Polyphonic Feminism: Intersectionality and the Multiplicity of Women's Voices in Bernardine Evaristo's Girl, Woman, Other

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Sections Info	ABSTRACT
	Objective: This article explores Bernardino Evaristo's *girl, woman,* and *other* as a literary statement of intersectional feminism. It focuses on the polyphonic structure used by the novelist and how challenges monolithic exemplification of womanhood. Despite of receiving considerable critical acclaim for its variety, less interest has been given by scholars to the interplay between feminist politics and narrative form. *Method:* This article deals with that gap by analyzing how the multiplicity of voices through the novel presents complicated intersection of class, generational history, sexuality and race, especially within the framework of black British women's competences and experiences. The research utilizes close textual analysis of the twelve correlated narratives to examine how the writer creates her feminist version; that is totally based on Kimberle Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality as well as the concept of polyphony by Mikhail Bakhtin. *Results:* The outcomes suggest that stylistic choice functions as less than polyphony. It becomes a way to intensify marginalized perspectives stand against the patriarchal and cultural elimination. *Novelty:* This study helps to show how formal novelty in literature can draw political and cultural critique.

INTRODUCTION

Feminism is about the social transformation of gender relations and how society organizes, values, and inhabits new norms [1]. It combines theory and action to challenge victimization and address structural inequalities related to race and gender. In a context of globalization, individualism, and uncertainty, strategies are employed at a micro level to facilitate social change, giving marginalized groups, especially women, a voice. Equal access to education is a key way for women to participate and challenge powerful discourses [2]. Cultures contain elements both empowering and disenfranchising women; recognising and salvaging cultural aspects that uplift women is essential. Gender serves as an analytical framework to understand women's experiences related to education, activism, violence, identity, sexuality, and poverty. Literature and poetry amplify women's voices and contributions, fostering recognition and inclusion.

The narrative of *Girl, Woman, Other* is constructed through twelve distinct yet interconnecting stories, each foregrounded by a female protagonist [3]. Characters range from a Ugandan academic and her Somali-born partner; an independent Frenchwoman fostering diversity in theatre; a Black activist disenchanted with her movement's Bashir regime stance; a working-class mother dedicated to education; to a feminist poet navigating her identity. This spectrum encompasses a wide array of races, sexualities, ages, generations, and stages of womanhood, thus embodying the multiplicity of

women's experiences. Presented in a polyphonic manner, the novel lends mounting urgency to individual male oppression and highlights feminism's ongoing disruptive potential. Evaristo's intervention into this heterogenous debate promotes a feminist discourse that rejects essentialism and embraces multiplicity.

RESEARCH METHOD
Theoretical Frameworks

The multiplicity of voices that the novel presents to the reader has a direct relation to the theoretical framework, manifesting a harmony between what it conveys and what it demonstrates. Nested within this framework is intersectionality, an essential motif that originates from feminist theory and functions dually as a challenge to systemic injustices and as a methodology for examining the layering of multiple identities. [4] illustrates that each of the twelve characters personifies a unique confluence of intersecting elements, with stylized chapters allowing their extant topic to unfold amidst a polyphony of perspectives. Proceeding to the section on Multiplicity of Voices elucidates this synergy of concepts.

Feminist theory concerns itself with our socialized understandings of gender difference and the resulting systematic inequalities. Within this, feminist critiques of language concentrate on normative structures and representations, paying particular attention to those deemed 'other' by hegemonic norms. Intersectionality as explained by [3] intersects with these notions of power and oppression, propensity to street policing, gendered social conventions and institutional praxes, and intravention in order to discern the situated and networked nature of identitarian dynamics. Originating within social science, the concept has since traversed disciplines and methodologies to become a contested yet heavily appraised analytic. Literary polyphony entails the intentional cultivation of multiple strands of perspective and affect, evoking the developmental potential of voices entangled in political reckoning and ethical attentiveness. The harbinger of a resilient criticality, polyphony is summoned as an apparatus for feminist diffractive witnessing [5].

1. Feminist Theories

This study applies feminist theories and intersectionality as an analytical tool for investigating the multiple forms of oppression experienced by marginalized populations. The autobiographical literature of women living under oppressive conditions is also relevant because it reflects the voices of those who find no sanctuary in spaces designated by oppressive social hierarchies. From this perspective, [6] added that a feminist alliance can be forged in which the differences and problems faced by all women become potentialities in a collective effort to dismantle the master's house and construct a "house of differences".

