

Oppression on Black Women in Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl,* *Woman, Other*

by Herika Herika

Submission date: 12-Jul-2023 02:52PM (UTC+0700)

Submission ID: 2130020342

File name: SASING_HERIKA_1611900058.docx (53.78K)

Word count: 5796

Character count: 29412

Oppression on Black Women in Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*

Herika, Drs. Danu Wahyono, M.Hum.

ABSTRACT

The article is about Oppression on Black Women in Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*. The problems are: (1) How is the oppression on black women representation in Bernardine Evaristo *Girl, Woman, Other*? (2) What are the causes of oppression on black women in Bernardine Evaristo *Girl, Woman, Other*? (3) What are the effects of oppression on black women in Bernardine Evaristo *Girl, Woman, Other*? The objective of the study is to find reflection of oppression on black women and the cause and the effect of the oppression. In analysis the problem, the thesis writer applies a qualitative method. The thesis writer uses extrinsic approach and psychological approach. The analysis shows that black women experience oppression. The forms of oppression found were discrimination, sexual harassment, racism, verbal abuse, violence, exploitation, and powerlessness. Several causes that make black women experience oppression such as patriarchy, social status, and lack of resources make them experience oppression. The effects of oppression largely determine a women's reaction after experiencing bullying. Some of the effects of oppression are the first household that can be seen. Women take care of all household chores and serve their husbands, because position for men that is higher than women. The second is taking care of children. A woman changes perceptions and as a mother who always protects her children from oppression that ensures happiness of her children. From this analysis it can be concluded that oppression occurs when there is group power to become oppressors, there are causes of oppression so that it has an effect on someone after experiencing oppression.

Keywords: Oppression, Black, Women, Patriarchy, Racism

Submitted:
XX May 20xx

Accepted:
XX June 20xx

Published:
XX July 20xx

1. INTRODUCTION

The oppression of black women has become popular throughout history around the world. Black women often face discriminatory treatment compared to their white counterparts, and are frequently regarded as inferior humans. Oppression typically entails violent acts against black women and men. Those vulnerable and confine themselves to their surroundings are often ostracized, even in anonymity or in plain sight. Oppression can take many forms, including but not limited to race, religion, gender, sexuality, discrimination, and others. Although women are inherently weaker than men, they often get bad behaviour from both growth and development such as in Nigeria. The vast majority of African-American women always brought to the United States to work as slaves in a situation of oppression. Oppression is any unjust situation where, systematically and over a long period of time, one group denies another group access to the resources of society.

According to Patricia Hill Collins (2000, p. 04) women are inherently weaker than men, they often get bad behaviour from both growth and development such as in Nigeria. The vast majority of African-American women always brought to the United States to work as slaves in a situation of oppression. Oppression is any unjust situation where, systematically and over a long period of time, one group denies another group access to the resources of society. Race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, age, and ethnicity among others constitute major forms of oppression in the United States. However, the convergence of race, class, and gender oppression characteristic of US slavery shape all subsequent relationships that women of Africa descent had within Black American families and another. Causes of oppression arise when people have different viewpoints or one individual has greater power in an establishment or system. This form of oppression includes economic, cultural, social, and political.

Those who oppose violence can use various means to fight it. However, many people succumb to the suppression due to their inability to fight back. Black women often face oppression, inequality, and discrimination, both physically and mentally. Oppression of all kinds affects those who suffer in both the short and long term. Oppression of women or black women is still prevalent in today's society. From private discussions to government decisions, the impact on a person's mental health is significant, not only psychologically but also physically and in terms of reproduction. In addition, victims may experience eating and sleeping disturbances and may even have suicidal thoughts, which do not necessarily occur after the trauma.

