

**Postcolonial Metropolis and Black Consciousness: A Study of
Select Novels of Bernardine Evaristo**

Thesis Submitted for the Award of the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In

Department of English

By

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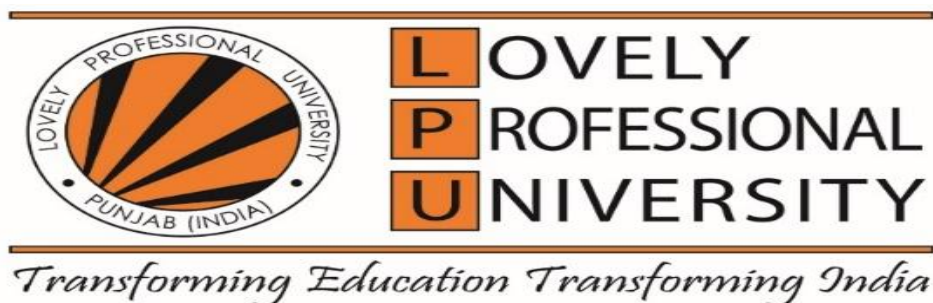
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July, 2026

DECLARATION

I, hereby declare that the presented work in the thesis entitled “Postcolonial Metropolis and Black consciousness: A Study of Select Novels of Bernardine Evaristo” in fulfilment of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D.)** is outcome of research work carried out by me under the supervision of Dr Ajoy Batta, working as Professor and Head, in the Department of English, Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India. In keeping with the general practice of reporting scientific observations, due acknowledgements have been made whenever work described here has been based on findings of other investigator. This work has not been submitted in part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree.

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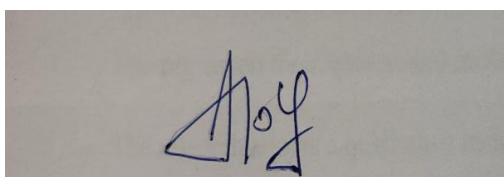
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work reported in the Ph. D. thesis entitled “Postcolonial Metropolis and Black consciousness: A Study of Select Novels of Bernardine Evaristo” submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the award of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** in the Department of English, is a research work carried out by Kaneez Fatima, Registration 12105547, is bonafide record of his/her original work carried out under my supervision and that no part of thesis has been submitted for any other degree, diploma or equivalent course.



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Name of supervisor: Dr. Ajoy Batta

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Acknowledgments

All praise and gratitude are for **Almighty Allah**, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful, whose boundless blessings, guidance, and mercy enabled me to undertake and complete this research journey. It is by His will and infinite grace that I found the strength, patience, and perseverance to face the challenges along the way. Without His divine support, none of this would have been possible.

I am deeply indebted to my supervisor, **Dr. Ajoy Batta**, Professor and Head of the Department of English, whose critical insights, academic clarity, and constant encouragement have been vital to the successful completion of this thesis. His unwavering commitment to excellence and his thoughtful mentorship provided me with the intellectual direction and confidence to navigate the complexities of my research. His constructive feedback pushed me to think more critically, question more deeply, and write more precisely. I am truly grateful for the invaluable time, energy, and insight he invested in shaping my research. Working under his supervision has been an honour and a privilege that I will always cherish.

I am sincerely thankful to **Dr. Pavitar Parkash Singh**, Professor and Head of the School, for their continuous support and for providing me with the environment necessary that allowed me to grow both personally and academically. I am equally grateful to Dr Sanjay Prasad Pandey and my panellists, Dr Sandeep Kumar, Dr Ghanshyam, Dr Minakshi, Dr Anil Kumar, and other Assistant Professors, for their invaluable suggestions throughout my PhD evaluations and for pushing me to refine my work.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to my **beloved parents and siblings**, who have been my strongest pillars of support. Their unwavering faith in my abilities, endless prayers, and continuous emotional and moral support have sustained me throughout this academic pursuit. They have made countless sacrifices for my education, and I owe them more than words can express. I am especially thankful to my sister, **Shafiqah Batoor**, who selflessly left everything behind to stay by my side during a time when I was unwell and struggling. Her care, encouragement, and quiet strength gave me the emotional stability I needed to persevere and accomplish my work. I am forever grateful for her sacrifice and love.

I would also like to express my deep appreciation to my husband, **Mohd Sidiq**, whose presence has been a blessing throughout this journey. His patience, prayers, motivation, and belief in my dreams became the foundation on which I stood during my most challenging moments. He was with me through every high and low, witnessing my struggles, calming my anxieties, and

celebrating every small milestone with genuine joy. He stood like a pillar beside me, offering constant emotional strength when I felt overwhelmed and exhausted. His faith in me never faltered, even when my own did, and his comforting words and quiet sacrifices gave me the resilience I needed to continue. Without his love, understanding, and tireless support, this thesis would not have been possible. This achievement belongs as much to him as it does to me. I am equally grateful to my **in-laws**, whose kindness, empathy, and support have been invaluable. Their continuous understanding and willingness to stand by me through every phase of this research made a world of difference. I will forever be thankful for the love and care they have shown me, and for allowing me to move forward with strength and determination.

A special mention must be made to my late grandfather, **Mohd Baqir**, whose belief in me and early encouragement gave me the courage to embark on this journey. His words of motivation still echo in my soul: “You were born to do something meaningful; don’t let temporary pain stop you from reaching lasting success.” These words became my anchor. It was always my dream to place this thesis in his hands and witness the proud smile on his face, and it feels profoundly heavy that he is not here to witness the completion of this work.

I extend my sincere thanks to **Dr Diksha Gupta, Dr Gaurav** and **Suhail Ahmad Dar**, whose insightful suggestions, critical feedback, and academic engagement greatly enriched my research work. I am grateful for their time and the knowledge they shared with me at various stages of my doctoral journey.

Last but not least, I thank my friends **Hakima Banoo, Durdana Jahan, Anubha Gupta, Aashika and Aima**, who stood by me through the many phases of this endeavour. Their companionship, words of encouragement, and the moments of lightness and laughter provided comfort and motivation when I needed it most. Their presence has made this journey meaningful and memorable.

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Abstract

This thesis, “Postcolonial Metropolis and Black Consciousness: A Study of Select Novels of Bernardine Evaristo”, investigates how Bernardine Evaristo represents the postcolonial metropolis through intersecting experiences of race, migration, identity, and resistance. Set against the backdrop of London, a city shaped by colonial histories and contemporary multicultural tensions, the study examines how Evaristo’s novels expose the contradictions of the postcolonial urban space, where cross-cultural interaction coexists with racism, marginalisation, and inequality. Within this contested terrain, Black consciousness emerges as a pivotal framework through which historically marginalised individuals reclaim their identity, assert their agency, and resist systemic discrimination.

The research adopts a qualitative methodology grounded in postcolonial theory, drawing on the works of Paul Gilroy, W.E.B. Du Bois, Frantz Fanon, Steve Biko, and John McLeod. Through these theoretical perspectives, the study analyses six major novels, *The Emperor’s Babe*, *Soul Tourists*, *Blonde Roots*, *Hello Mum*, *Mr Loverman*, and *Girl, Woman, Other*, to explore racial and ethnic complexities, the traumatic effects of displacement, and the evolving articulation of Black identity in postcolonial London.

The study contributes to postcolonial literary scholarship by offering a comprehensive exploration of the relationship between the postcolonial metropolis and Black consciousness—an approach rarely applied collectively to Evaristo’s oeuvre. It deepens critical understanding of urban racial politics, diasporic identity, and decolonial thought, and underscores the importance of reclaiming historical memory in the formation of empowered Black identities. This dissertation thus serves as a significant resource for scholars in postcolonial studies, diaspora studies, Black British literature, and contemporary cultural theory.

Introduction

In the postcolonial era, metropolitan cities across the globe have become complex sites where histories of empire intersect with contemporary realities of migration, identity, and resistance. These urban landscapes, once centres of colonial power, now serve as arenas where the legacies of imperialism are both confronted and reconfigured. Among them, London emerges as a postcolonial metropolis. As the former heart of the British Empire, the city bears the imprints of its colonial past, even as it transforms into a multicultural hub shaped by diverse diasporic communities. However, this transformation is marked by contradictions such as cross-cultural interaction alongside racism and ongoing inequality. Within this hostile environment, Black consciousness emerges as a sociopolitical response, a cultural and psychological expert for historically marginalised communities. It becomes a means of reclaiming identity, resisting oppression, and asserting presence in a space still haunted by colonial ideologies.

The present research, “Postcolonial Metropolis and Black Consciousness: A Study of Select Novels of Bernadine Evaristo”, examines how Bernardine Evaristo’s select novels depict the postcolonial metropolis by highlighting racial, cultural, and historical oppression. Through a postcolonial lens, the research explores racial and ethnic complexities, the pervasive effects of violence, the struggles of identity formation, and the cultural transitions that occur amidst systemic discrimination. The study explores how Black consciousness emerges and evolves in response to these oppressive structures. Paul Gilroy’s work on the Black Atlantic provides insights into the transnational dimensions of identity and migration, along with W.E.B. Du Bois, Frantz Fanon, Steve Biko, John McLeod, and other postcolonial theorists, to deepen the understanding of the characters' experiences with systemic oppression. Steve Biko’s notions of Black identity and empowerment are central to understanding the characters’ resistance. John McLeod’s work on postcolonialism further contextualises the narrative within the broader framework of colonial histories and their lasting impacts. The study emphasises the complex experiences of characters who endure marginalisation, dislocation, displacement, and violence, as they navigate the challenges of a postcolonial society, offering a nuanced exploration of Black consciousness and its relationship to the dynamics of race, migration, and oppression in postcolonial London.

The research aims to critically explore the socio-political forces that drive migration, examining the immediate causes behind the characters' movements and the long-term

repercussions of their displacements. Bernardine Evaristo's fictional worlds depict a vivid picture of the postcolonial metropolis, where characters deal with the issues of race, ethnicity, identity, and belongingness. The narratives unfold in a multicultural yet racially discriminatory urban landscape, reflecting the tensions and contradictions of contemporary London. Evaristo gives voice to historically marginalised individuals whose experiences are shaped by colonial histories and ongoing structural inequalities. Her novels depict the realities of Black British lives and also challenge dominant narratives through their innovative storytelling and diverse perspectives. The present study closely engages with six of her major works: *The Emperor's Babe*, *Soul Tourists*, *Blonde Roots*, *Hello Mum*, *Mr Loverman*, and *Girl, Woman, Other*; each of which highlights the postcolonial experience and the evolving consciousness of Black identity.

Bernardine Evaristo: Life and Work

Bernardine Evaristo was born in London in 1959 to a Nigerian father. Her father worked as a welder and was a member of the local Labour council, and her mother was a schoolteacher. Evaristo was born in Eltham and raised in Woolwich. From Eltham Hill Girls' Grammar School, Rose Bruford College of Speech and Drama, and from the University of London, she received her PhD. She spent her adolescent years at Greenwich Young People's Theatre, where she got her start in the arts. Evaristo is the author of two nonfiction books and eight works of fiction and verse fiction about the African diaspora. She frequently combines the past and the present, fiction and poetry, fact and fiction, and reality and different realities. She is a modern writer who focuses on the issues of racial and ethnic complexities. In her novels, Evaristo illuminates the experiences of black and brown people in a society dominated by white people. She explores how individuals and groups negotiate power and privilege in society.

In 1997, she published *Lara* and won the EMMA Best Book Award in 1999. It is a semi-autobiographical novel-in-verse. Lara is a mixed-race girl who grew up in Woolwich, a white London suburb, in the 1960s and 1970s. Taiwo, her father, is Nigerian, and Ellen, her mother, is white British. Despite significant opposition from Ellen's family, they married in the 1950s and had eight children in ten years. The story revolves around Lara's journey from a constrained childhood to conflict in early adulthood, then from London to Nigeria to Brazil as she strives to understand herself and her ancestors' identity. Bernadine Evaristo traced back over 150 years, seven generations, and three continents in this Book.

The Emperor's Babe is the second novel by Bernadine Evaristo, published in 2001. It was named one of The Times' 100 Best Books of the Decade in 2010 after winning the Arts Council Writers Award in 2000 and a NESTA Fellowship Award in 2003. The story revolves around Zuleika, a Sudanese girl who marries at eleven years to an older man in Londinium in 211 AD. Zuleika gives us a glimpse into her daily life and introduces us to a partly virtual Londinium with all its discrimination and suffering faced by the diaspora. The identity crisis always seems to loom over Zuleika like a shadow. Even though she was born in London, Zuleika feels that she does not belong in any country. Zuleika feels enslaved in her marriage, so one day she begins writing poems to help her construct a virtual space of her own. Zuleika is also in a secret affair with Septimius Severus, the Emperor. In the beginning, this secret affair makes her feel safe and affiliated, but in the long run, it leads her into trouble.

The third novel of Bernadine Evaristo is *Soul Tourists*, published in 2005. In *Soul Tourists*, a British couple meets in London. There's Stanley, a banker of Jamaican descent, who meets Jessie, a former singer and comedienne of Ghanaian descent. They embark on a journey across Europe, where they encounter ten historical persons of colour who once lived on the continent and appear to Stanley as ghosts. Thus, the novel becomes both a reimagining of European history and a road narrative.

In 2009, *Blonde Roots*, a prose novel published by Bernadine Evaristo. It is a tragicomic story of an Englishwoman. She got abducted while playing hide-and-seek with her sisters in the fields near their home one day. She is enslaved and sent to the New World and Great Ambossa, the imperial capital. She narrates her harrowing experiences and the hopes and dreams of the people she's left behind.

Hello Mum is an epistolary novella that was published in 2010. It is about a fourteen-year-old boy in London who got lured into gang violence. In this novel, Jerome recalls the events when his life spiralled out of control, and he started writing a letter to his mother. In these letters, he writes the reason behind his death. He also describes what happened before the incident and how he became associated with a gang. It gives a glimpse of contemporary London society and its gang culture.

Mr Loverman is Bernardine Evaristo's seventh novel, published in 2013. She is a British-Nigerian author and was awarded the Jerwood Uncovered Prize in 2014. *Mr Loverman* is a story of Barrington Jedidiah Walker, a 74-year-old Antiguan-Londoner and a secret gay man, as he examines the life of Britain's elder Caribbean community. He's been in

a relationship with Morris, his boyhood pal and soulmate, for the past sixty years. When his wife knew he had been cheating on her, she got separated. Barrington faces difficult decisions when his marriage falls apart.

Bernardine Evaristo's eighth novel is *Girl, Woman, Other*, published in 2019. The Testaments, by Margaret Atwood, was also a co-winner of the 2019 Booker Prize. It has won over 30 Book of the Year awards. Its awards include Fiction Book of the Year and Author of the Year at the 2020 British Book Awards, where she also won Author of the Year. It also received the Gold Medal of Honorary Patronage and the Indie Book Award for Fiction. It was a finalist for the Orwell Prize for Political Fiction, the Australian Book Industry Awards, and the Women's Prize for Fiction, among other awards. *Girl, Woman, Other* is a polyphonic novel on the intersections of identity, according to the author. It's told through the eyes of 12 British women of colour, ranging from 19 to 93 years old. Women come from various social levels, cultures, and sexual identities.

Bernardine Evaristo published her ninth novel, *Manifesto*, in 2021. The novel is an autobiographical novel by Evaristo. It is a lively and energising narrative of Evaristo's life and career, in which she rebelled against the status quo and worked for decades to make the world aware of her artistic creations. Evaristo recalls the queer relationships of her twenties and her determination to write books.

Award-winning novelist Bernardine Evaristo has written eight books, and her work and projects show her interest in the African diaspora. Evaristo got the EMMA best novel award for *Lara* in 1999, and with the publication of her most recent book *Girl, Woman, Other*, Evaristo became the first British black woman to win the Booker Prize in 2019. She received the Independent Book Award for Fiction, the British Book Award's Author of the Year, and Fiction Book of the Year in 2020. In 2021, Evaristo won the *Vanity Fair* magazine Challenger Award, Glamour magazine Women of the Year: Game-changing Author Award for *Girl, Woman, Other*.

Review of Literature

Some of the seminal reviews related to the present study are:

An interview of Bernadine Evaristo with Alastair Niven, “Alastair Niven in Conversation with Bernardine Evaristo” (2001), says about the character of Zuleika in *The Emperor's Babe*, “she is virtually imprisoned in her husband's house and has a terrible

relationship with him... She ends up having this amazing, short-lived affair with the Roman Emperor. In the sense of her personality being very strong and feisty, she makes the most out of her situation, and that's how I see her as being victorious" (16). These lines depict that for the author, Zuleika is not a victim but rather regarded as victorious. Even though her marriage imprisoned her in an awful relationship, she managed to get rid of this situation by having this incredible, short-lived affair with the Roman Emperor. In the sense that her personality is strong, Evaristo considered her a winner.

Pilar Cuder-Dominguez, in his paper "Ethnic Cartographies of London in Bernardine Evaristo and Zadie Smith," published in 2004, depicts the identity crisis and cultural conflict of mixed-race in London, particularly in Bernardine Evaristo's *Lara* and *The Emperor's Babe*. Evaristo's *The Emperor's Baby* focuses on multicultural London. The protagonist Zuleika is a second-generation mixed-race child. The character of Zuleika Evaristo highlights the exploration of Englishness features, not only racial demands, but also evokes an idealised heterosexual, educated, patriarchal middle-class.