2. Understanding Intersectionality

The concept of intersectionality forms the cornerstone of contemporary feminist thought by elucidating how various forms of oppression—rooted in race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality—intersect to shape individual experiences [3]. Femininity itself is a

constitutive element intimately entwined with these dynamic social relations, as the body functions both as the subject and object of bodily politics and visual culture. Proper analytical engagement with these frameworks is crucial because feminist perspectives often associate their significance with the underlying social experience of gender, thereby necessitating nuanced attentiveness to intersectional nuances. Now in circulation for several decades, literature on intersectionality encompasses a broad array of disciplines. Relevant conceptual interrogations also address the relationships between discourse and subject constitution. As a broad analytical trajectory, [7] emphasizes that intersectionality embraces multiple theoretical trajectories and research foci rather than a singular universal framework; the key challenge concerns integrating these multiple approaches in fruitful ways. This chapter foregrounds several central facets of intersectionality to inform reading the contemporary British novel.

3. Literary Voices and Polyphony

The narrative of Girl, Woman, Other is polyphonic, developed through twelve characters, most of whom are women. It centres on the lives of these characters amid historical and political shifts in Britain. The novel demonstrates the role of narrative and storytelling in its protagonists' construction of identity and their articulation of personal and collective histories. Each character's distinctive voice reflects a variety of perspectives, concerns, and interests, forms of gendered behaviour and cultural negotiation, and the novel's engagement with the nature of alterity and the status of contested identities in a divided society [8]. These twelve voices detect and explore the interstices, rhythms, and intersections of contemporary British social, cultural, identity, and historical experience. Not only is one voice located within the novel, but the narrative is polyvocal in its engagement with structures of feeling and ideological discourse.

The multiplicity of voices in the novel is parallelled by a broader definition of plurality concerning the characters' locations within diachronic relations to time and history. Girl, Woman, Other explores how voices are filtered through time and, therefore, how the past and historical constructions of Britain remain an inseparable and pivotal part of contemporary life. The narrative's twelve titular interrelated voices act simultaneously as individuals, as also members of collectivities with their own correlating intersubjective voices, and as commentators upon imagined national history and the status of particular groupings within the nation. The novel embraces strongly the character of Britain as a collective pulsing form constituted from a variety of situated and specific voices:"*I love Britain, too, Amma, although less so every time I return, it's become a living memory for me, Britain feels in the past, even when I'm in its present*" [9]. The polyphony does not derive from the possibility of a shared national voice; rather, it stems from the extent to which polyvocality, a multitude of temporally and spatially positioned voices, remains central to any exploration of history, identity, and the self.

Narrative Overview

[10] foregrounds the polyphonic nature of contemporary feminist debate and presents a multifaceted picture of the challenges involved in establishing a feminist position that gives voice to a broad range of women's experiences and perspectives. By

offering the interwoven stories of twelve characters, mostly women, whose lives intersect at various points over a twenty-five-year period, the novel highlights the diversity of women's voices and demonstrates how race, ethnicity, sexual identity, and socioeconomic status influence women's perceptions of themselves and their relationship to others.

"look at my Women's Arts' Festival? think of the size of the audiences over there, the support networks, the conversations, the high-powered black people operating at every level of society" [9].

Through this excerpt, Evaristo's narrative emphasises the value of a polyphonic approach to feminism and illustrates the potential of literature to play a significant role in the task of articulating the multiplicity of women's voices. A distinct voice is developed through each of the twelve characters and each is given a narrative on her own terms. By constituting a chorus of multiple voices, the novel resolves what must otherwise remain a tension and presents the multiplicity rather than a single unified position. Evaristo suggests that the challenge for feminist writers who are interested in giving a literary platform to marginalized perspectives is not simply to bring those perspectives to light, but, more important, to display the plurality of women's voices rather than enlisting individual woman to represent a homogonous group or claiming autonomy on behalf of a minority.

