novel's themes most certainly provides an interesting material for different studies. A lot of research on *Girl, Woman, Other* deals with the idea of womanhood and feminism. However, Evaristo's novel addresses more than race and gender. Further research could involve the study of interpersonal relationships based on the novel's characters – including intergenerational relations, friendships, romantic relationships, etc. Moreover, the author

wrote the novel in a non-standard way and experimented with her language and, therefore, her language could be used as a corpus for linguistic research.

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