Ingrid von Rosenberg, in his paper "If... Bernardine Evaristo's (Gendered) Reconstructions of Black European History", published in 2010, shows Bernardine Evaristo's interest in black British history. Her works, *The Emperor's Babe*, *Soul Tourists*, and *Blonde Roots*, highlight black British culture. It also breaks away from the stereotype image of blacks as victims and instead stresses their resistance and creativity. *The Emperor's Babe* explores the life struggle of people in Roman Londinium, where all black people from far corners of the Empire formed part of a multi-cultural population. *Blonde Roots*, the story begins with Doris in her thirties, trying to escape from slavery and a miserable life. She struggles a lot and finally flees to the mountains to live an independent life.

Ulla Rahbek's "Repping your Ends: Imagined Borders in Recent British Multicultural Fiction" (2013) article examines the imaginary border of multicultural British society in Bernardine Evaristo's *Hello Mum*. The imagined boundaries define the differences among the various ethnic groups, their boundaries, such as where young people can go and where they can't go, and even how they can act. These borders are imaginary, but they emerge from an inherited "knowledge" passed down from one generation to another. The 14-year-old protagonist of *Hello Mum*, Jerome, offers a compelling representation of contemporary London, revealing the harsh realities of gang culture within a multicultural society. "For Jerome, ordinary streets and innocent postcodes become territorial markers you cross at your

peril” (426). This line shows that due to the border between the different ethnic groups, Jerome, being a black, faced torture. For him, daily life in London is a war zone, and borders that are invisible to most Londoners mark the final line between life and death.

Kelly Vervondel, in the dissertation (2017) “Feminism in the Early Novels of Bernadine Evaristo,” exposes power inequalities, the construction of the negative image of females and the portrayal of female characters as strong and flexible. In *The Emperor's Babe*, *Soul Tourists* and *Blonde Roots*, power relationships favour men, as evidenced by Zuleika's submission to the will of the men in her life. Dori's representation as a slave shows her weakness, and Jessie's final submission to Stanley's will highlights patriarchal power. Evaristo, on the other hand, gives women a key role and the opportunity to challenge power inequities. “The women in Evaristo's novels are not resigned to their position, and they all search for ways of empowerment” (69). This line depicts that in *The Emperor's Babe*, *Soul Tourists*, and *Blonde Roots*, Bernardine Evaristo not only exposes gendered power disparities but also highlights women who struggle to find empowerment.

Kubra Kangulec Coskun's “Exploration of the Maternal Semiotic for Female Subjectivity in Evaristo's *The Emperor's Babe*,” published in 2017, analyses Zuleika's desire for a definite identity, her attempts to construct a new identity and her poetry as a means of survival. *The Emperor's Babe* is the narrative of Zuleika, a Sudanese girl who struggles hard for identification in a white man's world. This study examines Zuleika's quest for a united self in the symbolic domain connected with the Lacanian law-of-the-father, which stands for syntax, structure, and meaning in language through Julia Kristeva's theory of subjectivity. In this regard, her attempts at composing poetry will be taken as a mirror of her process of acquiring a permanent identity in London.

Tessa Roynon's “Constructing Selfhood through Re-Voicing the Classical Past,” published in 2017, explores the protests against the historical oppression of black women in different cultures and countries. It focuses on the empowerment of these oppressed women. Roynon argues that “Each work insists on a transnational conception of black identity, implicitly tracing black diasporic experience through Africa, Europe and the Americas (137).” These lines show that Bernadine, in her works, talks about the black identity and traces the history of African diasporic experiences during the trans-Atlantic slave trade and colonialism. Each of these incidents invokes not just the history of the seventeenth to twenty-first centuries but also the cultures of Ancient Greece and Rome, the legacies of which these

modern Europeans ruled over the black people. Evaristo's *The Emperor's Babe* shows the condition of the city during colonial rule.

Caroline Sanchez Palencia's paper "Feminist/queer/diasporic temporality in Bernadine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman and Other* (2019)" examines Bernadine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* through the perspective of blacks, females and queer by featuring twelve black women. To analyse Evaristo's novel as a text informed by feminist queer temporality, Palencia took help from Edelman (2004), Freeman (2010), and Ahmed (2010, 2017) and thus explores these characters' resistance to the rigid social structures. Black British diaspora and Black feminism are highlighted in this article.

In an interview with Bernadine Evaristo with Alison Donnell's "Writing of and for Our Time" (2019) reveals that Bernadine Evaristo had written the novel *Girl, Woman, Other* to show the existence of black women in the world, where they are almost invisible. She wants to highlight the role and importance of black women in every sphere of life. Furthermore, she tries to portray how they have become a victim of discrimination and marginalisation in society.

Marnie Hensler, in the article "Border Crossing and Reader Reception in *The Emperor's Babe, Mr Loverman and Girl, Woman, Other*," analyses how in all of her works, Evaristo traverse temporal, spatial, cultural, linguistic, stylistic, and formal boundaries. Evaristo crosses both temporal and formal bounds in *The Emperor's Babe* by setting the Black protagonist Zuleika in Roman London while incorporating modern writing style in her works. *Mr Loverman* intersects cultural boundaries by telling a tale of 75-year-old Barry, who has spent his entire life concealing his homosexuality from his wife. *Girl, Woman, Other* blurs the boundaries between space, culture, formality, and style. A chorus reveals the intertwined lives of twelve primarily Black British women from various generations, localities, and cultures in this work.

Merve Sarikaya Sen's "Reconfiguring Feminism: Bernadine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*," published in 2021, explores the importance of empowering women's rights and socio-economic prospects and improving humanity on a broader scale. *Girl, Woman, Other* is a trans modern narrative that provides a voice to a marginalised community of black women in Britain. The novel interweaves many events from the late nineteenth to the twenty-first century, set in locations ranging from Africa, the Caribbean, and America to Britain, to show how black women are marginalised daily. This article reveals patterns of diversity,

connectivity, and relationality throughout time and space, the unique genealogy of black British women and their maternal empowerment.

Rowan Ricardo Phillips' "The Emperor's Babe by Bernadine Evaristo" (2022) says that Bernadine Evaristo discusses the social hierarchy and the topic of the diaspora in her novel, *The Emperor's Babe*. The story revolves around Zuleika, a Sudanese girl who marries an older man at the age of eleven in Londinium in 211 AD. Zuleika gives us a glimpse into her daily life and introduces us to a partly virtual Londinium with all its discrimination and suffering faced by the diaspora. The identity crisis always seems to loom over Zuleika like a shadow. Although she was born in London, she feels that she does not belong in any country. Zuleika feels enslaved in her marriage, so one day she begins writing poems to help her construct a "virtual space" of her own. This does not appear to be a solution, as that virtual place does not give the feeling of home. Apart from that, Zuleika is in a secret affair with Septimius Severus, the Emperor. In the beginning, this secret affair gives her some sort of feeling of safety and affiliation, but in the long run, it leads her into trouble.

Xuerou Guan's "Space and Memory in Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*" (2024) examines how spatial settings in *Girl, Woman, Other* act as vessels of cultural and historical memory. Drawing on Jan Assmann's theory of cultural memory, Guan focuses on two prominent spaces in the novel, the Greenfield Farm and the National Theatre, as symbolic locations that anchor individual and collective experiences. The Greenfield Farm is interpreted as a representation of both radical and reformist contributions to social change, highlighting their roles in shaping cultural identity and memory. In contrast, the National Theatre stands as a metaphor for artistic rebellion and the assertion of marginalised identities in a predominantly white, patriarchal society.

Research Gap

While Bernardine Evaristo's works have been widely acclaimed for their engagement with race, gender, and identity in contemporary Britain, much of the existing literature tends to focus on thematic concerns such as feminism, intersectionality, and narrative experimentation, particularly in *Girl, Woman, Other*. Studies have also explored her treatment of cultural memory, diasporic identity, and historical revisionism. However, there remains a notable gap in critical literature that explicitly examines the intersection of postcolonial urban space, specifically London as a postcolonial metropolis, and the emergence of Black consciousness as a liberatory and psychological framework within Evaristo's fiction. This

research seeks to fill that void by offering an in-depth analysis of how Evaristo's select novels portray London as a site of postcolonial struggle and transformation, while simultaneously constructing a discourse of Black consciousness rooted in self-acceptance, resistance, and cultural pride. By foregrounding these two interrelated dimensions, the study provides a fresh theoretical lens through which Evaristo's literary contributions to postcolonial and Black British narratives will be explored.

Objectives

1. To trace the genesis of Postcolonial Metropolis and Race
2. To understand race and ethnic complexities in the select novels of Bernardine Evaristo
3. To analyse postcolonial London as a diasporic space
4. To study the construction of black consciousness in the selected novels of Bernardine Evaristo

To achieve these objectives, five research questions have been formulated, each addressing a significant dimension of the study. These questions serve as a framework for critically engaging with issues of race, identity, postcolonial urban dynamics, and the articulation of Black consciousness in Bernardine Evaristo's selected novels. The first question is how the concept of the postcolonial metropolis has evolved, and what theoretical frameworks can be applied to understand the racial, cultural, and historical dynamics of urban spaces like London? The second question is in what ways do Bernardine Evaristo's novels explore the intersections of race and ethnicity, and how do these complexities reflect broader postcolonial dynamics? The third question is in what ways does Black consciousness in Evaristo's novels empower Black individuals to reclaim and celebrate their identity, culture, and heritage? The fourth question is how the experiences of migration, displacement, and identity impacted the lives of the characters in postcolonial London? The fifth question is how living memory and the slave sublime reclaim forgotten histories and shape contemporary Black identity in postcolonial London?

Research Methodology

The methodology adopted for the study is qualitative. The study is conducted through the Postcolonial theory as the characters suffer racism, ethnicity, and various other challenges in the multicultural London society. The theory of Paul Gilroy and its various dimensions

becomes helpful to analyse the characters in Bernardine Evaristo. The support is also taken from theorists such as W. Du Bois, Franz Fanon, Dr Cornel West, Steve Biko and John McLeod. Moreover, online sources such as JSTOR, ProQuest and other e-resources have been taken into consideration to bring authenticity to the present study. The formatting of the study is completely based on the MLA 9th edition. In addition to this, the student visits the various libraries of different universities for the collection of the material.

Based on the above-mentioned objectives and the methodology, the research is structured into five chapters, each exploring Bernardine Evaristo's select novels through the dual lenses of postcolonial urbanism and Black consciousness.

Chapter one, entitled "Postcolonialism and Black Consciousness: Evolution and Theoretical Framework", lays the conceptual foundation for the study by exploring the emergence and transformation of the postcolonial metropolis, with a particular focus on the city of London. It begins by tracing London's historical journey from being the centre of imperial power to becoming a multicultural urban space shaped by migration, racial tensions, and the legacies of colonialism. The chapter critically examines how a metropolis, once a symbol of colonial dominance, has transformed into a site of cultural convergence, controversy, and resistance. The chapter also draws on various theoretical frameworks within postcolonial studies and Black consciousness, highlighting their evolution and relevance in the literary discourse. The works of Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, Paul Gilroy, and John McLeod play a pivotal role in shaping the theoretical development of postcolonialism, while Frantz Fanon, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Steve Biko provide critical insights into the formation of racial identity, historical awareness, and Black resistance against discrimination. Collectively, these thinkers reveal how concepts of race, ethnicity, and identity function within urban postcolonial spaces, particularly regarding the ongoing impact of Britain's colonial history.

Chapter two, entitled "Racial and Ethnic Complexities", critically examines how Bernardine Evaristo's selected novels highlight the persistent impact of racial discrimination and ethnic disparity on Black and mixed-race communities. Through various characters, the works portray the consequences of racism, including the development of an inferiority complex among individuals subjected to marginalization. Her narrative reveals how internalised oppression often arises from cultural insiderism, wherein dominant cultural norms exclude or devalue alternative expressions, thereby forcing minorities into positions of social and cultural alienation. It analyses how racial and ethnic profiling and segregation

continue to function in postcolonial societies. The chapter discusses how race is socially constructed and shaped by historical power dynamics, and how Evaristo's narrative techniques reflect the fluid and intersecting nature of identity in multicultural Britain.

Chapter Three, entitled "Black Consciousness and its Dynamics", investigates the psychological and cultural dimensions of Black consciousness as portrayed in Bernardine Evaristo's selected novels. Through an exploration of characters who confront systemic racism, cultural dislocation, and identity fragmentation, the chapter explores how Black individuals come to recognise, resist, and redefine their identities within a racially marginalised society. The notion of Black consciousness is examined not merely as a political stance but as a deeply personal and transformative process, shaped by both internal struggles and external pressures. The chapter traces how Evaristo's characters move from states of psychological fragmentation to empowerment and pride, reclaiming their cultural heritage and asserting their identities with renewed self-worth. This process involves narrative resistance, a refusal to be defined by dominant stereotypes and an embrace of the richness of Black history, culture, and community.

Chapter Four, entitled "Postcolonial London and Diaspora Space", explores London as a complex space shaped by its colonial past and multicultural contemporary society, positioning it as both a postcolonial metropolis and a diasporic space. The chapter investigates how the city represents the tensions between belongingness, modernity, migration and rootedness. London is not simply a geographical location in Evaristo's fiction, rather, it becomes a living metaphor for the postcolonial condition, where individuals navigate issues such as national identity, cultural displacement, and social alienation. For most of the protagonists, London is both a place of opportunity and a site of dislocation and fragmentation. It argues that postcolonial London in Evaristo's fiction serves as both a mirror and a critique of Britain's colonial legacy and contemporary multiculturalism. It underscores how diasporic individuals reclaim and redefine urban spaces, asserting their histories, voices, and identities despite systemic marginalisation.

Chapter Five, "Living Memory and the Slave Sublime", explores the influence of cultural memory and historical trauma in the formation of Black consciousness as represented in Bernardine Evaristo's selected novels. It focuses particularly on how the legacy of slavery, dehumanisation, and the Middle Passage continues to shape Black identity in the postcolonial world. The concept of living memory in this context refers to the enduring presence of the

past in the lives of contemporary Black individuals. Rather than viewing history as distant or static, Evaristo portrays it as active, embodied, and generational, influencing personal identity, cultural practices, and political consciousness. Her characters are influenced by ancestral trauma, yet they also find ways to transform this pain into resilience and continuity. The main aim of this chapter is the exploration of the slave sublime, a term that captures the awe and horror that arises from confronting the brutal history of slavery.

Significance of the Study

This study holds significant academic value as it brings a fresh perspective to the literary contributions of Bernardine Evaristo by exploring the intersection of the postcolonial metropolis and Black consciousness, two critical yet underexplored dimensions in her work. The Study depicts London as a complex postcolonial space shaped by migration, colonial history, and cultural hybridity. The research provides insight into how urban environments reflect socio-political struggles and identity formations. Furthermore, by applying the framework of Black consciousness, the study examines how characters navigate psychological liberation, cultural pride, and resistance in the face of systemic oppression and racial marginalisation.

The research not only contributes to the growing body of postcolonial and diaspora studies but also enriches conversations around Black British literature, urban identity, and decolonial thought. It offers new interpretations of Evaristo's novels that highlight the importance of reclaiming cultural memory, challenging Eurocentric narratives, and promoting empowered representations of Black identity. As such, this study serves as a valuable resource for scholars, students, and readers interested in literature, race studies, cultural theory, and contemporary British fiction.

Chapter 1

Postcolonial Metropolis and Black Consciousness: Evolution and Theoretical Framework

The Postcolonial theory explains the political, economic, historical, and social impacts of European colonial rule. It mainly concentrates on human and land exploitation during colonialism and its effect on the lives of the colonised people after colonialism. Pramod K. Nayar, in his book *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory*, explains postcolonial as “Postcolonial theory is a method of interpreting, reading and critiquing the cultural practices of colonialism, where it proposes that the exercise of colonial power is also the exercise of racially determined powers of representation” (177). These lines show that postcolonial theory emphasises the legacy of colonial rule and its regulatory structures after independence. They further indicate that colonialism operated as a form of cultural hegemony, enacted through representation, discourse, and documentation, rather than solely as military or political domination.

Postcolonial theory emerged as an intellectual response to the political, economic, and cultural legacies of colonialism and imperialism. It interrogates the unequal power relations established through colonial encounters and traces how these relations persist, represent and are practised after formal independence. Within academia, postcolonial studies emerged during the 1970s and 1980s, drawing insights from literature, history, anthropology, cultural studies, and critical theory. A major contributor to this field was Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978), widely regarded as a foundational text: Said showed how Western scholarship, travel writing, and artistic representations constructed “the Orient” (1) as exotic, backwards, and fundamentally other, a discursive framing that both reflected and helped justify imperial domination. Edward Said opened the way for subsequent postcolonial critics to analyse how representation, discourse, and archival documentation continue to shape identities, hierarchies, and cultural negotiations in formerly colonised and metropolitan spaces.

The word *metropolis* comes from the Greek term *mētēr pólis*, where *mētēr* means “mother” and *pólis* means “city” or “town.” Thus, a metropolis is a large city which serves as a hub for regional or international connections, commerce, and trade. Soanes, Spooner and Hawker, in *Compact Oxford Dictionary, Thesaurus, and Wordpower Guide*, define a metropolis as “The main city of a country or region” (562). A metropolis is a prominent city

that serves as the economic, political, and cultural centre of a nation or region. It is a large city that functions as the hub of commerce, culture, the judiciary, and government.