1. Character Analysis and Exploration

Evaristo's Girl, Woman, Other comprises the stories of 12 characters and 10 narratives that unfold across decades. The narrative follows a group of women and one nonbinary character, all of whom are linked by their experiences around the margins of contemporary Britain. The novel's ensemble cast includes African, Caribbean, and Anglo–English identities; a young single mother; an adopted member of the Windrush generation; a nonbinary punk poet; two Black lesbians; a performance artist; a political activist; a clergyperson of mixed heritage; and an academic, artist, and Zimbabwean single mother. These characters are unified by a shared sense of contingency and a strong desire to express their voices [11].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Multiplicity of Voices

The novel's unique narrative structure, which alternates among the perspectives of twelve differently situated characters across eleven chapters, accentuates the multiplicity of women's voices. Each story is told through a first-person narrator, even in the chapters featuring male characters, which reinforces the radically polyphonic nature of the text. This array of perspectives—from first-wave feminists and black working-class lesbians to playwrights and young Islamists—illustrates the complexity of Britain as a multicultural society and underscores the differential narrative possibilities of 'the many' rather than a singular representative voice. Evaristo employs polyphony as a strategy to generate multiplicity instead of homogeneity, thereby paradoxically opening avenues for the radical intervention of a unified feminist voice. *"tragedies and other classics, instead of writing plays about black women which will never have popular appeal, simply because the*

majority of the majority sees the majority of Les Négresses as separate to themselves, an embodiment of Otherness" [9]. The women featured in the novel represent the intersections of feminist thought with postmodern concerns for diversity and multiplicity within such parameters. Their distinctive voices embody the temporal and spatial fluctuations of intersectionality in terms of class, ethnicity, race, generation, religious belief, and sexual. While conventional depictions of a merely black British ethnic group or a female lesbian community provide stable and uni-dimensional identities, [12] asserted that the polyphonic narrative construction successfully dispels these notions through its multiple and inter-related narrative perspectives

1. Narrative Structure

The narrative intricacy of Bernardine Evaristo's Girl, Woman, Other provides a fertile ground for exploring the polyphony of women's voices. The structural decisions are critical in advancing the objective of presenting multiplicity, elevating archive, and embracing intersectionality as a vital constituent of feminism.

The novel's core structure revolves around the intertwined lives of twelve characters, mainly women, all connected to twentieth-century Britain. They form a count of twelve but are distributed unevenly across the book's twelve chapters. The observant reader can discern that the first group of chapters lends precedence to a bias toward black British cultural models relevant in the last third of the twentieth century. The archive connected to the history of African, Irish, and South Asian migrants is specifically honoured, alternating chapters between black British and black African, Irish, and Asianian narrators. A gentle but insistent reminder of systemic disadvantages emerges organically through the overlapping conversations of first-generation black Brits, African migrants, Irish returnees, and South Asians. The humanity of the characters explicitly underscores that status as a minority "order" is not a deficient condition, per se, but a position rendered precarious whenever community and culture break down beyond core cultural institutions [8]. Conversely, the third and fourth groupings roughly correspond to a broader, mainly white British settler demographic that occupies the roles of dominance, heirs and ill heirs to European empires, and respectability, enshrining semiotic status as "White."

The reader's expectations concerning a breakdown of the demographic balance of the speaking individuals are repeatedly challenged throughout the text. For example, in the first chapter, a white activist speaking the narrative voice contrasts with the expectation of a group of long-lost sisters. Similarly, in the fifth chapter, a mixed-race black British MP with the narrative voice puts paid to cosmetic assumptions. The narrative voice is distributed in an apparently even and recurring style: there can be no doubt that a lament for older pre-eminence and nostalgia for a "White" Britain commingles with reckoning with the consequences of the opening of the cultural and demographic space after Empire and World War II. Collectively, the twelve "sides" to multiply the "one" confirm a polyphonic minority—the irreducible "Endings-Other." Far from the Year Zero wish to be "an artist who happens to be black," the novel demonstrates that Christianity, queer rebellion, academic devotion, feminist self-

realization, and transnational complicities are only some emblematic "orders" that the irreducible multiple unity embodies. The "revenge of history" is, for once, both joyous and limpid.

The structural grounding underlines that the twelve chapters generalize the specific interference of the minor quote and establish the multiplicity of the Women's voice, emphasizing the invaluable role of intersectionality. Gender no longer suffices as a primary reference; the literary archive conditions the terminology and structure of the emerging formulation.