In this article, that reflect the oppression of women is *Girl, Woman, Other* by Bernardine Evaristo, which is a novel picture of the oppression on black women that occurs in Nigeria. This book is one of the winner books prizes 2019 Written. The novel tells a story about oppression black women of immigrant descent who come to The United Kingdom a long time. The story begins with Amma, who with enthusiasm, fought for years as a black actress. Her best friend, Dominique becomes involved in an emotional relationship with Nzinga, a controlling woman. Amma's headstrong daughter, Yazz, starts college and meets a group of friends who challenge her view of the world. Meanwhile, Carole lives with her Nigerian mother, Bummi, in a flat in London. With the help of his teacher, Shirley King, he became successful as a banker. Since she is an adult, Bummi started his own cleaning business. She also had a lesbian relationship with one of her employees, Omofe, but the relationship didn't work out as she could no longer cope with the shame of being in a same-sex relationship. After that, Shirley's career began with excitement and hope, but then she became disillusioned. Megan's lack of identity support from her liberal parents led her to turn to drugs and search the internet for answers. Later, she meets his aunt, who introduces him to a gender non-binary life. Penelope, the daughter of racist white parents, discovers that her real roots and ethnicity are not what she thought they were. "*Girl Woman Other*" is a contemporary, personal and political novel about what it means to be a black woman in Britain today. This story unites generations of women with the people they love to reflect the complexities of race, gender, friendship, politics and love.

This research uses Iris Marion Young's oppression theory. According to Young, understand oppression as a structural phenomenon. Structural oppression refers to inequality and injustice experienced by the target group in a way that harms members of other suitable social groups, while members of other suitable social groups benefit from the harm suffered by those who are oppressed. Structural oppression is especially true for black women, where they cannot freely express their ideas, feelings, and needs. The concept of oppression has been classified into five types, each denoting an oppressed group that cannot be specifically defined. These are the faces; exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence.

The writer of this thesis interesting to study literary Oppression in the novel. Since the oppression on black woman has a rising popularity in society now days, the writer chooses this novel because the oppression of black women is increasingly popular in today's society. The writer chooses this novel because it depicts the oppression of black women strongly. Through the novel *Girl, Woman Other*, the thesis writer is interested in Oppression on Black Women in Bernardine Evaristo.

2. METHOD

This research uses qualitative. The qualitative method is used to collect the necessary data from to achieve the research objectives and references relating to the topic to support the analysis. According to Creswell (2014, p. 04) qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or group ascribe to a social or human problem. In this study the data taken from novel about the oppression of women and quotations in the novel. The literary approach used in this

12 study the psychological approach which discusses the psychological oppression on black women by Bernardine Evaristo's novel *Girl, Woman, Other* based on the psychoanalytic theory by George Eliot.

The writer chooses psychological approach. According to George (2010) explained that psychological approach a form of evaluation that draws on psychological and literary theory. This approach focuses on the characters in literary works, the relationships between characters, and even the author's life. Based on the definition above, the writer uses a psychological approach because the researcher discusses the causes and consequences of oppression on black women.

The data source for this research is taken from a novel entitled *Girl, Woman, Other* by Bernardine Evaristo which consists of 453 pages and 5 chapter. The data are in the form of quotations, all words, narration, and conversations with oppression from the novel is research data. Then, this research is also supported by several journals related to the problem in this research.

The data collection procedure in this study is carried out with the following steps. The first is reading the novel *Girl, Woman, Other* by Bernardine Evaristo repeatedly and analyses the parts of the story that show the oppression of women, especially black women. the second is writer underlines and highlight related data through character are the representation, causes and effects of oppression. The lastly is writer processes the data based on the theory.

3 The data analysis procedure used in this research is the descriptive analysis technique. The following steps are the procedure for analysing the data. The first is reading and understanding "*Girl, Woman, Other*". The second is categorizing the data based on the theory of oppression. The researcher will divide the data by looking at which data is use to show the oppression. The lastly is classifying the discussion into the representation of oppression on black women, the cause and the effect of oppression towards black women.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This part is the analysis of oppression on women in *Girl, Woman, Other*. In presenting the discussion the analysis is divided into three parts: the representation of oppression, the causes of oppression, and the effects of oppression.