Metropolis gained wider cultural visibility in critical and literary discourse through Fritz Lang's landmark German Expressionist film *Metropolis* (1927). Set in a stratified futuristic city, the film dramatises extreme economic inequality, the exploitation of an underground labour force by a privileged technocratic elite, and the emergence of class consciousness in response to systemic injustice. Its towering urban skylines contrasted with subterranean factory worlds created a powerful visual metaphor for the vertical hierarchies of modern industrial capitalism. Because of this, scholars across disciplines such as literature, film studies, urban studies, sociology, architecture, and later cultural and postcolonial studies, have drawn on *Metropolis* to think about how cities organise power, labour, technology, and spectacle. The film's imagery continues to inform discussions of the modern and postmodern city, from debates about alienation and mechanisation to analyses of how imperial wealth, migrant labour, and racialised class divisions shaped metropolitan growth. In postcolonial urban criticism, *Metropolis* functions as a cultural stenography for the unequal infrastructures that underwrote imperial centres such as London, inviting comparisons between cinematic dystopia and the lived disparities produced by empire, industrial modernity, and global capital.

The term postcolonial metropolis is a fusion of two concepts that together examine the impact of colonialism on imperial cities, particularly the cultural, societal, aesthetic, and political transformations brought about by migration and settlement. The concept is used to disclose and highlight the problems faced by the metropolis natives and immigrants, such as racism, subjugation, objectification, political repression, social discrimination, economic exploitation, cultural alienation and prejudice towards the new commerce in the metropolis cities. Sandten et. al. describe that "The dialectic of the postcolonial metropolis and the postcolonial in the metropolis gestures towards both the colonial influence on the former imperial centres" (*Re-inventing the Postcolonial (in the) Metropolis*, xv). These lines suggest that postcolonialism examines the effects of colonial rule on formerly colonised regions, and the postcolonial metropolis refers to the transformations in imperial centres produced by migration, settlement, cultural change, and persistent socioeconomic and political inequalities. The article "Introduction: Tracing the urban imaginary in the postcolonial metropolis and the new metropolis" defines a postcolonial metropolis as:

The terms “postcolonial metropolis” and “new” metropolis are treated as synonyms, meant to describe the meanwhile “emancipated capitals” of both the former colonies as well as the so-called “developing” or “third world” countries and states. In this sense, the attribute “emancipated” refers to the processes of geopolitical, demographic and socio-economic change they have undergone. (Ines Detmers et al. 484)

Postcolonial metropolis or new metropolis refers to metropolitan and third-world countries that have undergone significant changes since the end of colonial rule. It highlights the ground realities of the multicultural and developed country London by underlining that London has some hidden characteristics of a dystopian city, such as prejudice in terms of race, the identity crisis of the migrants and their exploitation, gender and class discrimination and gang culture. It defined that the legacy of colonialism affects the socio-cultural, geopolitical and material disparities in postcolonial metropolis places like London.

The concept of the postcolonial metropolis finds its early literary roots in the texts of the 18th and 19th centuries. However, during that period, scholars and writers devoted comparatively little attention to the specific notion of the metropolis as a postcolonial construct. The focus was largely on empire, colonial exploration, and the colonised, rather than on the imperial cities themselves as dynamic and evolving cultural spaces. It was not until the late 20th century, and more significantly in the early 21st century, that the postcolonial metropolis emerged as a critical site of examination. This renewed interest can be traced through the literary contributions of writers such as Sam Selvon, Colin MacInnes, V. S. Naipaul, Charles Dickens, Frantz Fanon, and Salman Rushdie, whose works began to reveal the complexities, contradictions, and transformations of metropolitan centres shaped by colonial histories and postcolonial realities.

In the past two decades, the notion of the postcolonial metropolis has gained considerable prominence within postcolonial studies. A pivotal text in this development is *Postcolonial London: Rewriting the Metropolis* by John McLeod. This work is widely regarded as foundational to the theorisation of the postcolonial metropolis. McLeod was among the first scholars to critically analyse the transformation of imperial cities, particularly London, through the lens of colonial legacies, migration, diaspora, and cultural hybridity. He introduces the idea of the metropolis not merely as a geographic or political centre, but as a disputed space shaped by historical forces of colonisation and postcolonial movement.

McLeod highlights how postcolonial metropolitan spaces are continuously rewritten and reimagined in literature by a diverse range of writers, reflecting the lived experiences of formerly colonised peoples who have migrated to and reshaped these urban centres. Along with McLeod's work, Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* offers a complementary and deeply influential perspective. Gilroy explores the transnational and intercultural exchanges that define the Black diaspora, emphasising the Atlantic as a space of historical trauma, cultural interaction, and identity formation. His work is particularly significant in understanding the postcolonial metropolis as a site of diasporic convergence, shaped by memory, displacement, and the ongoing negotiation of identity in a globalised world. Together, the contributions of McLeod and Gilroy have been involved in framing the postcolonial metropolis as both a literary and theoretical construct. They highlight how the legacies of empire continue to inform contemporary urban life, and how literature functions as a powerful medium through which the voices of the marginalised can reclaim and reinterpret metropolitan space.

Paul Gilroy is a prominent theorist of race and racism, a distinguished scholar in cultural studies, and a sociologist whose work has had a deep impact on the understanding of diasporic identities and postcolonial urban life. His critically explores the historical processes of colonialism, slavery, and decolonization, with a particular focus on how these legacies continue to shape the sociopolitical and cultural landscapes of modern metropolitan centers. Gilroy examine into the complexities of migration and settlement, especially during and after the colonial period, analyses the postcolonial experiences in the metropolis. He highlights how metropolitan spaces like London have become sites of hybrid cultural, where overlapping political ideologies, conflicting cultural rituals, fluid notions of national identity, and evolving ethnic and racial dynamics create a mosaic of tension and transformation. In his work *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Gilroy challenges Eurocentric narratives of modernity by centering the experiences of the African diaspora and highlighting the enduring impact of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. He argues that race and ethnicity must be understood within the larger historical framework of slavery, colonial exploitation, and forced displacement. The Transatlantic Slave Trade was a foundational act of violence that forcibly transported millions of Africans across the Atlantic, primarily to serve the economic ambitions of European imperial powers. This traumatic legacy did not end with the abolition of slavery but continued through patterns of colonial migration, postcolonial displacement, and systemic racism in imperial cities. Gilroy further shows that

cities like London, as former imperial capitals, have become home to large populations of immigrants from the Global South, particularly from former British colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, and South Asia. These immigrants, despite their vital contributions to the economic and cultural life of the metropolis, often face systemic exclusion, discrimination, and marginalisation. He interrogates how imperial cities maintain their hegemonic power by policing racial boundaries, enforcing assimilationist ideologies, and deploying institutional authority to suppress immigrant identities and cultural expressions:

The reflexive cultures and consciousness of the European settlers and those of the Africans they enslaved, the "Indians" they slaughtered, and the Asians they indentured were not, even in situations of the most extreme brutality, sealed off hermetically from each other, then so be it. (2)

Gilroy traces the historical trajectory of the Black Atlantic to demonstrate that even under conditions of extreme oppression, cultures did not remain isolated. Rather, there was an ongoing and often involuntary exchange through resistance, hybridisation, and survival. He explores how the history of the transatlantic slave trade, colonisation, and subsequent migration shaped the formation of the postcolonial metropolis. He reveals that the so-called native populations in metropolitan areas saw themselves as original or rightful inhabitants viewed the influx of immigrants from colonised nations with hostility and suspicion. These European natives, driven by a desire to preserve their socio-political dominance, refused to recognize the newcomers as equals. Immigrants, many of whom were descendants of enslaved Africans or indentured laborers from Asia, were systematically subjected to social exclusion. Gilroy exposes this deeply rooted power dynamic by illustrating how the imperial cities, especially London, continued to uphold racial hierarchies, using both structural and symbolic violence to marginalise those they had once colonised. In this way, the postcolonial metropolis becomes a contested space, a site where the legacy of empire is not only remembered but actively renovated through modern forms of exclusion and inequality. Gilroy's analysis reveals the harsh reality that, to preserve their authority and dominance, European societies resorted to enslaving Africans, slaughtering Indigenous peoples, and exploiting Asians. These acts of brutality were not isolated events of the past, but foundational forces that shaped the socio-cultural and racial configurations of the contemporary metropolis. Gilroy emphasises that while these oppressed communities were victimised by empire, they were never passive. Instead, through survival, cultural adaptation,

and resistance, they began to assert their presence within the imperial centres, challenging the myths of European superiority. Thus, Gilroy presents the postcolonial metropolis as a deeply ambivalent space. It is at once a product of violent imperial histories and a stage for cultural resistance, hybridity, and transformation. The enduring conflict between inclusion and exclusion, dominance and resistance, reflects the structural tensions that define postcolonial urban life. His work pushes readers to confront the uncomfortable truth that the very identity of the metropolis, its modernity, wealth, and global significance, has been built upon centuries of exploitation and marginalisation. Yet within this space, the voices and cultures of the formerly colonised continue to challenge and redefine what it means to belong.

Gilroy discusses that the legacy of power in the hands of Europeans places immigrants, particularly those from formerly colonised nations, in a complex and often conflicting cultural position. These individuals become sandwiched between two dominant cultures: first is their inherited traditions, languages, and customs from their countries of origin, and second is the dominant European cultural norms imposed upon them in the metropolis. This cultural dissonance is further intensified by systemic discrimination based on ethnic and cultural differences, which leads many immigrants to perceive their heritage as inferior or incompatible with modernity. As a result, there emerges a pattern of cultural assimilation in which the immigrants, especially those of African descent, begin to adopt the values, behaviours, and national identity of the dominant European society. Over time, this leads to the hermetic sealing off of their cultural roots in an attempt to gain social acceptance and avoid marginalisation. However, this cultural transition does not occur without internal conflict. Gilroy terms this condition as contributing to ethnic absolutism, a process through which individuals are pressured to believe that cultural identity must be singular and pure. Within this tension emerges the experience of double consciousness, a term that captures the psychological fragmentation experienced by individuals attempting to reconcile two identities that are often treated as mutually exclusive. As Gilroy notes:

Striving to be both European and black requires some specific forms of double consciousness... where racist, nationalist, or ethnically absolutist discourses orchestrate political relationships so that these identities appear to be mutually exclusive, occupying the space between them” (1).

These lines highlight the central dilemma faced by Black individuals in European societies as they are expected to conform to a national norm while simultaneously being reminded that

they do not fully belong. This double consciousness becomes a source of deep identity crisis, as the individuals navigate conflicting pressures, on the one hand, the desire to preserve their cultural and racial heritage, and on the other, the need to assimilate to access social, economic, and political opportunities. Gilroy emphasizes that the legacy of slavery, colonial exploitation, and racial hierarchy embedded within European societies continues to shape the lives of Black diasporic individuals. The descendants of the Black Atlantic are burdened not only with the memory of historical trauma but also with the challenge of forging an identity that reconciles their African heritage with their European present. In this way, Gilroy's concept of double consciousness offers a powerful lens to understand the fragmented, ambivalent, and painful realities of identity formation in the postcolonial metropolis.

Paul Gilroy highlighted the concept of diasporic space in his book *The Black Atlantic*. Diasporic space defines the physical, emotional and psychological space of a person who is displaced from their homeland and living in a new home. It is a space formed due to the impact of many cultural and ethnic components within the diasporic community. In *The Black Atlantic*, Paul Gilroy used the term Black Atlantic to address the cultural, historical, and economic linkages that have shaped the African diaspora in the postcolonial metropolis and examine how Black people create, negotiate and form their identities. He argues that in the process of cultural transition, different cultural and ethnic groups interact and exchange ideas, values, and practices in the postcolonial metropolis. These exchanges of tradition and values resulted in a diasporic society and hybrid culture that involves socio-political changes and ethnic complexities. In this context, he argues, "Ethnic differences as an absolute break in the histories and experiences of black and white people" (2). It indicates how racial and ethnic complexity renovates the socio-political scenario by thinning out the boundaries between black and white in postcolonial metropolises. He says that the exchange of multiple identities and cultures congregate and merge in unpredictable ways. This merging of different ideas, values, cultures and traditions between the two poles of racial identity creates a sense of hybridity and multiplicity in the postcolonial city. He declares that this hybridity and multiplicity are responsible for a new socio-cultural and hybrid identity formation. John McLeod praises how Paul Gilroy uses "aquatic metaphors" (162) to explain diasporic space. He says, "Gilroy recast aquatic metaphors as figuring the enabling political and cultural possibilities of 'creolisation, métissage, mestizaje, and hybrid'" (163). McLeod notes that Gilroy has provided a model of diasporic culture as a mobile. The fluidity and exchange of the ocean signify the linkage and solidarity between different ethnicities and nationalities.

Further, the crossing of the Atlantic Ocean during the slave trade, migrations, and other forms of exchange has produced a unique cultural identity of the black Atlantic that is different from traditional national identities.

John McLeod is a professor of postcolonial and diaspora Literature. He adopts theories of postcolonialism and post-war cultural transition in contemporary British fiction. His book, *Postcolonial London: Rewriting the metropolis*, talked about two types of transformation that happened in postcolonial London. First is the physical transformation, and second is socio-political changes. In terms of physical transformation, John McLeod emphasizes how the arrival of immigrants and refugees from various British colonies has significantly altered postwar London:

There is another London being created here, one which admits the times and places of overseas to the supposedly humdrum heart of the aged British Empire, creating a novel environment which also epitomizes the perpetually changing milieu of city living... London bears witness to the profoundly polycultural character of the city in the postwar years and to a number of reactionary responses. (1-2)

John McLeod gives a brief idea about the transformation in metropolitan London due to hybrid societies, migration and settlement history during the postwar years. He analyses that London has transformed and becomes a new London due to the influx of newcomers from the Caribbean, India, and Africa. These immigrants affect the city's appearance in terms of new construction, such as the building of apartments, streets, and parks to accommodate the needs of the growing population. London city also becomes crowded with people from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and languages, all living and working together. This mixing of different cultures creates an alteration in the existing culture of the city. Many British values and traditions get mutated by the arrival of new people. Besides cultural mutation, London emerged as a diverse city with a wide range of ethnic groups, and the immigrants have also faced several reactionary responses from the natives. The first reaction is the ethical complexities that emerged in postcolonial London. Londoners classified the different ethnic groups into two categories viz white ethnic group and non-white ethnic group. The white ethnic group were treated as privileged, while the non-white ethnic group were bereft of London facilities. These response reactions took the shape of racism, xenophobia, and other

forms of discrimination. John McLeod highlighted how the natives react to the arrival of newcomers in the postcolonial metropolis:

Brixton's diasporic peoples, like many other new Londoners from countries with a history of colonialism, would be subjected to a series of attitudes which frequently objectified and demonized them, often in terms of race, while questioning their rights of citizenship and tenure in one of the world's most historically cosmopolitan cities. (2)

McLeod explores how the history of racism in London has shaped the city and examines the impact of racism on the economy, politics, and culture in the postcolonial metropolis. He argues that the arrival of the diasporic population in London creates a diverse environment. In London, the diasporic people frequently encountered hatred and discrimination. The natives often objectified and demonized the expatriates based on their race or ethnicity. The natives make expatriates an alien, and even after spending centuries, the citizenship rights of expatriates are still missing in a metropolitan city. These attitudes of natives gradually increased the tension between different ethnic groups and ultimately took the shape of racism and xenophobia in cosmopolitan cities like London. McLeod explained how racism made a series of clashes between police and young black youths in Notting Hill:

Tensions gradually mounted. On Saturday 30 August 1958, one week after violence Making a song and dance 49 in St Ann's, Nottingham, trouble flared in Notting Dale with local properties attacked and black people assaulted by gangs of white youths and Teddy boys. The violence spread from Notting Dale throughout Notting Hill and Shepherds Bush, with black people forced to defend themselves against a growing number of white rioters. By Wednesday 3 September the worst was over. Many were injured but, amazingly perhaps, no one was killed. (50)

McLeod describes The Notting Hill riots of 1958 to expose the gang culture and racial violence in the metropolis. He said that racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination mounted the tension and conflicts between different racial and ethnic groups. He recounts how the riots of 1958 started in Notting Dale and moved to Notting Hill and Shepherds Bush. During this riot, the white teenage gangs and Teddy boys gang started smashing buildings and the cafe of several west Indians. They then started attacking the rented house of blacks

and assaulted black individuals in the Shepherds Bush. As a result, tensions began to increase and eventually became more violent when black people started to defend themselves against the increasing number of white rioters. Fortunately, the disturbances stopped by September 3. This tension and conflict show the hatred of natives toward the newcomers. The riot is a reminder of the racism, inequality and injustice that started in the metropolis during the 1950s.