2. Diversity of Perspectives

Intersectionality is concerned with how discrimination—racism, sexism, classism, and so on—operates as "a system of power" to marginalize individuals based on their identity markers. Political scientist Kimberlé Crenshaw observes the challenges that emerge when frameworks that "address race and gender separately" are used to discuss categories that "combine or 'intersectionalize' these identities" [6]. Polyphony, as theorized by Mikhail Bakhtin, contends that the inclusion of multiple layers of consciousness within a text—each distinct and independently intelligible—can serve as a powerful means of attaining narrative inclusivity. The link between polyphony and intersectionality lies in the fact that a polyphonic narrative is capable of presenting an intersectional subject position through the representation of multiple voices, each advancing a coherent—and therefore non-essentialist—understanding of "the woman." A polyphonic perspective even allows one to model the "complex category of 'woman'" theorized by numerous black feminists and further elaborated by contemporary works [13]. This insight is employed to accomplish a reading that frames the narrative of Girl, Woman, Other as a polyphonic interrogation of the possibilities opened up by an intersectional conception of feminist identity.

The Complexities of Identity in Character Arc

The characters in *Girl, Woman, Other* enact their development under the constraints of race, ethnicity, sexual identity, and class. Amma publicly addresses these issues in her plays and openly accepts her lesbianism, whereas Grace assumes a fictionalized persona and refuses to be identified as a Black woman. Megan is a former model who does not regard herself as working-class. The characters' identities and social interactions are influenced by their gender, age, class, education, politics, and experience of displacement [14]. The novel engages with questions of identity and belonging, encompassing aspects such as cultural and gender identity.

Explicit reference to social concerns grounds the polyphonic structure, but Evaristo rejects "shorthand answers" and unresolved difficulties proliferate. Amma's account occupies the second section of the book and begins with an explicit statement of Black feminist position: If my mother embodied a matriarchal essence, it was one that corralled men and women like mere livestock, shepherding without compassion or true understanding. I firmly identify as a Black feminist. It's not enough to simply identify as feminist, as conventional feminism often overlooks the significance of race—my journey as a woman is deeply intertwined with my identity as a Black individual. White feminists

may proclaim their alliances with various groups, yet they seldom prioritize their political stances around essential principles like being Black, female, and unapologetically proud [15].

Amma intertwines political activism with many private experiences. Her life narrative crosses the twentieth century, while the other accounts are set mainly in the last two decades of the century and the first decade of the twenty-first century.

1. Racial and Ethnic Influences

The narrative voices in Girl, Woman, Other reflect a multiplicity of experiences and perspectives, embracing the possibilities inherent in intersectionality. Evaristo's novel presents a polyphony of diverse voices, including those of women of color, lesbians, and the working class [16]. These voices are rarely heard within traditional feminist discourse. Evaristo's achievement lies in seamlessly integrating those different feminist perspectives with Gilbert and Gubar's feminist formulation.Evaristo addresses another gap in feminist argumentation by offering a polyphonic narration of differently positioned but overlapping types of individuals. The plurality of voices include the working class, women of color, lesbian voices, Black narratives, Afro-Caribbean culture, and Black British sensibility. Marcelle, Dominique, Winifred, and Shirley embody Black British narratives; their characters explore the significance of race, ethnicity, and sexual identity to their development. Through characterisation and narrative point of view, Evaristo traces the complexity of identity for these women.

From different perspectives, race and ethnicity variously mark characters in the fiction as they live with or attempt to redeem these attributes from the devaluation imposed by the mainstream. Marcelle struggles to establish a higher level of attainment under the multiplying weight of obligations that her class and status demand. Dominique and Shirley wrestle with their dual displaced-ness as diasporic subjects. They are both haunted by feelings of not belonging to Britain or to their parents' continent.

2. Exploring the Dimensions of Sexual Identity

Girl, Woman, Other explores the dimensions of sexual identity and intersects with a number of aspects of the multifaceted phenomenon of sexual identities, which, in the light of their literary exponents, are undoubtedly worthy of close study and analysis. This work probes into the fluidity of sexual identity and articulates the polyphonic positions from which Bernardine Evaristo, one of Britain's most feminine and celebrated female novelists, foregrounds a horizon of textual affirmation by touching on the need to open up a space to accommodate the unheard voices for the reconfiguration of female caracterial belonging across a broad expanse of socio-political, cultural, racial, and sexual dimensions. Driven my the will to paradox the established cultural assumptions of society, the works of Evaristo and a host of feminist authors represent a legitimate and timely moment in the articulation of composite identities that are yet to be equated, as is, for example, the status of erotic fiction, which she contests through the deployment of extremely innovative and cutting techniques [14]. Various commentators perceive contemporary literature as a ground where debates about sexual identity continue to unfold by means of a furrow of literary expositions through which spotting an emerging