3.1 The Representation of Oppression on Black Women

The oppression of women is a constant topic of conversation. Yazz's mother Amma is Dominique's best friend. She is growing by her mother Helen, and is born in England, and her father Kwabena, is Ghanaian journalist who is compel to immigrate to the UK after supporting the independence movement. Domestic abuse is one of them. These violent crimes take place in interpersonal settings, particularly those involving family and other close friends. Black women encounter racism and ageism in *Girl, Woman, Other*. She continually criticizes her parents for not having a sufficient feminist perspective as a teenager she has strong and radical feminist political ideas. She joins the social and political movement in seeking gender parity. Rather than protest in silence or passively accept the patriarchy, she actively opposes it. As long as men rule this planet, she fights not only for their rights as women, but are also for their rights as black people. she is a passionate, irrational, and unrepentant person. She stands up for what she believes in. She is not afraid to correct others who disagree with her. At some time, she understands that she is oppression due to the hue of her skin; she frequently encounters invisible discrimination. She does not conform to the norm. It can be seen in the following quotation:

4 Yazz knows full well that Amma will always be anything but normal, and as she's in her fifties, she's not old yet, although try telling that to a nineteen-year-old; in any case, ageing is nothing to be ashamed of Especially when the entire human race is in it together although sometimes it seems that she alone among her friends wants to celebrate getting older. Because it's such a privilege to

not die prematurely, she tells them as the night draws in around her kitchen table in her cosy terraced house in Brixton as they get stuck into the dishes each. (Evaristo, 2019:3-4)

The quotation above show that she doesn't realize she is discriminate against. Yazz wants her mother to shop for her clothes at Marks & Spencer, where all the other mums did. She finally concludes that his mother should have known all too well that Amma would always be something abnormal, which she defines as something typically ordinary or ordinary. Aside from scowling about clothes, Yazz's mom's emotions are unlike any other mom', she is not what one would anticipate from a woman, much less a Black women, who refuses to go shopping and do what is expected of her. Yazz, Amma's daughter, frequently criticizes her parents for what she perceives to be their disparate progressive idea. she has a strong commitment to social justice and inherit his family's spirit of revolution. Yazz makes the mistake of ranking his friends' oppression levels from most to least, failing to recognize how intersectionality undermines the straightforward narrative he's try to impose on the world. It can be seen in the following quotation:

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, hijabed. She's the only one Yazz can't tell to check her privilege. (Evaristo, 2019:66)

The quotation above show that the oppression is racist against the colour of the victim's skin. They don't want women of colour to join their circle or to be like brownies who lose some of their privileges because of being white. after class Yazz queued to use the restroom, she takes on the role of defuse discord between Black and white Women who are argue insults with each other, and she is under the threat that Black and white Women would never interact and would not never been a full-fledged sister not only in honour of being black. Black women therefore don't even get a chance to demonstrate that they can. Since they are three of the few women of colour at school, she and her friends Waris and Nenets got to know each other very quickly among other students. They identify they friendship as the Unfuckables or can't be bothered, alienate themselves from the school environment which often gets racist treatment by white women. Women claim the right to live in privilege and ability to achieve their power as black women.

3.2 The Cause of Oppression on Black Women

These are several causes of oppression that happen in *Girl, Woman, Other* by Bernardine Evaristo as The Patriarchy, Lack of Resources and Social Status.

3.2.1 The Patriarchy

The patriarchal social structure places men in a position of dominance over women regarding political leadership, social rights, and property ownership. Women are often the object of prejudice under the patriarchal paradigm because they are seen as weak creatures. She and his parents fled to Somalia, following their people. She suffers because the Somalis often hate them and are unpleasant. The headscarf she wears is the cause of the cruelty of Somalis' life, who are ridicule people who cannot see each other well because of the colour of their skin. When she looks, it seems that the white people are getting whiter while the black people are getting darker. Even though she has very good intentions, she feels bad going through tough days and is constantly seen as prejudice. It can be seen in the following quotation:

Then there was the 'after era', when her mother said they began to be viewed with blatant hostility that gets worse every time a jihadist white people up, or mow them down in a truck at

times like these Waris braces herself to get even more shoved, spat at and called names such as dirty Arab when I'm not even Arab, Yazz. (Evaristo,2019:58)

The quotation above shows that black women's emancipation at the time is so horrifying, and it makes their life under patriarchy much more terrible. Black women who are viewed as terrorists are treated harshly; they are ridiculed, spat on, and use filthy Arabic. The Somali state despises women who wear the hijab because they view them as terrorists who carry out suicide bombings in churches, which will disrupt their citizens' quiet lives and drive them to become restless. The Somali people and government consistently take arbitrary action without taking into account the defenses of black women. She is unable to participate in social events because she doesn't want to invite antagonism. Perceptions of patriarchal culture cause men to view women as inferior so that they are treated arbitrarily through sexual violence or sexual degrading. This is also felt by Carole who experiences sexual violence with her male friend. When she attends a party at a friend's house where she is sexually harassed, she grabs a restricted body area by a student named Trey and asks for sex. That night she is filled with fear of what to do to protect herself quietly among the people as if nothing has ever happened. She is looking for her friend to take her home and never finds him, so she follows a man who is the same man trying to seduce her, but she says seduction with the lure will make her the queen of his life. They tell stories of heart and heart which make her even more shocked she is forced to make her refuse with the help of force to free herself from the clutches of several men but she is quickly caught and then she is raped by a different man and endures pain all over her body and she doesn't know what to do just surrender that she feels. It can be seen in the following:

10 When she opened them, she couldn't see, she'd been blindfolded, her arms were pinned above her head how had he clothes come off?

Then her body wasn't her own no more it belonged to them and she, who loved numbers, became innumerate couldn't, didn't want to (Evaristo, 2019:125-126)

The quotation above shows that in the case of a lady who is repeatedly sexually attacked, she struggles with embarrassment from her friends and her surroundings and finds it difficult to go out in public. She chooses to shut herself in her room and is troubled by the image of the person who has sexually attacked her in her thoughts rather than telling him what has happened that evening. Because everything that transpired that night is all her responsibility, she is accused by her friends, who also condemn the way she appears in public as if to attract men. She is then making fun of. She is confusing as to why none of her pals stood up for her and instead supports the person who has treated her so abhorrently. She is traumatic going out at night, feels anxious in a crowd, though everyone looks down on her, and is afraid to socialize with her surroundings as a result of that occurrence.

13 3.2.2 Social Status

Social status is the relative level within an individual with rights, a lifestyle in a social hierarchy based on honour. Status also includes gender, age, race, and family relationships. Social status can also be one of the reasons a fire can happen to someone. Violence against women has become a common action in life in Nigeria, women with immigration status are oppressed by the government in power with religious extremists. This is also felt by Megan who is drawn as a tomboy, in a social environment women must wear women's clothing and not form a body. She is forced to dress like a graceful woman, but she always refuses. In social circles she always gets insults like a dirty woman who resembles a man's style. On top of that, the neglect of her family that she felt so depresses her. She felt the culprit is unfair in the social and family environment. Her life is unsettled with ridicule that makes her angry and disgusted with her a strange woman. She is forced to dress like a woman in general so that her good name will be noticed by society. It can be seen in the following quotation:

6 she was determined to dress Megan up for the approval of society at large, usually other females who commented on her looks from as early as she can remember it was the defining aspect of Megan's early childhood (Evaristo, 2019:308)

The quotation above show that conform to social norms by defining gender in accordance with them. She felt compel to seek her mother's approval because of the way she dresses. When she has to wear awful clothing, she frequently felt let down and sobbed. Riots and rebellion over the clothing she will wear result in indirect verbal abuse, curses, and insults, to the point that her own mother curses her. Her family treats her unfairly since they are aware of the social mores that do not respect her right to wear whatever she chooses in private, but they don't really care. In contrast to Amma, she always supports her child's decisions as long as they do not put her in danger because that is a legal right in our society. But a lot of them want their Yazz destroy because they believe that black women are frequently marginalized by the words and actions of a sizable portion of society that frequently shows disrespect for women. It can be seen in the following quotation.