McLeod, in his work, addresses the imaginative or aesthetic changes in the metropolis city. He explores how the diasporic writers have represented the changes in the metropolis cities since the 1950s. McLeod, in his work, addresses the imaginative or aesthetic changes in the metropolis city. He explores how the diasporic writers have represented the changes in the metropolis cities since the 1950s. McLeod examines the consequences of the postcolonial legacy in transforming contemporary London by highlighting the hidden reality of the postcolonial London metropolis. He mentions some famous myths and expectations of the people who never visited the metropolis and explains how the image of utopia London transformed into dystopian London when they encountered the dystopian characteristics of London. He talked about the famous Caribbean musician Lord Kitchen, who portrays the myth and expectation of diasporic people from London in his calypso (a genre of music):

Lord Kitchener's calypso is, of course, not about London at all but about a certain expectation or ideal of London when seen from afar. The myth it perpetuates about 'this lovely city' is one of fulfilment, friendship and freedom. Walking in the streets is a pleasure, and one can wander where one pleases with ease... The reality of London, of course, would often be very different from its expectation, especially as regards walking the streets or securing residence. (29)

McLeod argues that many Caribbean migrants who arrived in London in the 1950s had an idealized view of the city. Lord Kitchener's calypso songs show the myth of Caribbean people about London city. Lord Kitchener's calypso expressed that Caribbeans have hope for a better life in London and consider it a youthful, progressive country. Lord Kitchener, through his works, conveyed that they thought London would offer freedom and opportunities to the immigrants. He claimed that immigrants from different countries expect London to be a dynamic cosmopolitan city and a hub of innovation and creativity, "Coming to London was a vital and inevitable part of their attempts to develop their career"(60). Many colonizers believed London was the perfect epitome of utopia, so many people migrated to

London to ripen their careers. McLeod argues that many diasporic people shifted to London to build their careers. In reality, the legacy of colonialism still lingers in London, which creates a prejudiced attitude of natives toward expatriates. This attitude resulted in the disparity of accessing the facilities in the metropolis, housing, education, and employment, “many of the difficulties facing newcomers to the city, such as their expectations of London nurtured from afar and the prejudicial attitudes they found in employment and housing” (2). McLeod claims that the influence of colonial education taught them London was the centre of the world. The cinema and English writers further encourage them to create London as a utopia in the eyes of the diasporic. The image of London as a utopia causes a lot of difficulties in the life of migrants when they witness that the reality of London is entirely different from their expectations. Just like Lord Kitchener, many Caribbean believes that people will often enjoy themselves while walking in the streets of London due to the joyful and optimistic atmosphere. However, McLeod points out that the reality of London is very different from its idealized version, particularly when it comes to walking in the streets or securing residence because the city has become a home to a high crime rate. The crowded city makes it simple for crooks to disappear into the crowd. There are reports of muggings, pickpocketing, and other violent criminalities regularly. The people in London did not feel safe and secure while walking in the crowded city.

In postcolonial London, the diasporic encounters prejudice, inequality and injustice in the metropolis while trying to find shelter and employment. Many newcomers did not even get a house or job due to language barriers, ethnicity and race. The lack of economic opportunities and resources creates a hostile environment for newcomers and makes it difficult for them to establish a new life in London. McLeod reveals the housing crisis of the metropolis by highlighting the incident of Notting Hill:

Notting Hill as it was one of the few areas where rooms could be rented, although at highly inflated prices. The notorious slum landlord Peter Rachman became a millionaire by acquiring 147 properties in the area and leasing them at extortionate prices to black arrivants, who were intimidated if they complained to the rent tribunal or were late with payments. (49)

In the above quotation, McLeod reveals the exploitation of newcomers while searching for a room to live in London. He explains how Notting Hill became a home for many newcomers to London. During 1950-1960, the British people viewed the influx of newcomers as a threat to

their existence. At that time, a notorious landlord named Peter Rachman became a millionaire as he took advantage of the circumstances by buying 147 properties in the Notting Hill area and charging high rents. The expatriates have no option other than accepted Peter Rachman's offer. In this way, Notting Hill became the home and a site for exploitation for expatriates. In addition to the economic exploitation, the 1957 rent act reduced tenancy rights, which further helped landlords like Peter Rachman to take advantage of the newcomers. He threatened them and tortured the tenant whenever renters tried to file a rent tribunal complaint or made late payments. All these incidents and the 1957 rent act indicate the injustices and the hostile environment of the postcolonial metropolis.

Black Consciousness has emerged as a powerful force in postcolonial metropolises around the world. A wide range of concepts comes under the term black consciousness, including racism, race relations, black dignity, black power, and even rebellious consciousness, as black consciousness emerged against the historically oppressed. It is the awareness of the blacks about their cultural values, rights, causes and consequences of black oppression and the determination to combat those causes. Therefore, the idea of black consciousness suggests that black people feel proud of being black and should recognize their value as human beings. It gets emerged as a reaction against apartheid rules and injustice. Black consciousness gained popularity during the 1960s when the Black Consciousness Movement started under the leadership of Steve Biko. Nengwekhulu, one of the founders of the South African Students Organization, defines black consciousness as:

Black Consciousness is the realization and acceptance by Blacks in South Africa that, in order to play a positive role in the struggle for liberation and emancipation, they must effectively employ the concept of group power and thereby build a strong base from which to counter the oppressor's policy of divide and rule. (2)

According to Nengwekhulu, black consciousness refers to the realization of blacks that black people should understand their indigenous value systems and raise their voices together to come out from the grave of exploitation and oppression. He said the oppressors imposed foreign values, both physically and psychologically, to make them malleable to subjugation. So, blacks should unite together and fight for the psychological and physical liberation of blacks.

Black consciousness is the main reason which encouraged the blacks to start a movement against white oppression, and this movement is known as the Black consciousness movement. This movement rejects Apartheid, traditional white values, monopoly, Eurocentric views and dominance. In 1970, the Black Consciousness movement sparked a social, cultural, and political awakening in South Africa. Before the rise of the black consciousness movement, various other freedom fighters and anti-apartheid groups like the Pan-Africanist Congress and African National Congress formed in South Africa. Pan- Africanist was founded in 1919 to fight against imperialism and colonialism to gain human rights and achieve equal economic opportunity. The African National Congress is a political party formed after independence in South Africa that seeks to resist the apartheid guidelines in the country. By the middle of the 1960s, both groups were suppressed by government constrain. So, blacks again become the victim of racial segregation. At that time, Steve Biko and other black students dissatisfied with the white leadership and racial segregation established an all-black association in 1969 and formed the South African Student's Organization (SASO). It is a school of thought that reinterpreted black as an accepting and positive identity. The main motive of SASA is to build an identity for black student and educates them that black South Africans could affect significant social change if they became aware of their value as individuals and their rights in society. The revolt against injustice and understanding of their value is called Black consciousness.

After a few revolts and protests, the Black Consciousness movement and its leaders were quiet after the South African government understood that opposing apartheid rule could be problematic for the blacks. The government forced Biko to get exiled to his hometown in the Eastern Cape, where he carried on creating community development initiatives and wielding considerable political power. To maintain white supremacy, the government killed Biko in September 1977. Due to Biko's death, the black people's revolts and protests started again with devotion towards black consciousness. The activist founded the Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO) in 1978. AZAPO is considered the heir of SASO. The objectives of both SASO and AZAPO are the same. In SASO, only South African students were actively involved, while AZAPO was open for coloured people, blacks and Indians.

Biko's struggled with intense government repression during the black consciousness movement. So, his contribution and dedication towards the black consciousness movement have registered his name in the history of the Black Consciousness

movement. He is remembered as a potent icon and beloved hero, inspiring others to forge a new black future for South Africa through Black Consciousness.

The term Black consciousness derives from the concept of W.E.B DU Bois's Double Consciousness of black Americans. According to Du Bois, Africans lived in a society where they were marginalized and did not give equal rights due to their Black identity. Despite being liberated, they still confront difficulties. Du Bois claimed that because black Americans remained to live between the American and African identities, they did not necessarily achieve freedom. This conflict between being American and being black is known as double consciousness. He says:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, —an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (3)

In these lines, Du Bois describes the difficulties of being black in American culture. He claims that after years of imprisonment, blacks aimed to become self-aware men by combining two opposing identities into one that would eventually be more acceptable. As the Afro-Americans constantly have to see themselves through the lenses of others, the feeling of being an American and a Negro creates a burden on their shoulders. The conflicting identity has developed an identity crisis in their psyches. To illustrate the plight of black people, Du Bois used the ideas of "the Veil" and "double awareness" in his work. The Veil is a metaphor for the colour line. According to him, the Veil suggests three things: first, it refers to the physical differences between whites and blacks; second, it signifies how Americans view the black identity. Third, it suggests how black people view themselves with their black identity. According to Du Bios, Africans are excluded and denied equal rights in society because they identify as Black and completely ignore the fact that they were born in America and thus also have an American identity with them.

Du Bois's work influences 1960s black consciousness thinkers and activists. He describes the extent of racism in America in his book, *The Soul of Black Folk* and calls for an end. He traces the bitter history of Africans to make blacks aware of how and why European plan to make them insecure about their identity:

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, -- this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa.

(8)

In this passage, Du Bois discussed how Europeans have biases historically towards Africans in all spheres of life and its effect on the blacks. Apartheid society's discrimination increased hate for themselves among its victims, who doubted their abilities. Black people have lacked a meaningful identity due to this discrimination. Since colonialism, black people have struggled with their multiple identities. After years of imprisonment, they were trying to become self-aware men by combining their two distinct identities into one, which would be their true identity. The ultimate objective of merging their identities was not to conquer white European countries but to be accepted by their new homeland. In other words, Du Bois tries to paint a clear picture of the struggles black people experience in a racist society and how they would come to understand their cultural values and rights. Du Bois adds the following to explain that although the battle between white and black persisted for forty years after emancipation, for the black man, the later century was more horrible:

The Nation has not yet found peace from its sins; the freedman has not yet found in freedom his promised land. Whatever of good may have come in these years of change, the shadow of a deep disappointment rests upon the Negro people...a disappointment all the more bitter because the unattained ideal was unbounded save by the simple ignorance of a lowly people. (11)

These lines demonstrate the persistence of racism after black people got freed from slavery, servitude, and colonialism. He argues that freedom is not the ultimate freedom of blacks because whites continuously ridicule black people. Even though the Negro was now free but the injustice they faced prevented them from achieving true freedom. Thus, the continued practice of racism led to greater oppression, which in turn, shackled the minds of African Americans. Du Bois then illustrated that, although being emancipated from slavery, African Americans could not truly gain freedom. The only step to achieving the ultimate freedom from these injustices is to educate black people about black consciousness. Through education, they feel empowered and become aware of their cultural values and rights. Du Bois understood that education could uplift the black social status and gives him the power to break the imposed discrimination. In his book, *The Soul of Black Folk*, he mentioned that:

The South believed an educated Negro to be a dangerous Negro. And the South was not wholly wrong; for education among all kinds of men always has had, and always will have, an element of danger and revolution, of dissatisfaction and discontent. (29)

In these lines, Du Bois shows the Importance of education and awareness among blacks. He stated that before the civil war most of southern Europe refused to provide education to black people because they knew that educating Negroes could be dangerous for them. Through education, blacks will be empowered and reject the Eurocentric perspective about blacks. They will start uplifting the status of black people in society by fighting against oppression, discrimination and injustice. Education makes them aware that to maintain European hegemony, they inbuilt the inferiority complex among blacks through the institution of slavery. Du Bois believes that education will helps blacks to find one true identity.

Frantz Fanon was a French psychiatrist, philosopher and writer. He discussed race, colonialism and post-colonialism. Fanon's views on race are primarily concerned with the racial formation, alienation, struggle, inferiority complex and the rejection of blacks by the whites. He focuses on how an inferiority complex has developed in the mind of blacks. *He says*, "As long as the black man is among his own, he will have no occasion, except in minor internal conflicts, to experience his being through others" (82). Fanon claims that blacks would not consider themselves inferior if racism or white people was absent. Instead, they will consider themselves normal beings, neither superior nor inferior. The encounter of blacks with white people creates a hierarchical system and takes advantage of their power. He analyses those blacks needed to understand that their fear of white rulers and inferiority complex was an inherent idea of whites to maintain racial superiority throughout the colonial period. "The feeling of inferiority of the colonized is the correlative to the European's feeling of superiority. Let us have the courage to say it outright: It is the racist who creates his inferior" (69). Along these lines, Fanon rejects Mannoni's ideology that black people submit to colonialism because they have inferiority complexes. He argues that the European divided society into white and black people and assigned a higher value to themselves. The whites create inferiority-superiority complexes and allow white people to build their superiority by labelling inferiority complexes to black people. They deliberately provide these labels to exploit the colonized people as the oppressed inferiority complex is inversely proportional to the European's feeling of superiority and vice-versa.

Franz Fanon's writings inspire the physically and mentally imprisoned blacks to rise and reclaim their self-esteem, pride, and liberation. He highlights the contribution of racism to the emergence of black consciousness. He said that repeated racist experiences, discrimination and injustices harm black people's self-image and distort their understanding of themselves. Gradually, black people internalize racist assumptions about themselves:

In terms of consciousness, the black consciousness is held out as an absolute density, as filled with itself, a stage preceding any invasion, any abolition of the ego by desire... Still in terms of consciousness, black consciousness is immanent in its own eyes. I am not a potentiality of something, I am wholly what I am. I do not have to look for the universal. (134-135)

These lines depict the colonial hierarchical system and inferiority complex embedded within the soul of the blacks, and they accepted racial injustice, oppression and discrimination as universal truth. They started looking at themselves as inferior, powerless, sinful and primitive. Fanon emphasises action over knowledge, and his ultimate objective is freedom. Therefore, having an agency who aware blacks about racism and racist history is more crucial. He argues that blacks only get rid of these things when they get familiar with the term black consciousness. For him, black consciousness is the psychological liberation from the pre-existing inferiority complexes, due to which the mental shift away from the primitive and evil racist tag of the Black to the self-accepting identification of the Black. These self-accepting helped blacks to fight against all kinds of injustice. Fanon emphasises action over knowledge, and his ultimate objective is freedom. Therefore, having an agency who aware blacks about racism and racist history is more crucial.

Afro-American author, philosopher, critic, and activist Cornel West focuses on racial injustice and black consciousness. Cornel West examines the crisis, trauma, and problem faced by the black race in his book *Race Matters*. The subject of West's writings is American society and the effects that class, gender, and race have on it. He also gives an insight into how black consciousness can empower the status of blacks. Cornel West paints an accurate portrait of the current state of racial prejudice towards black people and the efforts made to find a way to combat it. According to West, white people do not respect black people as citizens of the country, which leads to racial injustice and identity crisis. The way Cornel West approaches the racial issue is distinctive because he studies race from both a political and a spiritual perspective. He then provides an explanation that strikes a balance between the two. West says that race gets ingrained in African history and practised in our daily lives. The

only way to eradicate racial injustice is to educate people about their ethnic and cultural values and empower them financially.

Cornel West's *Race matter* starts with an explanation that because of racial injustice, black people view themselves as a problem in today's society. "The common denominator of the view of race is that each still sees black people as a problem people"(5). In this line, the West gives critical comments on black leaders like De Bois, who believes black as a problem people. He said that due to their misconception, black people never feel comfortable with their own skin colour, culture and traditions. West also reject the liberal and conservative solution to eradicate racism. The conservatives support self-help programmes that emphasize how black people should behave and live, in contrast to the liberal view of the government that believes that by focusing primarily on the economic aspects of blacks, they can eradicate racism from society. West thinks the cause for racial injustice is the concept of problem people rather than the economic dimension. He believes that liberal unworthy attention, such as providing funds to blacks, makes people feel like problem people. They perceive themselves as inferior and helpless people who rely on others for survival. Conservatives give them a sense of being incomplete in their Black identity. According to West, liberal or conservative ideas can only conceal the problem of black people sometimes but cannot eradicate the issues of black people:

The liberal/conservative discussion conceals the most basic issue now facing black America: *the nihilistic threat to its very existence*. This threat is not simply a matter of relative economic deprivation and political powerlessness--though economic well-being and political clout are requisites for meaningful black progress. (12)

West accepts that both concepts can hide the surface issues that blacks face, but they fail to address the underlying issue. The West believes that the fundamental problem of racism is not economic or political deprivation or political, but rather Nihilism, which is a feeling of useless, purposeless life and hopelessness. It gets associated with blacks since the beginning of racism history. The whites degrade their cultural values and treat them as inferior. The blacks always feel alienated. The only solution to eradicate racism is to erase racial injustice by giving them equal rights and opportunities in all fields.

West also contrasts the current state of the black people's crisis and leaders with the previous state of the black people and their leaders. "The present-day Black middle class is

not simply different than its predecessors — it is more deficient and, to put it strongly, more decadent”(54). In this quote, West shows that present black leaders did not have the quality of faithful and true black leaders. The quality of good leadership is to be selfless toward society and educate black to value their culture and identity so that they become aware of black consciousness. He says that the current black leaders are selfish and are blamed for lacking the visionary quality of past leaders. West argues that the suffering of the black middle class is still the same or more threatening than before, as the leaders fail to bring the fundamental rights of the black. He adds that present black leaders are excessively cautious, fearful of losing their identity and respect, which is already lost, and willing to sell out their conscience for insignificant gains such as individual achievement and personal success.

Steve Biko is regarded both as an activist and a philosopher of black consciousness. Steve Biko's childhood was marked by witnessing police brutality and oppression by the apartheid government. He embraced the concept of Black Consciousness and spoke out against the harsh government of South Africa's policies. During his leadership, he noted down his experiences. Later, these notes and interviews were compiled into a book named *I Write What I Like*. In his book, he defined Black consciousness:

Black Consciousness is in essence the realisation by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their operation---the blackness of their skin---and to operate as a group in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude. It seeks to demonstrate the lie that black is an aberration from the "normal" which is white. (49)

Biko explains that black consciousness is an awareness that being black is never a reason for their problem, but accepting their identity as a weakness is the root cause of oppression. It is practically the realisation that blacks should liberate themselves from the chains that bound them to inevitable slavery and teach them that black people must maintain unity with their brothers to fight against such exploitation and injustice. Black consciousness gives the black community the need to redefine black value systems to create a sense of pride in their cultures, religions, value systems and the will of black people to grow and become their ideal selves. “The philosophy of Black Consciousness therefore expresses group pride and the determination of the black to rise and attain the envisaged self” (92). It highlights that the black consciousness movement was born of a need for self-defence against a repressive government and an exploitative apartheid system. Biko argues that the philosophy behind the

black Consciousness movement is to help blacks to get rid of their painful situations by implementing its solutions. He said that black people as individuals must consider and challenge outdated ideas, standards, and systems. After that, they must try to raise their status and values in their own eyes while always keeping their core principles and ideals in mind.