British sexual identity becomes possible. Girl, Woman, Other, which foregrounds an inverse working of linguistics to embrace the emergence of fluidity, redundancy, and multiplicity of female embodiment, maps the various attributes of a constellation of multiple sexual identities, revealing an articulation that is polyphonically contingent on the various heteroglossic dimensions employed in the literary field.

3. Class and Socioeconomic Influences

Some characters' experiences reveal the influence of socioeconomic status, class, and education on their identities and interactions. *"Carole stands quietly at the noisy after-party in a far corner of the room along with the other bankers and funders who, like her, look out of place in their smart business attire"* [9]. Bummi is a classically educated Yoruba who pursues bilingual education. She is among a small, professional section of society, yet cut off from home and work cultures, she faces the challenge of bridging two distinct worlds [17]. She maintains a close connection with her heritage and often quotes proverbs. However, she is not well established in the community; her response to her father's offer to settle in Nigeria is hesitant. Careers help to define identity, and the absence of career advancement is a failure: Bummi also has a home that is out of reach, while Carole and Dominique have found work, but through their success have lost a sense of home and culture [18]. Meanwhile, Amma is a product of the British system of free education and, at least initially, limited aspirations. When the only jobs on offer are semi-skilled or unskilled, the obvious way to earn money is sex work, and Tegan is similarly caught by the trap of early joblessness. Joe's stardom recedes, while the aristocratic Red magazine has been fading for years. Nevertheless, efforts to revive aristocratic and parliamentary tradition continue, as seen in Shirley's attempts to access the House of Lords.

Social and class positions provide the backdrop for other application areas. Evaristo represents a wide range of positions that extend beyond any standard left–right political spectrum. The classics-trained lecturer fails to change the curriculum, but a privately educated Thatcherite seeks a new political aristocracy. Disabled individuals confront prejudice regardless of their position: even her student view of Shirley is sympathetic, yet there is nothing positive to say about her outlook.

Themes of Identity and Belonging

The importance of culture and belonging is explored in the novel through the development of characters' identities. *This highlights how racial identity remains a limiting factor in how individuals see themselves and are perceived by society. "he bemoans the fact that black people in Britain are still defined by their colour in the absence of other workable options"* [9] It investigates how cultural, gender, and sexual identities influence the experience and process of finding a sense of belonging. Many of the book's black characters demonstrate the fluidity of cultural identity—such as the Fitzgerald sisters, who are half-Kenyan and half-white English, and Amma, who is black Barbadian—showing how an unstable relationship with a particular culture does not necessarily inhibit the search for belonging. Instead, belonging is possible without a singular cultural identity, as demonstrated by these characters. Amma's experience mirrors her daughter Yazz's feelings of being neither fully "black nor white," highlighting the complexity of identity

formation amid multiple cultural influences. Evaristo's presentation of intersectionality at a deep and intimate level challenges the notion of a homogenous black experience and highlights the heterogeneous experiences within any cultural or racial group [14].

The book also explores the deliberate construction or distortion of identity, such as in the case of Dominique, the Booker Prize–winning author whose public persona of weakness and victimhood obscures the harsher truth of her past abuse of her daughter—an identity shaped by individual, national, and gendered expectations. This complexity is further underscored by the character Rashmi, who sits between cultures and embodies the challenges and nuances of multicultural identities; her voice emerges strongly in the novel's final moments. Evaristo doesn't seek to provide definitive answers to the problem of identity and belonging but instead offers a polyphony of voices that collectively consider the issues. By presenting a diverse range of experiences and perspectives, the novel encourages reflection on these themes without prescribing a singular resolution. Despite the multiplicity of voices, certain motifs—especially those related to environmental concerns and cultural belonging—emerge as unifying threads that emphasize the collective dimensions of identity and the shared challenges faced by the characters.