8 When Yazz talks about her unusual upbringing to people, the unworldly ones expect her to be emotionally damaged from it, like how can you not be when your mum's a polyamorous lesbian and your father's a gay narcissist (as she describes him), and you were shunted between both their homes and dumped with various god-parents while your parents pursued their careers? (Evaristo, 2019:52)

The quotation above show that explain Yazz felt offend whenever someone make a bad comment about his parents. Given that his mother was a polyamorous lesbian and his father is gay, many of them anticipate that she will be upset. the humiliation she receives will not be shame of what his parents did in the dark ages. She felt a deep pain when she passes a grocery store that she wants to forget. Imagining in his mind the humiliation of his parents that make she cry while walking. In the midst of community life, she is always helpless, neglected status, loss of respect among them. She always imagines continuing to live in a dark life without oppression. There is hope for him to be able to live a normal life like society in general.

3.2.3 Lack of Resources

A person's poverty can result in the emergence of oppression from a person or group due to having limited economic matters. Poverty in the novel *Girl, Woman, Other* is depicted in black women from Nigeria who experience the oppression of poverty and are ostracized from society. This was felt by Bummi who did not have any property when the agriculture left by her father is damage by an irresponsible company. Then they lost their only home because they were kick out by their father's brother. They have to get out and walk to their grandmother's house. On the way, they are always made fun of by the people whom they meet. Exploring the forest all the way makes him sad to see his life's situation getting worse, the burning anger makes him want to fight the people who have insulted him and his mother along the way but she doesn't have that great courage because his fear is greater than his courage. She accepts everything that happened and set out on a journey to get to his grandmother's house. It can be seen in the following quotation:

Comot for dis place now-now, we no wan see your leg here again, you no get anything to do for this place! 17 Bummi remembers the long walk with mama through the forest to her grandparents' home (Evaristo,2019:160)

The quotation above show that when her father's family force him out of her hut. They make every effort to survive in this devastated area where massive oil companies drill thousands of meters into the earth to extract millions of barrels of oil to power the entire planet while leaving the soil that grows the oil to rot and oppress the weak for their own again. They don't have any, let alone the oppression they face is endless, society mocks him, the rotten land makes him filled with anger. Every day crying what he has experience alienated from a social life that he does not want.

3.3 The Effect of Oppression on Black Women

Oppression can affect someone, when someone experiences bullying, it usually hurts that individual. In society, the gap in position between women and men has been bound for a long time. The social environment tends to place women's position as second position after men. Narrated in *Girl, Woman, Other*, society views women as only able to work at home, as housewives who take care of a family, especially serving their husbands. The oppression that befalls Nigerian women, many blacks are affected by domestic violence by their husbands and they have to work only at home. It can be seen in the following quotation:

2 She realized then that what she'd hitherto thought personal to her was, in fact, applicable to many women, masses of them, women whose husbands forced them to stay at home when they were more than willing to put their intellect to good use in the skilled workforce, women, such as herself, who were going bonkers wit boredom and banality. (Evaristo,2019:289)

The quotation above show that men's power is greater than women who are only allow to take care of the household, and strictly prohibit women from working outside the home. Women are consider weaker and helpless than men. Women or wives have limitations in placing their choices and desires. Besides that, women also have a tendency to obey their husband's wishes, even if they have bad intentions. Women are also limit to raising children and taking care of the house. Every day, she has to wash the routine activities that she has to do for women in the household. What is done by Nigerian women is often refer to as "women's nature" is actually a cultural arrangement that exists in a society. It was also what Shirley felt that she is starting to feel unsure about her actions. She has to decide what to say to explain the meaning of the picture of a black man hanging to death from a tree so that her children would not be afraid of the horrific truth behind the picture. Then he confronts Education which showed pictures of the Bergen Belsen concentration camp in America. She asks to be silent for the safety of his students. Instantly he felt scared when she is stopped by the police but she has to stay calm against that fear which meant more than his courage to face and think about the situation she has to stay safe and be around him she didn't let his children experience the oppression she has face in the dark ages. It can be seen in the following quotation:

2 Their parting shot, on your way, Sunshine, you're lucky this time it was scary, creepy and emasculating, he told Shirley the first time he let his guard down and confided in her, every time it happened I was relieved that I wasn't beaten up or killed in a police van or cell. (Evaristo, 2019:231-232)

The quotation above show that, it is normal for someone to feel scared and might want to cry when they hear the police calling them for a search. A mother always fights her fear and pretends to be

strong in front of her child to avoid the fear that she doesn't want to let her child be in a dangerous situation. Keeping her child in her arms, she is still traumatic for the police. Although Women can no longer do anything without feeling intimidation because they are not in that state. Penelope's unhappiness still makes her very miserable. Regarding anxiety about potential scenarios. The uncertain thoughts that made him sick kept him awake at night. She was quite depressed; she didn't want to part with her grandchildren because she didn't want them to feel the same way when she was shunned by society and had nowhere to turn. She strives to be the grandmother who is always there for her grandchildren and whom they can rely on in times of need. She thought her children would never admit that she wasn't a bad mother. She always believes that she is traumatized by things that had yet to happen because of his persistent imagination. It can be seen in the following quotation:

6 now Penelope's suffering from post-traumatic disorder because yesterday she went online to check her emails after her traditional Friday lunch of 'penne & Pinot' with a gal pal divorce, and there it was. (Evaristo, 2019:446)

The quotation above shows that how the anxiety causes her fear affects her. Black women are always worried that their descendants and future generations will leave them. She always believes that if she is separate from her child and out of sight, she will fear the same persecution that she had experienced. A state of stress and anxiety leads her to believe that things don't happen all the time. The way women respond to powerful groups influences their lives, and they try to keep their children away from anything that might intimidate them. Black women give various characters a deeper level of development in terms of characteristics. They show courage to face oppressive masters in *Girl, Woman, Other*. Unlike LaTisha, who got pregnant out of wedlock, her parents force her out of the family. She couldn't believe her mother could leave her while she is pregnant. Her mother will not give away the unborn child she is carrying even the slightest bit from her mind. She tries to support herself and the child she brought while working as a supermarket cashier.

4. CONCLUSION

20 From the results of the analysis carried out in the novel *Girl, Woman, Other*, it can be concluded that the main cause of the oppression of black women is the gender discrimination in the social environment and by white groups. Many times, white people mistreat black women. When black women are weak, oppression takes advantage of them, causing them to lose part of their rights and power. This illustrates how black women's status is devalued in society.

Black women are subjected to discrimination, brutality, and exploitation. They also endure injustice. Amma is a white lady who ardently challenges the patriarchy of battling for black women's rights. However, she is verbally harassing members of her own family. Amma and Dominique can only be silent when white theatre empowers people of colour when they create a women's theatre group and become high school activists. They discuss what it means to be a black woman, which causes disapproval. In Nigeria, violence against women is a widespread issue, especially for those in precarious situations due to a lack of resources, education, or social status. A woman of colour must prioritize her home life, responsible for doing household chores, and taking care of children. Black women are forced to choose between having a family and working.

Many women of colour are marginalized as a result of discrimination that benefits men. Then they encountered racism from white feminists who frequently passed judgment on black women without taking their emotions into account. They were always seen as hostile and violent toward black women. Black women who face sexual assault, rape, or harassment are often compelled to have sex without their consent, which is a horrific act. Many black women experience the traumatic effects of

bullying because black women are bullied at work, in the family, and at home. Black women often face bullying, which causes them to experience extreme fear and anxiety. Because of a toxic relationship, one that is as controlling and isolating as a bird in a cage, even attacking physically and intellectually. In addition, black women have the fortitude to fight injustice and do it in a way that benefits society. Despite frequently feeling intimidated by one of the black women portrayed in the book *Girl, Woman, Other*.

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