Biko analysis apartheid brutality, oppression and inequality. His main aim in writing this book is to empower blacks and coloured people through Black consciousness. According to Biko, whites plan a mischievous plot against blacks to colonise and exploit black people physically and mentally by giving them the label of inferior-superior blacks-white complexes. He encouraged black South Africans to take pride in their heritage and reject the idea that they were inferior to white South Africans. He believes that a necessary step to restore black people's dignity and pride is to elevate African history heroes and promote African heritage to deconstruct the notion of Africa as a dark continent:

A lot of attention has to be paid to our history if we as blacks want to aid each other in our coming into consciousness. We have to rewrite our history and describe in it the heroes that formed the core of resistance to the white invaders. More has to be revealed and stress has to be laid on the successful nation building attempts by people. (70)

Biko emphasizes the value of studying and embracing Black history. He asserted that the first form of resistance against imperialism and apartheid is to extract positive values from indigenous African cultures and gain the strength to confront and challenge oppression. He said that the blacks must connect the past to the present and demonstrate the modern African's historical and cultural evolution to understand their culture and position among whites. The whites purposefully showed the African culture at the tribal level to perpetuate the myth that Africans were barbaric with no real ambitions in life and were distracted with drink and sex. Indeed, the widespread corruption prevalent in African townships is due to White man's interference in the natural evolution of the native culture.

Biko believes that the growing awareness of black consciousness among black students plays a vital role in their community's liberation. The student knew that black people in South Africa could not get freed until they all rallied together and fought against brutality and white supremacy. “The blacks are beginning to realise the need to rally around the cause of their suffering . . . their black skin . . . and to ignore the false promises that come from the white world (62)”. This line depicted that due to these students, blacks are beginning to be

aware that skin colour is not the root cause of their suffering, and they need to rally against the whites for their rights and ignore the false assurances from the white world. So, the students formed a union named SASO (South African Student Organization), which focused on the psychological and physical liberation of the black community:

SASO is a black student organization working for the liberation of the black man first from psychological oppression by themselves through inferiority complex and secondly from the physical one accruing out of living in a white racist society. (100)

Biko explains that South African student organization concentrates on liberating black men first from psychological oppression and then from physical exploitation. Biko here refers to the situation of a black man in today's world who experienced exploitation at two different levels. Firstly, blacks are oppressed by an external world through an institution such as laws that restrict their rights to a certain level. Secondly, a black man has developed a state of alienation, where he rejects himself. These oppression and inferiority complexes originate from his childhood memory, trauma and the behavior of whites toward them throughout their life. As Biko said, "At the heart of this thinking is the realization by blacks that the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed" (68). In these lines, Biko argued that the oppressor played with the mind of the blacks. The whites make them believe that white people have more power by practicing police harassment, ruthless killing and implementing new laws that constantly remind blacks that the white man is on top. With this context in mind, blacks thought it was a case of the powerful versus the weak, so blacks did not dare to go against them. He says to liberate blacks from white supremacy, a black man should see himself as a being, complete in himself, rather than a powerless oppressor. The blacks do not have to allow anyone to insult their cultural values and identity.

Black consciousness is the most positive step in the world of blacks. It is a process of looking at themselves and regaining pride in their existence. He wants to make blacks proud of their skin colour and liberate themselves from the identity crisis and inferiority complex. For Biko, black consciousness is a method to end racism and the inferiority complex of black people. So, he started the black consciousness movement to set a definite identity and respect for this identity. He says:

Black Consciousness seeks to do is to produce at the output end of the process real black people who do not regard themselves as appendages to white society.

This truth cannot be reversed. We do not need to apologise for this because it is true that the white systems have produced through the world a number of people who are not aware that they too are people. (51)

Biko mentioned that the goal of Black Consciousness is to create real black people who do not see themselves as an extension or liabilities to white society. He said the blacks could not change the bitter truth of their past and did not need to feel sorry about their existence. Instead, white people sought apologies for producing several blacks, who were unaware that they could enjoy equal rights in society. He argued blacks should not waste their energy on thinking about the torture that happened in the past because they couldn't reverse the fact. They should focus on the present to shape the future of the black community and understand that other ramifications of Black Consciousness include rectifying false narration about their culture, religion, and ethics through awareness, education and black theology. Biko said, “we must focus our attention is a thorough understanding of what many people have hitherto scorned, namely Black Theology” (59). He said that black consciousness in South Africa sought to unite citizens around the root cause of their oppression. Biko's philosophy introduces the concept of Black theology and Christianity value, preaching that allowing oneself to get oppressed is a sin. Adapting Christianity to African values and belief systems is the central idea for the physical liberation of blacks from oppression. He also said that it should be the mission of black Consciousness activists to alter the thinking of black people by helping them to develop the inner confidence they needed to achieve emancipation:

This is the first truth, bitter as it may seem, that we have to acknowledge before we can start on any programme designed to change the status quo. It becomes more necessary to see the truth as it is if you realise that the only vehicle for change are these people who have lost their personality. The first step therefore is to make the black man come to himself; to pump back life into his empty shell; to infuse him with pride and dignity. (29)

In the above quotation, Biko argues that colonialism, missionaries, and apartheid reduced the blacks to an empty shell and diminished their self-esteem. He believes that to liberate black psychologically, socially, economically and spiritually, they must create a new, positive definition of black that embrace all individuals who face discrimination because of the colour of their skin. He claimed that black consciousness should focus on uplifting black people rather than demonising white people. Black people need to learn that only their effort and

self-acceptance can bring change in their position. Therefore, the first step is upgrading the status and self-esteem of blacks. They should realise who they are and instil pride and dignity within themselves. This step started as a means of alleviating black people's misery. However, it acts as a tool to boost the psychological liberation of black communities and actively combat racism and white supremacy.

Black people have a long history of racial discrimination and segregation. The whites spread false stereotypes about black people to justify oppressive policies. These stereotypes suggest that blacks are uneducated and belong to an inferior race. So, black consciousness ideology gets enforced for blacks to liberate themselves physically and psychologically and to remove these false narratives about them. In the 1990s, black consciousness encouraged blacks to consider themselves equal to white, and they successfully removed the tag of inferiority from black identity. During the early 1990s, apartheid got abolished through a sequence of actions that culminated in establishing the democratic government in 1994. It's fascinating to note that the black consciousness ideology still seems to have acquired more popularity among black teenagers in the country who were born during post-apartheid. The legacy of the Black Consciousness movement contributed to the fearless resistance of black against injustices. It focuses on claiming the rights of black people and addressing socio-economic disparities and challenging racism. The black consciousness inspired young people, which led to the growth of Black Theology and cultural movements and sparked the creation of renewed community and political groups like the Black Community Programs organisation and the Black People's Convention. Black community programs started in 1972 to provide the necessary help for Black people to be politically aware, self-sufficient, and the agents of their growth and liberation, while as black People's Convention actively opposed the injustices that happened to the blacks. In contemporary times, Biko's approach towards black consciousness inspires many young black activists to be engaged in liberating any marginalised community, such as black women and queer and trans individuals.

To further illuminate the various dimensions of the postcolonial metropolis, race, and Black consciousness discussed above, the selection of Bernardine Evaristo's *The Emperor's Babe*, *Soul Tourists*, *Blonde Roots*, *Hello Mum*, *Mr Loverman*, and *Girl, Woman, Other* highlights the evolution of Black British identity, consciousness, and cultural negotiation across nearly two decades. Spanning from 2001 to 2019, these texts permit an examination of how Black consciousness in Britain has shifted in response to changing socio-political climates, transformations in urban multiculturalism, and ongoing debates around race,

belonging, sexuality, and diaspora. The temporal spread of these novels illustrates a clear evolution of the thematic development, allowing this study to map both continuity and change in the representation of Black British subjectivity.

These novels also represent an exceptionally diverse range of genres, including the verse novel (*The Emperor's Babe*), prose novel (*Blonde Roots*), road narrative (*Soul Tourists*), epistolary novella (*Hello Mum*), polyphonic narrative (*Girl, Woman, Other*), and the migrant family novel (*Mr Loverman*). This generic diversity is not merely aesthetic; it reflects Evaristo's deliberate experimentation with narrative form to capture the multiplicity and fluidity of Black experiences in Britain and beyond. The inclusion of multiple genres allows for an in-depth analysis of how form itself becomes a vehicle for articulating identity, trauma, mobility, and resistance. Furthermore, the chosen novels cover multiple historical timelines, extending the inquiry into race and identity beyond contemporary Britain. *The Emperor's Babe* revisits ancient Londinium in 211 AD through the life of Zuleika, revealing the deep historical roots of Black presence in Britain. *Soul Tourists* reimagines Black European history through spectral encounters that challenge erasure in the European archive. *Blonde Roots* constructs an alternate enslavement world that reverses racial hierarchies, foregrounding the brutality and absurdity of racialized power. *Hello Mum* and *Mr Loverman* situate their narratives in contemporary London, exploring youth violence, gang culture, migration, ageing, and sexuality within the diasporic community. *Girl, Woman, Other* foregrounds modern intersectionality by bringing together twelve Black British women whose lives intersect across generations, class positions, sexual identities, and cultural histories. This chronological and thematic breadth enables examination of Black consciousness not as a fixed category but as a dynamic, evolving phenomenon shaped by time, location, memory, and collective experience.

The novels can be broadly categorised into three literary and historical phases, each corresponding to distinct shifts in Black British cultural politics and Evaristo's own artistic development.

1. Early 2000s (2001–2005): Emergence of Identity and Diaspora

The Emperor's Babe and *Soul Tourists* reflect a period in which Evaristo was exploring belonging, displacement, and the complexities of early twenty-first-century Black British identity. These works revisit both ancient and modern Europe to uncover marginalised histories and interrogate the long-standing presence of African diasporas across continents.

Themes such as early diasporic identity formation, cultural hybridity, and the search for selfhood are prominent in this phase.

2. 2010: Urban Youth, Systemic Oppression, and Racial Violence

Hello Mum marks a shift toward a more urgent engagement with urban marginalization, youth violence, institutional racism, and the lived consequences of socioeconomic inequality in contemporary London. Written as an epistolary novella, the text provides intimate insight into the pressures faced by Black British youth navigating gang culture, police surveillance, and identity conflict.

3. 2013–2019: Intersectionality, Sexuality, and Collective Black Identity

Mr Loverman and *Girl, Woman, Other* represent Evaristo's mature phase, characterized by a deeper engagement with intersectionality, queerness, gender politics, ageing, and community. These novels are based on multidimensional identities within the African and Caribbean diasporas, capturing generational tensions, sexuality, migration, and feminist politics. *Girl, Woman, Other* in particular expands the conversation to a collective scale, presenting a polyphonic exploration of Black womanhood in Britain.

The postcolonial metropolis, as a conceptual framework, reflects the cultural, social, aesthetic, and political transformations that happened in imperial cities as a result of migration, settlement, and decolonial renegotiations of space. It highlights the multifaceted challenges experienced by both native populations and migrant communities, including racism, subjugation, objectification, political repression, social discrimination, economic exploitation, cultural alienation, and prejudice toward new arrivals. Although the term has gained prominence in postcolonial studies over the past two decades, its ideological roots can be traced to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literary texts, where early engagements with urban modernity and empire were present but not explicitly theorised. The concept was later revitalised in the works of writers such as Sam Selvon, Colin MacInnes, V. S. Naipaul, Charles Dickens, Frantz Fanon, and Salman Rushdie, who offered literary and political insights into the racial, cultural, and psychological landscapes of metropolitan life. A foundational intervention in this field is *Postcolonial London: Rewriting the Metropolis* by John McLeod, which redefines London as a dynamic site of postcolonial negotiation. Complementing this perspective, Paul Gilroy's seminal work *The Black Atlantic* provides an expansive analysis of the historical transformations, cross-cultural exchanges, and diasporic identities that shape the postcolonial metropolis. Gilroy's articulation of diasporic space

illuminates how Black communities reconstruct identity through continuous navigation across cultures, places, and histories, thereby resisting the erasures of colonial epistemologies.

Black consciousness emerges in parallel with postcolonial metropolis as a transformative ideological force. Rooted in W. E. B. Du Bois's concept of Double Consciousness, Black consciousness encompasses an awareness of cultural value, collective dignity, the causes of racial oppression, and the determination to resist systemic inequities. This study highlights how colonial regimes sought to imprison Black bodies and minds, and how racism contributed to the rise of Black consciousness as a necessary strategy of psychological, cultural, and political liberation. The philosophical contributions of Steve Biko further deepen this understanding. Biko envisioned Black consciousness as a process of self-recovery, an insistence that Black people reclaim their pride, humanity, and agency in the face of oppression. His movement encouraged Black communities to reject internalised inferiority and to reconstruct self-worth independent of colonial validation. The enduring influence of Biko's ideas catalysed sustained resistance to racial injustice, inspired youth movements, fostered Black Theology and cultural activism, and cultivated new forms of communal solidarity. Both the evolution of the postcolonial metropolis and the development of Black consciousness reveal interconnected processes of resistance, identity formation, and cultural resurgence. These frameworks offer crucial insight into how Black subjects negotiate metropolitan spaces marked by historical violence yet rich with possibilities for self-definition, mobility, and collective empowerment. The literary and theoretical histories surveyed here lay the foundation for understanding how the primary texts selected for this study engage with and expand these critical debates, offering innovative representations of Black identity, memory, and belonging across diverse temporal, spatial, and narrative terrains.

Chapter 2

Racial and Ethnic Complexities in Evaristo's Select Text

Race and ethnicity have become topics for discussion and debate in the United States for many decades. These terms have fundamentally shaped human history, literature, and cultural narratives. Historically, race and ethnicity have been used as tools of division, with systemic structures enforcing hierarchies that privilege certain groups while marginalizing others. The complexity of racial and ethnic identities stems from a combination of historical developments and socio-political structures that have evolved over centuries. The transatlantic slave trade, colonization, immigration, and civil rights movements have all played crucial roles in shaping how race and ethnicity are understood today. In the United States, the concept of race has been deeply intertwined with laws and policies from segregation and Jim Crow to affirmative action and multicultural initiatives. Ethnicity, on the other hand, encompasses shared cultural traits such as language, religion, and traditions, which often intersect with race to dehumanize the marginal group further.

Initially, race emerged as a biological concept that categorized groups of *Homo sapiens* based on physical characteristics and geographic origins. However, this ideology did not remain confined to biological classification. It has been understood as a social construct rather than a fixed biological reality. *Compact Oxford Dictionary* defines race as “Each of the major divisions of humankind based on the physical characteristic” (731). Race refers to a group that shares similar inherited physical traits, such as skin colour, hair texture, facial features, and size. The concept signifies the classification of people based on their inherited behavioural and physical variations.

The racial divisions in the United States are deeply tied to the transatlantic slave trade, which began in 1600 when a Dutch vessel brought African captives to English settlers at Point Comfort, Virginia (Lewis, 2025). This moment set the foundation for centuries of racial oppression and forced labour. Over the next several centuries, millions of Africans were forcibly taken to the Western Hemisphere, though only around 5% were transported to the American colonies. The demand for labour in agriculture led European settlers to systematically enslave Africans. By the 1700s, the African population in the colonies had grown to roughly 10% of the total population, with many being either newly arrived captives or native-born Africans. Regardless of their origins, both groups were subjected to lifelong enslavement, with no legal rights or personal freedom. As the enslaved population

grew, the demand for new arrivals decreased, leading to lower prices in the slave trade. Africans were treated as property and subjected to harsh oppression by white landowners.

During the American Revolution, some northern states took steps toward abolishing slavery, but the southern economy remained dependent on it. Even after the U.S. banned participation in the transatlantic slave trade in 1808, slavery itself persisted, especially in agricultural regions. The rise of industrialization gradually reduced reliance on manual labour, yet systemic racial oppression remained deeply ingrained in society.

By the late 19th century, slavery was officially abolished, with the 13th Amendment ending the practice in 1865. However, legal freedom did not bring true equality. Africans in European countries continued to face systemic discrimination, segregation, and disenfranchisement under Jim Crow laws. They were denied equal opportunities for education and economic advancement, with many forced into low-paying jobs. The racial divide remained prominent, as white society viewed Black people as inferior, leading to widespread prejudice and violence.