1. Cultural Identity

A comprehensive understanding of cultural identity requires an appreciation of the ways in which the self is grounded in a location and history that is always already thought and processed. A particular place and a particular language, for instance, signify specific histories and create meanings for the individual, even as the individual's nature and meanings also inform the place and the language. In her keynote address for the 1992 African Literature Association conference, Ghanaian writer Ama Ata Aidoo theorized this dialectic relationship and articulated the ways in which location shapes self-perception, identity, and consciousness:

Any definition of selfhood must take cognizance of and attempt to resolve at least four embedded and quite frequently contradictory contexts. The first of these is that of location—the place where the defining is predicated, within which the English or anything else exists and by which it gains significance. To choose a place is primarily and centrally to choose a ground of being from which one sees. It is a selection, a choice, a perspective.

Aidoo went on to describe how location underwrites a complex of knowledge and symbols, all of which furnish a particular ideological framework from which the self-cognizes and defines the world around it. These four frameworks, outlined by Aidoo, are first, folklore, ritual, dance, the intangible values; second, socialization—the norms and attitudes of traditional society; third, the restitutionist future; and finally, the colonizer's knowledge. For Aidoo, "it is this aggregate selectivity of cultural elements which form the context out of which African tragic thinking arises and within which it functions, its dialectics emerging from the painful interaction of lower intensity abstractions" [19].

2. Gender Identity

Most theorists tend to dichotomize sex and gender, treating them as separate concepts. Sex is usually described as biological and fixed, whereas gender is presented as socially constructed and constantly changing. However, such a basic distinction rarely works effectively, and there are significant overlaps between the two.

Literature and critical theory have explored the complex relationship between sex and gender, often revealing deeper connections that challenge the straightforward binary model. Some writers have contested the conventional division altogether, emphasizing the inseparability of biological and social dimensions. Even Judith Butler, a prominent thinker in this field, acknowledges that gender is never simply a property of a body; instead, gender, sex, and desire are mutually configuring articulation systems formed through temporally and culturally specific discourses, thereby complicating the notion of independent categories. Even then, the "sex/gender distinction" remains fundamental to many feminist theoretical positions. From a practical perspective, however, it is easier to treat the terms separately in order to determine the full range of identification possibilities.

Most of the mothers and aunts in the novel maintain traditional stances on the relationship of sex to gender, as a guide to behavior and even as a defining principle of identity. Against this background, characters who experience a disjunction between their biological sex and their gender identity encounter intense discomfort for themselves and perplexity in those around them. Dynamics of identity are similarly disturbed when combinations that are counter-cultural take women entirely out of the standard heterosexual framework. In her characters, Evaristo explores what it means to be a woman in relation to such variables as race, ethnicity, sexual identity, and socio-economic status [1].

The Role of Community

The writings of Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral (1889–1957), winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1945, as captured in her collection Tala, provide a poetic foundation for Bernardine Evaristo's Girl, Woman, Other. The final poem in Tala, *"The Witch,"* signals the impossibility of a feminist tradition for Evaristo's contemporary protagonists. Women like Mistral's witch, who deviate from prescribed models of womanhood, exist outside dominant discourses and their exclusion reflects the silencing of alternative voices within feminism [20]. *Girl, Woman, Other* fills this void by adopting a form of writing that embraces otherness and multiplicity rather than coherence and origin. A narrative that exceeds closure expresses the elusive and continual nature of identity, a notion Evaristo rallies as a protest against feminist and Western paradigms that circumscribe the "feminine" as a single, bound entity. Situated in British society, the novel repeatedly challenges such rigid formulations of identity through the depiction of a community that consists of women from diverse racial, sexual, and class backgrounds while offering solidarity as a starting point for recognizing both differences and connections.

Critique of Traditional Feminism

Mainstream feminism has generally privileged the experience of the white, middle-class, heterosexual woman, in a way that sidelines the suffering of women from minority ethnic groups living within patriarchal and racist societies [6]. The experienced suppression of these women is thereby rendered invisible within a discourse that foregrounds only gender and ignores the intersection of other oppressive social forces. By foregrounding diversity and simultaneity in representations of identity, Evaristo's polyphonic feminist approach opens space to rethink feminist discourse. The novel ends with an eager announcement of possibility in the face of traditionalist resistance to progress, of community in a world of accusation and division, and of belonging in a society lethally permeated by distrust. Polyphonic feminism offers a model through which to envision the empowerment of multiple voices and a transnational commonality of experience.