The mid-20th century saw the rise of the civil rights movement, which aimed to dismantle institutional racism and secure equal rights for Black Americans. Although legal slavery had ended, discrimination persisted, prompting leaders and activists to push for change. Under pressure from civil rights advocates, President Franklin D. Roosevelt took action against racial discrimination in federal employment in 1941. Despite these improvements, racial disparities continue to exist in modern America. While the country embraces the idea of multiculturalism, Africans still face systemic discrimination in employment, education, and the justice system. The long history of racial injustice has left lasting effects, and in many cases, Black identity continues to be a barrier to full social and economic equality. In *Orientalism*, Edward Said examines how Western discourse has historically portrayed the East, tracing its continuity from ancient texts such as *The Iliad* to contemporary writings, including those by American statesman Henry Kissinger. He highlights how Orientalism relies on racialized and stereotypical depictions of Eastern societies, particularly Semitic cultures, often portraying them as primitive, irrational, and threatening. Despite geopolitical shifts that redefine the boundaries of the Orient, the underlying stereotypes remain largely unchanged, reinforcing long-standing biases against Semitic languages, cultures, and religions:

The two aspects of the Orient that set it off from the West in this pair of plays will remain essential motifs of European imaginative geography. A line is drawn between two continents. Europe is powerful and articulate; Asia is

defeated and distant . . . It is Europe that articulates the Orient; this articulation is the prerogative, not of a puppet master, but of a genuine creator, whose life-giving power represents, animates, constitutes the otherwise silent and dangerous space beyond familiar boundaries. (57)

Said references how European imaginative geography constructs rigid boundaries between Europe and Asia. The distinction between West and East is not merely geographical but ideological, positioning Europe as superior while Asia is depicted as defeated and distant. This perspective reflects the colonial mindset in which Western scholars, writers, and rulers saw themselves as the legitimate interpreters of Eastern societies. The East was represented not as a subject but as an object to be studied, categorised, and spoken about. Claiming the power to the Orient positions itself as the authoritative source of knowledge about non-Western cultures, reinforcing its dominance.

Paul Gilroy has significantly influenced discussions on racism, nationalism, and multiculturalism, establishing himself as a leading cultural and social theorist. His work examines the deep connections between race, racism, and nationalism, offering insights into contemporary political dynamics. Gilroy critiques the idea of fixed national identities, questioning how Englishness has historically excluded Black individuals from a sense of belonging. In *The Black Atlantic*, he emphasises the role of Black experiences in shaping modernity. “The continuing lure of ethnic absolutisms in cultural criticism produced both by blacks and by whites” (3). Paul Gilroy challenges the idea of race and culture as static entities, arguing that identity is shaped through movement rather than being rooted in a singular nation or ethnic group. Gilroy advocates for a hybrid, diasporic identity that acknowledges the influence of global cultural forces, from jazz and hip-hop to political movements like Pan-Africanism. Through this lens, Gilroy disrupts essentialist understandings of race and national identity, proposing a more fluid and interconnected view of Black identity formation. However, while his Black Atlantic framework emphasizes hybridity and cultural exchange, contemporary political discourse continues to reinforce rigid notions of national belonging. Gilroy critiques this shift by arguing that new racism no longer relies on biological hierarchy but instead constructs cultural differences as a barrier to the national membership of blacks:

New racism was generated in part by the move towards a political discourse which aligned "race" closely with the idea of national belonging and which stressed complex cultural difference rather than simple biological hierarchy. These strange conflicts emerged in circumstances where blackness and

Englishness appeared suddenly to be mutually exclusive attributes and where the conspicuous antagonism between them proceeded on the terrain of culture, not that of politics.

Gilroy evaluates how race has been reconfigured in contemporary political discourse to align closely with national belonging. He argues that new racism no longer relies on biological hierarchies but instead constructs cultural differences as the primary means of exclusion. This shift is particularly evident in postcolonial Britain, where Blackness and Englishness have been framed as mutually exclusive categories. Rather than outright racial exclusion, new racism operates through cultural narratives that define who belongs and who does not, making whiteness the implicit standard of national identity. This exclusionary process unfolds within cultural institutions, media portrayals, and political rhetoric, further emphasising the idea that racial minorities remain outsiders despite their deep historical ties to Britain.

Ethnicity refers to large groupings of people classified according to a shared racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural background. “An ethnicity is typically defined as a group characterized by a common culture, shared history, and common ancestry” (*Britannica*, “Ethnicity”). The term ethnicity derives from the Greek word *ethnos*, which means nation, tribe, caste and people. Before the formation of nations or countries and states, various territories were associated with certain ethnic groups like Anglos and Saxons, Celts, Greeks, and Pueblo. Ethnicity has been used since the times of ancient Greek writers to construct and explore themes, characters, and storylines. The Ancient Greek writers frequently used these concepts to examine the power relationships between various racial and cultural groups such as humankind, God and the Titans.

The European invaders shifted the notion of ethnicity from the ancient Greek approach to conquer and rule the colonies by treating them as inferior. Hence the European concept of ethnicity changes the meaning of ethnicity. Earlier, it indicated physical characteristics and ancestral origin, but during colonialism, the concept was more associated with disparities in privilege, power, and access to resources. It segregated whites from black people and subjugated them. The whites considered themselves superior and treated the blacks as an inferior. Thus, the social, cultural and political marginalization based on racial and ethnic backgrounds is called racial and ethnic complexities. These racial and ethnic complexities are present from colonialism and are still alive in our society today. W.E.B Du Bois mentioned, “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour line” (16). Du Bois believed that race and ethnic prejudice were the prominent social issues of the

20th century, as discrimination based on race and ethnicity impacted the lives of minority communities. He argued that the only way to move ahead and create a more equitable society was to bridge this color line and work together to prevail justice and equality for all.

Bernardine Evaristo's *The Emperor's Babe* explores racial and ethnic complexities, set against the background of Roman-occupied London. The novel narrates the life of Zuleika and other characters, who face many challenges because of their race and ethnicity. Through the character of Zuleika, the existence of racial prejudice in Roman London is analysed, as she gets subjugated to racist abuses from the people because of her skin color and her physical features:

A lady uses powdered horn to enamel, an ornatrix is weaving Indian hair into my own, six pads – Vestal-stylee. They are painting me white with chalk, my lips and cheeks with the lees of red wine, Don't talk! Black ash is dabbed on to my eyes, Keep still! I'm the It Girl of Londinium, yeah! (27-28)

These lines show the racial complexity faced by Africans, as characters are often subject to racist abuses from the white Romans. When Zuleikha reached Roman Londinium as the wife of an aristocrat, her face was makeover with white chalk. Her hair, face, lips, and cheeks try to transform so that she can at least resemble the Romans. All these racial discriminations create an inferiority complex within the mixed and black races. The inferiority complex of Zuleika is visible in the prologue when she says, "They say his mistress is an actress, a flaxen- Fraulein type, from Germanic Superior" (3). It shows that due to the difference in skin color, Zuleika feels that her race is inferior and the Germanic mistress race is superior.

Zuleika is introduced as an intelligent, resourceful, and independent girl. However, these qualities are swiftly overshadowed by the patriarchal and racial structures governing Londinium. Her father, Antamani, exemplifies how oppressed subjects internalise dominant colonial ideologies. When Felix expresses interest in marrying Zuleika, Antamani accepts immediately without seeking her consent, revealing the deep entanglement of race, power, and gender in their lives. His response positions him not as a protective father but as a compliant participant in the Roman socio-hierarchical order, presenting his daughter as a docile commodity. His eagerness illustrates how the oppressed racial group internalises hegemonic structures, willingly sacrificing the autonomy of their daughters in hopes of gaining favour with the dominant class. Antamani's eagerness to marry off Zuleika to Felix,

an older Roman aristocrat, underscores how racial minorities in oppressive societies often comply with their subjugation to secure material and social benefits. Felix's statement:

Sì, Mr Felix. Zuleika very obediens girl, sir. No problemata, she make very optima wife, sir.' 'Glad to hear it, for when I saw her at the baths, she stole my heart. Indeed, she is so ... exquisita, so ... pulcherrima, such a delicious surprise in this, shall we say... Sì, Mr Felix. Zuleika very specialis girl. Yes, always at home, quietly sewing,... You will benefit greatly from this negotium. (15-17)

Antamani positions Zuleika not as an autonomous subject but as a product to be marketed. His broken Latin-inflected speech further signals his racialised outsider status in Roman society. This outsider has internalised the dominant group's linguistic and cultural norms in an attempt to gain legitimacy. Antamani's emphasis on Zuleika's obedience, domesticity, and silence reflects patriarchal expectations placed upon colonised women. Zuleika becomes a symbol of docile femininity meant to please a dominant-class male. Within a minute, she is transformed from daughter into asset. Felix's response intensifies this objectification. His description of Zuleika as *exquisita*, *pulcherrima*, and a delicious surprise frames her as exotic and consumable. The language of surprise and delight emphasizes her status as a racialized novelty, desired precisely because she is different, other, and available. Her body is eroticised within the exotic colonial gaze. Antamani's final remark reveals the deeply transactional nature of the exchange. By characterizing Zuleika as part of a business deal. The marriage becomes an economic arrangement rather than an emotional or relational one. Zuleika's value lies in how she can elevate her father's status and satisfy Felix's desires. Frantz Fanon argues this phenomenon as a "racial epidermal schema" (112), where Black individuals internalize racism through their lived experiences, particularly in white-dominated societies, where they constantly attempt to assimilate and gain social acceptance. Antamani becomes a prime example of racial epidermal schema, as he does not challenge the racial hierarchy but rather participates in it by offering Zuleika as a means of securing proximity to power. The racialized body, in this context, is both desired and devalued as Zuleika is considered acceptable for marriage, yet her status remains subordinate. After her marriage, Zuleika experiences deeper racial exclusion. The Romans isolate her from her past, reinforcing racial boundaries that mark her as inferior despite her new aristocratic status. She was not allowed to meet her friends because the Romans considered them "untamed humans" (12). Zuleika's best friend Alba was not allowed to attend her friend's reception. "I went to your house twice

but the guard told me to scarper” (37). The guards' refusal to allow Alba access to Zuleika underscores the rigid racial divisions enforced to maintain the dominance of the ruling class. The powerlessness of Zuleika is revealed when she says, “It wasn't me, I replied it's him it's my... I've missed you so much. It's been awful” (37). Her fragmented speech reflects her psychological distress and loss of control over her own life. Felix, as a representative of the dominant race, ensures that Zuleika remains within his grasp, suppressing her voice, choices, and identity.

Zuleika's subjugation in marriage and exclusion from Roman society are deeply interconnected. Her body is desired, but her identity is rejected. In Roman society, she faced ethnic disparity. Felix's sister Antistia and Zuleika both belong to the same gender but they both never treated equally. The primary discrepancy between Antistia and Zuleika is their ethnic and cultural background. Zuleika is a dark-skinned woman of the Nubian ethnic group, while Antistia belongs to the white Roman ethnic group. Antistia being a Roman, enjoys more rights than Zuleika. She can easily travel in Roman society, attend events and social meetings, and live on her terms and conditions. While being a Nubian, she is confined to the domestic realm and has limited power and opportunities. Despite being the wife of a true patrician, Zuleika never gets privileged like Antistia. While describing Antistia, Zuleika mentioned, “What Antistia wanted Antistia got, but I was Felix's missus” (52). Zuleika shows the ethnic disparity between her and Antistia. She said that Antistia has all the rights and privileges and she is merely an exotic sexual object rather than a person with opinions, emotions, and feelings. Besides all this discrimination, Zuleika also never gets accepted by Roman society. One fine day Antistia said:

You will never be one of us... A real Roman is born and bred, I don't care what anyone says, and that goes for the emperor too ... Felix will never take you to Rome, Little Miss Noobia, he has his career to think of... Felix's father had been a governor, they had dined with the emperor's children, my father spoke pidgin-Latin. (53-54)

The above paragraph conveys a sense of the barriers and limitations applied to the other races and ethnic groups of ancient Londinium Roman society. Antistia mentioned that being a Noobian, Zuleika can neither be a part of the inner circle of Roman power nor Felix can openly accept her in front of the Romans. The definition of pure Roman further reminds Zuleika that despite her relationship with Felix she is an outsider and devoid of all the privileges of being born into Roman society. Antistia's motive to mention Felix and his

father's connections with the emperor's children highlights that being Roman is not just a matter of citizenship but also a fixed cultural identity. At this point, Zuleika admits that no matter how many years she spends in Rome and tries to assimilate into Roman society, she will always be an outsider. "At fourteen, I was no longer a novelty" (53). It depicts the complexities and challenges confronted due to her ethnicity. When Zuleika got married, she considered herself a citizen of Roman London. However, after hearing Antistia's statement, this novelty wears off. She accepts that being born in the land of Rome, learning their language, and even marrying a true patrician cannot provide the privileges that Antistia has had since birth. Thus, Zuleika's subjugation in marriage and exclusion from Roman society are not contradictions but direct consequences of 'cultural insiderism', which functions by maintaining absolute distinctions between ethnic groups. Gilroy mentioned "The essential trademark of cultural insiderism, which also supplies the key to its popularity, is an absolute sense of ethnic difference" (3). Zuleika's body is commodified, but her identity is rejected, a process Gilroy identifies as central to racialized hierarchies. Through the implementation of these rigid boundaries, Roman society ensures that individuals like Zuleika remain outsiders, no matter how closely they are tied to the ruling class.

The ethnic disparity in Roman society was not only confined to the lower middle class but was also common among historical figures during Roman rule in London. Septimius Severus ruled the Roman Empire from 193 to 211 AD, but despite being an emperor with immense power and privilege, he still encountered ethnic complexities and prejudices based on his African roots. His experience mirrors the struggle of marginalized individuals who, regardless of their status, continue to be perceived as outsiders due to preconceived notions of racial and cultural differences. Due to cultural insiderism, the emperor experiences racial exclusion and isolation from the other Roman rulers, who consider him an outsider. When the emperor met with Zuleika, both felt a sense of affinity because they belonged to the same root. The emperor felt so comfortable with her that he narrated how he confronted ethnic prejudice:

His nomadic eyes settled on me, so tenderly, as if my thoughts had been spoken, and heard. I wanted to cry... That boy is the father of man before you, who was ridiculed on arrival in Eternal City because of his thick African accent. Today he is icon to sixty million subjects (give or take few hundred thousand), yet he drinks potion of acidic nectar. (143-144)

The quotes demonstrate how Severus's racial and linguistic differences prevented full acceptance in Rome. Despite his authority over millions, he remains an outsider due to rooted racial and cultural hierarchies. His lament, "I am tired, Zuleika, tired of barbarians clawing at my frontiers after good life, tired of freedom-fighters, secessionists, revolutionaries, seditious governors" (146) expresses the exhaustion and frustration of an emperor for being constantly bullied based on ethnicity. The story of Severus depicts the struggle he confronted his entire life due to his ethnicity. When he recounted the ethnic prejudices experienced, his words resonated deeply with Zuleika because they reflect a shared reality. Just as Zuleika finds herself excluded from Roman high society despite her marriage to a patrician, Severus, too, is never fully accepted into the inner circles of Roman elite power. His African heritage remains an enduring mark of his difference, much like Zuleika's Nubian ethnicity dictates how she is perceived and treated. While trying to console him, the emperor further throws light on the dark side of prejudice. He mentioned that Zuleika is not the only one who confronts ethnic disparities, even though after becoming an icon to sixty million people, he still gets ridiculed for his African accent. He said that he feels proud of himself because, despite all these obstacles, he became governor of the city. At the same time, he feels exhausted when he realises that despite gaining success and power, he still has to drink the acidic nectar of ethnic prejudice because of his African roots.

The Emperor's Babe critically examines racial and ethnic complexities in Roman London, revealing how societal hierarchies dictate inclusion and exclusion. Through the experiences of Zuleika and historical figures like Septimius Severus, the novel highlights how racialized individuals remain outsiders, regardless of their status or achievements. Zuleika's father, Antamani, eagerly accepts Felix's marriage proposal without her consent, believing it will grant him privileges. His willingness to sacrifice his daughter's autonomy reflects how oppressed groups sometimes fulfil racial hierarchies to secure social benefits. Zuleika's journey underscores the limitations of assimilation, as after her marriage, she remains exoticised rather than fully accepted. Similarly, Severus, despite his political power, continues to face discrimination due to his African heritage.

Bernardine Evaristo's *Soul Tourists* explores the complexities of race and ethnicity by blending historical and contemporary narratives, highlighting the experiences of Black individuals across different generations. The novel demonstrates that race and ethnicity are not fixed or biological categories but socially constructed identities shaped by historical

forces like colonialism, migration and settlement. Stanley, a Black British man on a road trip across Europe with his companion Jessie, highlights the historical dimensions of racial exclusion, revealing the painful experiences of Black individuals both in the past and present.

Stanley's encounter with ghosts of historical Black figures like Pushkin's African great-grandfather, Mary Seacole, and others uncovers the silenced histories of racism present in Europe. One such encounter is with the spirit of Mary Jane Seacole, a Jamaican nurse known for her service during the Crimean War. In the novel, Stanley Williams meets her on a bus in Turkey, where she recounts her struggles to serve in the war despite her skills and determination. Her application to nursing agencies in England, including Florence Nightingale's office, was repeatedly rejected. The denial was not due to a lack of qualification but was instead based on racial prejudice. When Seacole reflects, "And I saw in her face the fact that, had there been a vacancy, I should not have been chosen to fill it... Did these ladies shrink from accepting my aid because my blood flow beneath a somewhat duskier skin than theirs?" (226), she exposes the racism embedded in the institutions of 19th-century Britain, where Black women were not only marginalized but systematically excluded from participation, even during times of crisis. Despite her Jamaican heritage and service to British soldiers, Seacole is made to feel that her skin colour renders her service unacceptable. The very institutions that proclaim values of service and sacrifice deny her participation solely because she is not white. Seacole's rejection highlights a racial hierarchy in which whiteness is aligned with professionalism, authority, and trust, while Blackness is perceived as alien and less competent. Although she is fully equipped to serve, her racial identity situates her as an outsider within the British war effort, reinforcing the systemic barriers Black people face even when they attempt to integrate into dominant institutions. The novel thus uses Seacole's story to critique the exclusionary practices that pervade historical narratives.