1. Limitations of Mainstream Feminism

Modern Western feminist thought has often celebrated women as an inherently liberating force, asserting that activities opposing patriarchal power distances women from its influence. Yet women operate across a range of power relations, with no singular conception of female identity or experience. Mainstream feminism has been criticized for constructing an idealized experience of womanhood that primarily reflects the viewpoints of privileged groups—especially white, middle-class, and heterosexual women—thereby marginalizing voices outside these categories. The notion of "sisterhood," implying a unified bond among women, can inadvertently reinforce exclusion when the interests of certain groups dominate the feminist agenda; when unified experience is emphasized over diversity, experiences that differ from dominant narratives are obscured, rendering some women unrepresented and unsupported [6]. Intersectionality highlights how individual identity comprises multiple, overlapping locations, each potentially contested or subject to change through power negotiations and reordering of significance. Although women may share concerns about liberation, the strategies and forms of resistance they adopt often differ across and within groups. Freedoms that advance one group's interests may suppress another's; the liberation of one segment can coincide with the continued subjugation of others. By recognizing that identities are constructed and fluid, rather than fixed and essential, intersectional feminism problematizes unitary understandings of women's experiences. In doing so, it facilitates a polyphonic approach that incorporates the voices of widespread, diverse constituencies into the feminist dialogue [17].

Literary Techniques

Evaristo's innovative textual techniques are crucial in embedding feminist thought and an intersectional perspective. In particular, her diverse use of language contributes decisively to the representation of multiplicity of voices [10]. The juxtaposition of formal language and received pronunciations with the dialects of minority groups exhibits relation to the works of authors such as Zadie Smith and Ben Okri and aligns the novel with the wider tradition of Black British literature.

The Semi-Seriousity rubric is a desirable alignment, too, for its rejection of Classical, Rationalist and Enlightenment principles of literary Modernism, which subsequently underpinned ideological constructions of a Modern Man, Woman and World. Such techniques have also been associated with Postmodernist criticism, a social reaexting of modernism which followed World War II and rejected its ideas of progress and rationality. Characters, personas, aspects of society and culture at odds with the Modernist precepts of reason, realism and universality are, instead, acknowledged and celebrated through narrative discontinuity, changeability, fluidity, locus on language, and the concept of women's laughter and humour (the ability to respond to life's adversity in ways other than submissive-melancholy). Postmodernism is, then, a social reimagining: a semi-serious opposition which makes a laughing mockery of the classical and rationalist ideals traditionally posited as the source of particular genius, character and role.

1. Symbolism and Motifs

Evaristo's novel also features a wealth of imagery and symbolism that supports the polyphonic feminist message. The intertwining of narrative styles and diverse voices mirrors the pattern of a braided hedge described in the epigraph, which exemplifies the novel's intricate and multi-layered structure. The use of water, waves, and the sea symbolizes dynamic motion, fluidity, and transformation, while the garden metaphor portrays a seclusion functioning as a womb—a place of protection and rebirth. Similarly, motifs related to walking and footsteps eloquently express the individual journeys of the characters through various times and locations, reinforcing the novel's overarching theme of interconnectedness. Additionally, symbols such as birds and flight represent freedom and transcendence, whereas references to chains and prisons underline experiences of confinement and oppression. The recurrence of weather elements, notably storms and rain, reflects turmoil and cleansing, further accentuating the characters' struggles and renewals. These poetic and visual elements are not merely aesthetic; they enhance the narrative by embodying the multiple struggles and transformations experienced by the colored women throughout the text, thereby enriching the polyphonic feminist discourse.

Reception and Impact

Upon its release in 2019, *Girl, Woman, Other* was widely praised by critics and readers alike for its insightful and nuanced take on the challenges faced by the second generation Black British community [1]. Well-suited for English Literature and Women's Studies courses, it attracted the attention of the literary community, winning the London Literary Award that same year. The second literary prize, the Booker Prize, followed, and media coverage increased significantly. Booker Prize judges praised Girl, Woman, Other for showcasing "a diversity of contemporary British life and has unique polyphony of voices."