Seacole's narratives act as a bridge between generational and diasporic experiences of racism, emphasizing its persistence and evolution. Just as Seacole was rejected by the institutions of 19th-century Britain, Stanley feels unsafe driving across contemporary Europe. Fanon argues, "Colonial racism is no different from any other racism" (*Black Skin, White Mask* 88). Both situations of Seacole and Stanley demonstrate that racism is not confined by geography or time; rather, it is a continuous, global structure. Stanley says:

It's dangerous for us driving across Europe. I was delighted to present an argument that carried weight. It's not safe for us out there. You only need to read the papers. Aborigines dying in police custody... Fascist thugs all over Europe...apartheid in South Africa (51).

This quote captures the psychological burden of being Black in a Eurocentric world. Stanley's statement comprises irony and grim realism. The passage highlights historical and contemporary traumas referencing apartheid in South Africa, the death of Aborigines in police, and the rise of fascist groups across Europe. These references show the legacy of racism as a transnational and persistent phenomenon. It emphasizes that Blackness, regardless of geographical context, is met with suspicion, danger, and exclusion. Stanley senses that Europe is not safe for blacks due to systemic racism, xenophobia, social unrest, and political ideologies. His fear is a reflection continuous exposure of the Black diaspora to structural violence and social alienation. Through Stanley's voice, the psychological and emotional weariness of being hyper-aware of one's racial identity in spaces coded as white. The roads they travel may be modern, but the danger lurking along them is deeply historical.

Soul Tourists examine racial and ethnic complexities that traverse both time and geography. Through Stanley and Jessie's journey across Europe and their encounters with historical Black figures, the novel disrupts the conventional Eurocentric historical narrative and gives voice to those who have been marginalised or forgotten. The novel demonstrates that racism is not a vestige of the past but a living, systemic force that continues to shape Black identities, experiences, and opportunities whether in 18th-century France, 19th-century Britain, or late 20th-century Europe.

Bernardine Evaristo's *Blonde Roots* novel reverses the role of racism to explore the impact of colonial discourse and forceful migration on race, power and privilege. The story reveals how the trans-Atlantic slave trade marked the beginning of racial and ethnic complexities within the society based on skin colour. In the novel, the blacks are their masters, and white Europeans are the slaves. This reversal discards all Eurocentric narratives. The plot begins with the kidnapping of a white European girl named Doris, who was sold off to Great Ambossa by the slave merchant. In Great Ambossa, Doris encounters discrimination and oppression based on race and ethnicity.

The novel exposes the arbitrary nature of racial hierarchies and critiques the constructed ideologies of race and beauty. Evaristo's use of satire is not merely for entertainment rather it functions as a powerful narrative device to reject the established

historical truths. When Doris notes, “People belonged to one of two colours and in the society I was about to join my colour, not my personality or ability, would determine my fate” (75). In an alternate reality, where whites are subjugated, flips the historical script to expose the social construction of race. Race here is not tied to inherent biological differences but is a marker of socio-political power. Doris's observation reflects the arbitrary boundary imposed on bodies under the guise of racial classification.

The novel discards dominant beauty standards by exposing their cultural relativity. The ridicule Doris faces for her features like blonde hair, pale skin, and thin physique reflects the Eurocentric beauty ideals that have historically been imposed on Black bodies. The Ambossan society devalues these features and asserts their own as superior. “A prominent clavicle, corrugated chest bones, concave stomach and thin blonde hair were considered the embodiment of beauty in Europe, even though the Ambossans considered me ugly as sin” (31). Being a dominant group, the Ambossans establish their physical traits as superior and the epitome of beauty by giving wrong explanations. In Europe, a prominent clavicle, corrugated chest bones, concave stomach and thin blonde hair were considered beautiful, but Ambossans considered these features ugly and inferior. So, whenever a guest comes to Doris's master, her master tries to make her as African as possible by cancelling her European features:

My long hair was threaded through the wire and put into plaited hoops all over my head. I wanted to protest that we whytes just didn't have the bone structure to carry it off. But she expected me to look like respectable when I opened the door to her guest and not like some uncouth wretch from Europa. (19)

During colonialism, African people often faced discrimination based on their hair because naturally curly black hair was misconstrued as unprofessional or unclean, particularly in the workplace. Evaristo subverted this notion and showed that Africans discriminate against white Europeans based on hair type. The African master considered long straight hair dirty and unprofessional at the workplace. Doris's long hair was forcefully strung through the wire and placed in plaited hoops. The Ambossan changed Doris's hairstyle to look respectable rather than a wretch from Europa denotes that the Africans viewed Europeans as barbarian and inferior. Doris does not like the hairstyle because it's different from what she is used to as a European, but she cannot protest against it. Such exploitation and discrimination based on race and culture developed an inferiority complex among the whites. Fanon, in *Black Skin*,

White Mask, writes “The feeling of inferiority of the colonized is the correlative to the European’s feeling of superiority. Let us have the courage to say it outright: It is the racist who creates his inferior” (93). In *Blonde Roots*, white people feel inferior because the black race continuously ridicules and mocks white culture and their physical features.

The case of Sitembile further intensifies this argument. A princess, born to the king of Monaca captured by the slave merchant and sold to Bawana. In Bawana's house, she experiences ill treatment because of her ethnicity. He assigned her the work of toilet cleaning to her. Sitembile cleans fifty toilet pots every day. All these workloads and racial discrimination compel her to think that the blacks are superior to her. Therefore, she tries to look as black as possible:

She’d sit there twisting her hair into pigtail mixed with clay, rubbing ochre into her skin to darken its pigment in the hope that she might be spotted by one of Bwana’s nicer, younger, more handsome business associates and be whisked away to a new life as a favoured mistress. (16)

The Ambossan traders treated whites as savages. They oppress and exploit the whites based on their ethnicity. This racial division creates an inferiority complex among the oppressed groups. Due to physical and psychological torture, forced labour, and other types of mistreatment, Sitembile experiences an inferiority complex. Therefore, she tries to alter her hair by twisting it into a pigtail and darkening the skin shade by rubbing ochre. Sitembile transformation is not merely about beauty or acceptance but about survival. In this context, bodily transformation becomes an act of desperation, a strategy to escape the violence of racial oppression. Fanon notes this condition as “a zone of nonbeing” (*Black Skin, White Mask* 10). Nonbeing is a space where subjectivity is stripped and reconstructed under threat.

Blonde Roots analyses the epistemological violence that sustains systemic racism by exposing how knowledge, history, and cultural narratives are manipulated to uphold racial hierarchies and justify oppression. The devaluation of European culture, language, and traditions by the Ambossans reflects colonial tactics of erasure and domination. The deliberate patronizes of Doris and the denial of her cultural heritage mirror real-world colonial practices where Indigenous names, religions, and histories were erased or rewritten to fit colonial ideologies. The Ambossan frequently mocked the ethnicity of European and Asian people to establish their own cultural and ethnic superiority. The white people faced

subjugation and marginalization due to their European identity. Doris says, “The Ambossans called us tribes... The Ambossans also called Europa the Grey Continent” (7). The Ambossan people dehumanized the Europeans based on their ethnicity. The blacks stripped out their identity by calling them tribes. They considered European culture savage and primitive and ridiculed the white culture by calling it the Grey Continent, which refers to a savage and primitive continent. Mocking the ethnicity of Europeans served as a way to belittle and undermine their cultural traditions and practices reinforcing the notion that their way of life was more civilized or advanced. “You will soon discover, the European slaves have been saved from the most horrendous deaths, punishments, morally reprehensible indulgence and serfdom, whilst being a given opportunity to adopt the manners and custom of civilised man” (121). These lines satirise the European concept of superior ethnicity. The Ambossans justified Europeans as barbaric and primitive because they enslaved each other and gave horrendous punishments like death. By showing them primitive, the Ambossans follow the same tactics and exploit people based on ethnicity. The Africans target Europeans based on their cultural heritage, practices and beliefs connected with a specific ethnicity. The Ambossans, who are the masters in the inverted power dynamics of the novel, explain their perspective on isolation and its link to European civilization:

The Ambossans didn't believe in solitude and neither did I anymore... They said that the Europeans need for solitude was further proof of our inferior culture, our inability to share. Privacy was a foreign concept to all Aphrikans. Life was communal and for we slaves, by necessity intimate. (69)

It offers a powerful evaluation of epistemic violence as conceptualised by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. In this scenario, solitude and privacy are reinterpreted by the dominant Ambossan society as signs of cultural deficiency. Rather than being seen as individual preferences or expressions of autonomy, the desire for solitude among Europeans is used as evidence of inferiority. The Ambossans reinterpret a fundamental aspect of human behaviour to justify their racial hierarchy, branding the colonized people's cultural norms as defective. This act of redefining and devaluing the colonized subject's practices and worldview is defined by Spivak as “epistemic violence the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other” (*Can Subaltern Speak* 76). Here, epistemic violence occurs not only through the suppression of European voices and traditions but also through the strategic misrepresentation of their cultural norms. The Ambossans impose their

communal values as universally superior and dismiss any alternative behaviour as a marker of underdevelopment or savagery.

Evaristo's *Blonde Roots* analyses racial and ethnic complexity as socially constructed terms by inverting the power dynamics and historical context of the Atlantic slave trade. It questions the concept that racial hierarchies and stereotypes are fundamental or natural by proposing an alternative narrative where black Ambossans are the masters and white Europeans are their slaves. This reversal exposes the arbitrariness division of racial classifications and disrupts conventional understandings of race and ethnicity as fixed and immutable.

Hello Mum is an emotional novella that sheds light on the racial and ethnic complexities shaping the lives of Black British youth in contemporary society. Narrated through the voice of a 14-year-old boy named Jerome, who is of mixed Nigerian and English heritage. The novella captures racial injustices, stereotyping, and systemic neglect faced by young Black boys growing up in the postcolonial metropolis. From being criminalised by the media and surveilled by authority figures, to facing limited educational opportunities and cultural insiderism, Jerome's story speaks to the lived realities of many young Black British individuals.

The narrative of *Hello Mum* begins with Jerome's letter to his mother. This narrative strategy immediately foregrounds the lived experiences of a young Black boy navigating racialised structures in contemporary Britain. The epistolary opening exposes how entrenched historical narratives of racial and ethnic division shape the everyday realities of young Black and mixed-race individuals. Jerome's letter reveals not only his emotional pain but also the social structures that criminalise and marginalise people like him. Reflecting on the hostility he experiences, Jerome writes, "You used to say, 'Old people are vulnerable, be kind to them.' No way! I tell you, they hated teenagers. Given half the chance, they'd burn us all in gas ovens like Hitler" (2) This striking comparison demonstrates the depth of Jerome's perception of racial hatred. Through the comparison of modern incidents with the imagery of gas ovens and Adolf Hitler, Jerome unconsciously draws parallels between contemporary racial hostility and the historical atrocities associated with fascism and genocide. His statement reflects the intensity with which racial exclusion is felt by marginalized youth, suggesting that the hostility directed toward them resembles the ideological hatred historically associated with white supremacist regimes. The reference

also reveals the psychological burden of racialized existence in the postcolonial metropolis, where inherited histories of violence continue to shape the perceptions and experiences of minority communities. Jerome's frustration further exposes the collapse of his mother's moral advice, her belief that elderly people deserve compassion, because, in his experience, they themselves participate in racial hostility. This context becomes even more evident in the violent incident Jerome recounts later in the letter:

He whacked my legs with his walking stick. Can you believe it? I hadn't done nothing, yeah? It hurt too. I should've whacked him back. Delmar spat at him and I shouted out I'd tell the police he tried to touch me up. Plenty witnesses, man! Plenty witnesses! (3)

It shows that on the surface, the episode appears to be a spontaneous act of aggression, but when viewed through Gilroy's theoretical framework, it reflects the persistence of colonial ideologies that continue to inform racial hierarchies in contemporary Britain. Gilroy argues that "the substance of racial politics today is clearly associated with an older discourse of racial and ethnic difference which is everywhere entangled in the history" (7). The elderly man's attack on Jerome highlights the inherited racial logic. Jerome's presence in the public space of the city becomes marked as suspicious or undesirable, echoing colonial narratives that portrayed Black individuals as deviant to social order. Even though Britain is formally a multicultural and postcolonial society, the incident reveals how older discourses of racial difference continue to structure everyday interactions. Despite Jerome's insistence that there were plenty of witnesses, no one intervenes or speaks in his defence. This silence reflects what Gilroy identifies as the normalised operation of racial hierarchy within modern societies. The encounter, therefore, becomes representative of the way colonial histories continue to manifest in the everyday realities of Black youth in postcolonial Britain.

Racial and ethnic profiling is closely associated with racial and ethnic complexities. It is a controversial issue in many communities, where individuals are regarded suspiciously and treated as criminals because of their race or ethnicity. Racial and ethnic profiling practice was started deliberately by the Europeans to stigmatize and exploit the colonists. Franz Fanon took the model of Algeria to explain how the colonizer constructed the myth of criminality to stigmatize people based on race in *The Wretched of the Earth*. "It was affirmed that the Algerian was a born criminal. A theory was elaborated and scientific proofs were found to support it. This theory was taught in the universities for over twenty

years” (295). The Europeans intentionally spread the assumption that blacks are intrinsically prone to criminal behaviour throughout their colonial authority. This assumption was systematically designed and taught as a credible theory in academic institutions. In this way, the Europeans successfully enforced racial and ethnic stereotypes, which portray a negative image of a particular race and ethnicity and lead to unfair treatment within the criminal justice system. *Hello mum*, depicts the negative impact of assumption. It highlights how racial and ethnic profiling can result in unfair treatment and contribute to racial discrimination and systemic injustice:

Why is it that everywhere I went people treated me like a criminal? Bus drivers hated me. The Feds hated me. The men in the corner shop hated me- even when I went alone, one of them followed me around... You told me they followed you around as well, and you're grown up. I would never steal, Mum... When I walked girls and women crossed the road too, as if I was going to snatch their bags and stab them... Everyone hated me, except my family and my crew. You know what? All I ever got was total disrespect. (14-15)

Jerome's direct or indirect encounter with racial and ethnic profiling depicts the legal discrimination and its negative impact on the people. Jerome's experience with the bus driver, shopkeeper and other civilians highlights the negative attitude and racial hatred toward him because of his background and ethnicity. He reveals that being black is the biggest crime in London because he was subjected to unwarranted surveillance and discrimination when entering stores without practising any criminal activities. Even the woman or girl crossing the road when he walks alone reflects the biases and hatred towards some racial and ethnic groups. Besides these racial hatreds and prejudice, Jerome also faced legal discrimination due to racial and ethnic profiling. “Every time a police car passed it slowed down and the Fedz eyeballing me, even in the daylight when I was alone. I'd been stop-and-searched four times too” (15). It reveals institutional racism within law enforcement agencies. Jerome observed that whenever he met a police car, it slowed down its speed, and the policemen stared at him as if he had done some horrible crime. Moreover, the stop-and-search incidents disturbed individual sentiments by violating the civil rights of particular racial or ethnic groups. Jerome's feeling of disrespect further signified the experience of stigmatization and unfair judgement due to racial and ethnic complexities spoils their reputation in society.

The persistent discrimination and social violence portrayed in the novel are not merely instances of exclusion, but symptoms of a deeper, more insidious struggle against cultural insiderism. Jerome finds himself living in precisely this in-between space. His mixed heritage renders him invisible in both dominant and marginal communities. He is not Black enough to be fully accepted by his Black peers, nor white enough to belong within mainstream British society. Culturally and socially, he floats in a kind of no-man's land. His efforts to adapt, to mould himself into the expectations of those around him, are met not with acceptance, but with suspicion and violence. This tension becomes clear when his mother criticises the way he speaks, saying:

We lived in the same flat but we didn't speak the same language . . . Why don't you speak properly anymore, Jerome?' Mum, you have no idea what my life was like. No way could I speak all la-di-dah like Harry Potter and survive in this hood. Every time I opened my mouth I'd get beaten up. (6)

It captures the disconnection between Jerome and his mother, not just in terms of speech, but in understanding, cultural experience, and social reality. Though they share a physical home, they inhabit different linguistic and cultural worlds, each shaped by divergent racial and generational experiences. Her mother being a proper English woman believes that speaking in proper English, a more formal, middle-class, arguably white-coded dialect will grant him access to a safer or more respectable position in society just like her. Her desire to shield him is understandable, yet tragically misguided because Jerome's lived reality contradicts this logic. His reply reveals that adopting such speech doesn't signify assimilation or acceptance. Instead, it would make him a target for ridicule and physical violence among his peers. Jerome isn't just navigating language as a form of communication, but as a social and cultural performance, in which every misstep can be punished. Jerome's inability to meet the linguistic expectations of either community or his mother's idealised Britishness or his peer group's street-coded dialect renders him culturally illegible, or even traitorous, to both. He is accused of humiliating his peers just for speaking differently. "I'd get beaten up before I reached the high street. By my own boys too, for bringing shame on them" (1). It shows how cultural communities themselves can reinforce exclusion through internalized norms of authenticity, often under the pressure of a wider society that constantly defines and devalues racialised identities. This internal contradiction resonates deeply with Gilroy's view of rigid racial and cultural categorisation. In *The Black Atlantic*, Gilroy argues, "The partial completion of this desirable but impossible familial network in Europe emphasises the perils

of rootless cosmopolitanism as well as the absurdity of America's racial codes... The central character's lack of belonging to anyone or any place looks like a curse" (112–113). Jerome is the embodiment of this condition. His mixed identity, rather than opening up multiple affiliations or cultural bridges, becomes a kind of curse, an endless source of confusion, rejection, and pain. In Jerome's world, cultural authenticity is tied to conformity, and conformity demands the suppression of complexity. He cannot just be himself; he must constantly code-switch, translate, or disguise parts of who he is to navigate spaces that claim to represent his communities. Jerome is not merely confused—he is psychologically burdened by his inability to find acceptance anywhere. His mixed-race identity, rather than being a source of strength or intersectional insight, is a source of vulnerability, because the society around him refuses to embrace the legitimacy of hybridity. He is judged, categorized, and punished based on how well he performs an identity. This exposes how cultural insiderism enforces conformity not only in dominant white British society but within Black communities as well, particularly those shaped by postcolonial and diasporic histories.