Bernardine Evaristo has become "one of the most distinctive, adventurous voices of contemporary fiction in the postcolonial tradition." Using the voices of twelve different characters, each with their own struggles, fears, desires, and aspirations, she takes the

reader on a journey that explores the realities, choices, and hopes of women who are too often denied a voice. The celebratory polyphony of Girl, Woman, Other features women of different ethnicities, generations, classes, and sexualities, challenging Brittan's postwar history of overwrought divisiveness and disillusionment. The novel acts as a reminder of the plethora of voices that bloom when given room to do so, and the invigorating plurality whose absence from politics and society diminishes us all [6].

1. Critical Reception

Regarding the reception of Girl, Woman, Other, Laplante highlights the novel's storytelling that provides a narrative for anyone who feels outside the mainstream, its resilience of optimism, and, correspondingly, a deep but non-despairing rage at injustice. The work denotes an influential sentiment for a literature that helps underrepresented or unwritten groups in the contemporary English cultural scene bring to voice their identity needs and communities. Evaristo's position is thus secured as a cultural icon keenly engaged with the creation of reparation and transcendence through awareness and articulation across and beyond boundaries of difference.

2. Cultural Impact

Barrie explores the intricate interplay of genres within Girl, Woman, Other and characteristic polyphonic techniques that generate a self-reflexive, non-hierarchical and inclusive feminist narrative. Building on Bakhtinian frameworks, the work distinguishes between official and unofficial feminism, tracing their historical and ideological contours, and situates Evaristo's novel as a corrective to the limitations of the official tradition. It underscores the centrality of identity and belonging in Evaristo's polyphony and highlights the use of age alongside race, neopatriarchy, postfeminism and new femininities as organising categories for a profound engagement with contemporary feminism. Claire Denis's Comment j'ai tué mon père is appraised as a misogynistic and ostensibly cathartic confrontation with the paternal Other, the majority of women being synthetically reduced to the mother as oedipal object and castrating castratrix. The complex umbilical and uterine relationships represented in the film expose the phallocentric and masculinist roots of this rejection of the feminine and motherhood which remain unchallenged by the director who constructs a disturbingly nihilistic narrative of loss. The contemporary female other remains firmly tethered to the figure of the mother when this notion might have usefully been deconstructed. The essay advances polyphonic feminism as a highly productive literary strategy that enables an intersectional form of fiction to interrogate, expand and reconstruct the feminist tradition in all its diversity. Evaristo's novel offers a more nuanced, radically inclusive understanding of women's lives, voices and perspectives than is afforded even by intersectional feminism, a model that marginalises certain groups and perpetuates essentialism and binary thinking [1].

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : Female characters, based on British feminist movements, are merely spotlighted in the narrative. This investigation of Girl, Woman, Other has

analyzed polyphonic feminism as a representation of the multiplicity of women's voices and experiences. The novel is an intricate, interconnected story, following the lives of twelve women, many of whom belong to marginalized groups. Teju Cole's concept of entry points has been applied in a grammatical adaptation of Ngozi Adichie's "danger of a single story." Polyphonic feminism figures the multiplicity of women and marks a new stage of feminist literary history. **Implication :** The introduction proposed polyphonic feminism as an interdisciplinary and intersectional undertaking. Section 2 surveyed core concepts in the theoretical framework: Feminist Theory; Intersectionality as a response to single-axis thinking; and Polyphony as a literary concept, elaborated in relation to Bakhtin's theory and his specific terms for dialogism. The diversity of perspectives corresponds to the diversity of the author's community. Section 4 analysed the multiplicity of voices, showing how Evaristo's technique is an expansion of polyphony in the Bakhtinian sense, foregrounding concerns about voice, empowerment and inclusion. **Limitation :** Section 3 outlined Evaristo's narrative, situating the themes in a liberal feminist tradition. Section 5 explored the layers of identity and experience that qualify the novel as an intersectional text. Questions of race, gender, class and sexuality were discussed with further emphasis on the role of cultural background. However, while the text engages with these categories in depth, the scope remains tied to the specificities of the British feminist context and may not fully capture feminist experiences beyond that frame. **Future Research :** Sections 6 and 7 conducted a comparative analysis and assessed the impact of polyphonic feminism. The final part critically reviewed relevant feminist and literary responses. Three case studies exemplified the application of intersectionality and polyphony to individual trajectories. These examinations invite further exploration of how polyphonic feminism can be applied across broader literary traditions and cultural frameworks, thereby extending the reach of intersectional analysis beyond the current study.

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