Bernardine Evaristo's *Hello Mum* highlights the realities of racial and ethnic marginalization in contemporary Britain. Through the voice of Jerome, a young mixed-race boy navigating life in a racialized and class-divided society, the novella exposes how identity leads to systemic racism, cultural stereotyping, and social exclusion. Jerome's struggle to belong within his community and the environment around him reflects the complex intersections of race, ethnicity, language, and class. His story reflects how even intimate spaces like family can be marked by generational and cultural misunderstandings, further intensified by the weight of external discrimination.

Mr Loverman is a story of black Caribbean people living in London. The novel explores the intersections of race, ethnicity, and sexuality within the context of the black British community. Barrington, originally from Antigua, faces the challenges of being a Caribbean immigrant in Britain. It highlights the experiences of Caribbean immigrants, shedding light on the complexities they encounter in society. The story depicts the racial stereotypes set by the European colonizers that are still evolving and practised in the 21st century.

Barrington, Carmel, Maxine, Donna and all other fellows of the black race confronted marginalization and brutality in the multicultural London city. Donna, as a second-generation Black British girl, particularly bears the brunt of racial microaggressions

within everyday social spaces such as schools. She regularly encounters unintentional or intentional comments that demean her based on their race. “Drusilla’s the one to wash and plait Donna’s hair and grease it with Dax to stop it getting all dried up and matted even though the English children at school still call Dona Sambo in the playground” (71). Despite the advancement and diversity found in London, racism persists, and Donna experiences the pain of racial bullying and derogatory name-calling. The hair-care ritual is an intimate marker of cultural identity and familial love. That Drusilla lovingly washes and plaits Donna’s hair is a moment of care, community, and cultural transmission. Yet this cultural marker becomes a site of racial ridicule in the public sphere, demonstrating how Black cultural practices are inferior when viewed through the dominant white gaze. Her experience of being called Sambo in the playground, despite the efforts to maintain her hair with culturally significant products like Dax shows how Black bodies are ridiculed through Eurocentric ideals and racial stereotypes. The term Sambo, historically loaded with demeaning connotations, is used by her peers to mark her as different and inferior. This moment reveals the persistence of racist ideologies in supposedly progressive, multicultural institutions and adds to the emotional and psychological burden of black and mixed-race children.

Ethnic complexities in *Mr. Loverman* extend beyond personal identity and family dynamics, entering the realm of systemic discrimination in education, employment, and financial institutions. The characters do not isolate racism to interpersonal bias, but instead expose its structural embeddedness across institutions in London. The narrative analyses how Black British and Caribbean individuals are systematically excluded from opportunities that could provide social mobility and security. Daniel discusses the persistent racial exclusion present within the British university system:

It’s all about who you know, not what you know. I’ve read about it. If only life was so straightforward. That university’s only got a handful of our black British kids out of some twenty thousand. I been reading about that, Danny-boy. He’s got the advantage of acting just like them, so maybe he’ll get through the interview when hidden prejudices come into play. (180)

It highlights the condition of Black students in higher education, pointing to the reality that admission and success are often contingent not only on merit, but on social networks, access, and racial privilege. During admissions, white social connections, legacy admissions, and

cultural familiarity act as gatekeepers. Daniel's experience at school, "I'd get beats at school if didn't know my grammar. I know my grammar too, but we're in minority, Grandy" (173) emphasises how Black students face linguistic prejudice and ethnic stereotyping regardless of their actual capabilities. While grammar is policed as a symbol of intelligence and respectability, Daniel's punishment is not due to his linguistic knowledge, but rather racialized assumptions that Black students are intellectually inferior or culturally deficient. This reflects Stuart Hall's concept of racialised discourse, where meaning is constructed through stereotypical frameworks that position Blackness in opposition to rationality, correctness, or belonging. Hall argues that "Race is thus, also, the modality in which class is 'lived', the medium through which class relations are experienced" (*Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader* 341). In this context, language becomes a tool for enforcing class and racial hierarchies. Daniel is aware of his marginal status, not because he lacks skills, but because his cultural identity is seen as incompatible with the institution's expectations. Thus, language becomes not just a skill but a site of discipline, power, and racial control.

Institutional racism is not confined to education but extends to the financial and economic systems, as seen in Barrington Jeddiah Walker's early experiences in London. Barry recounts being demeaned and dismissed in employment contexts, "people talk down to me like I'm some back-a-bush dumb are who don't understand the ins and outs of the Queen's English" (7). Barry's intelligence and potential are dismissed due to his Caribbean accent and rural background. This reflects a colonial legacy that positions Caribbean immigrants as culturally and intellectually inferior. His ability to speak English fluently does not afford him dignity or economic opportunity. Instead, linguistic and racial prejudice combine to block him from access to fair employment. His attempts to access credit to buy property are similarly obstructed:

Looking at those dumpy houses I could tell they'd been empty for years, which meant that they had to be goin' cheap, right? So I hatched a plan to buy them and rent out. But the banks never lent us no money in those days...Didn't matter how viable your proposal, how squeaky clean your finances, how impeccable your references, how speaky-spokey you was. (116)

It points to the ethnic bias built into the financial system, where even meeting every formal requirement is not enough if you are Black and Caribbean. Barry's inability to secure a loan even when fully eligible demonstrates that structural racism operates not through explicit

policies, but through informal practices and unspoken exclusions. Financial receptionists upheld racial hierarchies by denying credit, wealth accumulation, and entrepreneurship to Black immigrants. These forms of institutionalized discrimination reflect the ethnic inequality in postcolonial Britain. Fanon says, “The originality of the colonial context is that economic reality, inequality, and the immense difference of ways of life never come to mask the human realities” (*The Wretched of the Earth* 39). Educational institutions, job markets, and banks may appear neutral, but they are historically shaped by white, colonial values and designed to privilege white citizens. Both the case of Daniel and Barry shows how racism does not need to be loud to be destructive, instead, it is embedded in expectations, access, and representation.

Bernardine Evaristo’s *Mr. Loverman* highlights the intergenerational exploration of racial and ethnic complexities experienced by Caribbean immigrants and their descendants in postcolonial Britain. Through the lives of Barrington Jedidiah Walker, Maxine, Donna, and her son Daniel, the novel reveals how race, ethnicity, and identity intersect with Eurocentric narratives, language, education, employment, and institutional structures. Hence, it proves that racism is not limited to overt acts of discrimination but is embedded in everyday practices that restrict access to opportunity, recognition, and social legitimacy.

Girl, Woman, and Other captures the unique stories of women from various racial and ethnic backgrounds, including black, white, Asian, and mixed-race individuals. The characters come from different generations, social classes, sexual orientations and experiences, disclosing the various racial and ethnic complexities. The characters Amma, Julie’s husband, Hartie and her grandchildren expose the racial and ethnic complexities across generations.,

Historically, the industry has overlooked black talent. Black actors, especially women, have rarely been given equal opportunities in British theatre or the Hollywood film industry. Despite their skills and potential, they are often sidelined in favour of white actors and narratives that cater to Eurocentric tastes. This long-standing exclusion is portrayed in *Girl, Woman, Other*, where she captures the frustrations of Black artists navigating spaces that were never designed to accommodate their presence. The narrative opens with Amma’s experience in the theatre world, a woman who has dedicated her life to radical performance but has only recently break through and obtain recognition. When she reflects on Miss Stevenson’s confidence in quickly climbing the professional ladder she says, “Little Miss

Stevenson- who thinks that because she's landed at the National Straight out of drama school, she's one step away from conquering Hollywood" (5). Miss Stevenson believes that her involvement with the National Theatre, a prestigious theatre institution, places her on the cusp of conquering Hollywood. Amma finds it ironic as she remembers what it means to be black in Hollywood. The racial biases and limited opportunities for black actors can complicate the journey towards recognition and success in Hollywood:

At times like these Amma misses Dominique, who long ago absconded to America they should be sharing her breakthrough career moment together they met in the eighties at an audition for a feature film set in a women's prison (what else) both were disillusioned at being put up for the parts such as slaves, servant, prostitute, nanny or criminals... Amma was shorter, with African hips and thighs perfect slave girl material one director told her she walked into an audition for a play about Emancipation. (6)

It highlights the racial complexity that Amma and Dominique confronted while pursuing their acting career. They experienced the limited and stereotypical roles offered to black actresses in the entertainment industry. Whenever they audition for multimedia, the director overlooks their talents by rejecting them or offering to represent black women as demeaning characters like slaves, servants, prostitutes, nannies or criminals. "Since the early days of film, Black people have been portrayed negatively compared to their white counterparts. . . . Hollywood has a long history of portraying Black actors with a level of cultural exoticism, as a way to diminish the humanity of the Black experience" (Carter 2022). Amma's roles reveal that Black women are persistently cast within demeaning and racially stereotyped character types. In one of the auditions, the director goes as far as to call her "perfect slave girl material" (10) due to her physical characteristics. It highlights the objectification and the industry's tendency to typecast black women based on physical features that fit into preconceived notions of what a black character should look like. All these objectifications and preconceived notions complicated the journey of a black actress in Hollywood.

The experiences of Black women in Britain reflect the effects of racism and sexism and show how these systems intersect to shape their social, political, and emotional lives. Amma, one of the central characters, becomes a victim of double marginalisation because of her race or gender. Amma experiences discrimination in supposedly progressive feminist

spaces. “What it meant a black woman... how it felt when people called them nigger, or racist thugs beat them up. What it was like when white men opened doors or gave up their seats on public transport for white women (which was sexist), but not for them (which was racist)” (13). It captures the invisibility and dehumanisation of Black women, even within systems that claim to work toward equality. The politeness only toward white women reveal how racism denies basic human empathy. Amma, despite being a woman like her white counterparts, is excluded from the gendered gesture of respect because her Blackness dominates her womanhood in the eyes of white men. Gilroy’s idea is that “Black and white are bonded together by the mechanism of ‘race’ that estranges them from each other and amputates their common humanity” (*Against the Race* 5). Amma is not only excluded from societal privileges afforded by whiteness but is also denied the symbolic recognition that comes with womanhood in a patriarchal society. As a Black woman, Amma does not fully belong in mainstream (white) feminism, which often sidelines racial issues, nor in racial justice spaces that tend to discriminate against blacks. Amma’s memory of being called nigger and physically attacked by racist thugs further demonstrates the everyday violence that Black women endure in Britain. These abuses are not isolated incidents, they are systemic reflections of how Black women are constructed as undeserving of empathy or protection. Even seemingly small gestures, like ignoring Black women on public transport while showing courtesy to white women, further enhance the message that Black women are also excluded from gender equality.

The character depicts how racial and ethnic complexities manifest within Black British families across generations, particularly through the lens of internalised racism. Hattie, an older matriarch, takes pride in her Black heritage, which is grounded in cultural memory and ancestral lineage. However, her children, Ada Mae and Sonny, actively reject their black identity for social mobility and assimilation into white British society. Their discomfort with their racial background is apparent from childhood. Ada Mae paints herself as white in her drawings, while Sonny avoids being seen with his visibly Black father. These behaviours are not merely personal preferences but are shaped by the racial hierarchy that associates whiteness with respectability, acceptance, and safety. This aspiration toward whitening the family lineage becomes even clearer when both siblings marry white partners and distance themselves from their cultural roots. They put effort into erasing visible Blackness from the family tree:

Look more white than black because Sonny and Ada Mae married white people none of them identifies as black and she suspects they pass as white . . . the only thing she objects to is when they objected to Chimango when he arrived on the scene, a fellow nurse at the hospital where Julie worked, from Malawi. Hattie was sickened by their behaviour, they should've been more enlightened but the family was becoming whiter with every generation and they didn't want any backsliding. (349-350)

It explores how internalised racism and racial passing shape familial and generational dynamics within the Black British experience. One of the most striking instances of this occurs in the portrayal of Hattie's descendants, particularly Sonny and Ada Mae, who have married white partners and appear to distance themselves from their Black heritage. Hattie reflects that none of her grandchildren identify as Black, suspecting they might be passing as white. She concedes, "If they can get away with it, good luck to them, why wear the burden of colour to hold you back?" (349). This line embodies a moment of an acknowledgement that the burden of racial identification in a white-dominated society can feel so heavy that erasing or hiding one's Blackness seems like a rational strategy for survival. Frantz Fanon's assertion in *Black Skin, White Masks*, "For the Black man there is only one destiny. And it is white" (12). It captures the psychological effects of colonial and racial domination, where the oppressed internalise the coloniser's value system, believing that salvation, recognition, and upward mobility are only possible through assimilation into whiteness. This ideology is evident in Sonny and Ada Mae's desire to raise children who look more white than Black, and to distance themselves socially and culturally from their African-Caribbean roots. Their marriages into white families and refusal to identify as Black reflect the enduring belief that whiteness offers safety, status, and legitimacy. The hate for blacks is further exposed when Julie brings Chimango, a Malawian man she works with at the hospital. Despite their Black ancestry, the family responds with discomfort and subtle rejection. This moment reveals that colonial ideologies of racial hierarchy persist within families, handed down silently and unconsciously from generation to generation.

Girl, Woman, Other exposes the racial and ethnic complexities that define the lived experiences of Black British women and their communities. The characters confront the legacy of colonialism, the burden of assimilation, and the psychological dimensions of internalised racism. Characters like Amma, Dominique, and Hattie's descendants demonstrate

how racial identity is not a fixed marker, but a fluid, contested space where individual histories, social expectations, and generational ideologies intersect.

Chapter 3

Black Consciousness and Its Dynamics in Evaristo's Select Text

Black consciousness is a powerful ideology that emerged as a response to factors like white supremacy, slavery, and social and economic oppression in South Africa during the struggle against apartheid. It encourages the black community to look inward and seek a self-definition rooted in its history and culture. It uplifts black individuals to embrace their identity, heritage, and culture. It promotes self-love, self-determination, and the pursuit of social, economic, and political equality for black people. Black consciousness challenges the oppressive systems that have historically oppressed black communities. In literature, black consciousness aims to amplify black voices, experiences, and perspectives. It plays a crucial role in fostering a deeper understanding of black culture. Fanon stated, "In terms of consciousness, the black consciousness is held out as an absolute density, as filled with itself, a stage preceding any invasion, any abolition of the ego by desire" (*Black Skin, White Mask* 133). Fanon stated that black consciousness is an absolute density, a self-contained entity that stands independently. This absolute density is a form of self-awareness that resists the degradation of Black identity through colonial violence, racism, and the psychological mechanisms of othering. Fanon defies European narratives that frame black identity solely as external, often oppressive. Steve Biko, in *I Write What I Like*, mentioned:

Blacks are suffering from inferiority complex---a result of 300 years of deliberate oppression, denigration and derision---they will be useless as co-architects of a normal society where man is nothing else but man for his own sake. Hence what is necessary as a prelude to anything else that may come is a very strong grass-roots build-up of black consciousness such that blacks can learn to assert themselves and stake their rightful claim. (22)

Biko argues that black people developed an inferiority complex due to a racist and oppressive system that spanned around 300 years in South Africa, where black people confronted systematic discrimination, violence and exploitation under apartheid. This inferiority complex hinders blacks from getting equal rights and opportunities in society. He focuses on creating a strong sense of black consciousness to overcome the psychological scars of oppression and develop a strong sense of self. He advocates for a grassroots movement that empowers black people to embrace their identity, culture, and history to balance the effects of

the inferiority complex and create a normal society where every individual is valued and respected for their intrinsic humanity, without regard to race or ethnicity.

The Emperor's Babe is a novel that powerfully explores how systemic racism and discrimination can become internalised, shaping one's sense of identity and self-worth. Evaristo illustrates how oppressive structures subtly and persistently instil in Black individuals the belief that they are inferior, less intelligent, or inherently less capable than their counterparts. During childhood, Zuleika and her friend Alba are portrayed as lively, imaginative, and enthusiastic young girls. They brim with hope and possess the determination and creativity necessary to pursue their dreams. However, this early innocence is disrupted when, at the age of eleven, Zuleika is forcefully married off by her parents to an aristocratic Roman, which marks the beginning of her exposure to systemic oppression within both her household and the broader Roman society. As the narrative unfolds, Zuleika's daily encounters with racism, class hierarchy, and gendered expectations gradually erode her confidence and sense of self. The constant belittling, exclusion, and subtle forms of dehumanisation she experiences shape her internal world, causing her to accept discrimination as an inherent part of her identity. She begins to believe that her limitations are natural rather than imposed. Yet this internalised oppression starts to shift when she meets fellow Black individuals who refuse to assimilate into the dominant power hierarchy. Their unapologetic pride in their identity and culture provides a counter-narrative to the racist ideologies surrounding them. Most significantly, the presence of the Black emperor, who embodies strength, dignity, and authority, becomes a transformative force in her life. These encounters help Zuleika recognise her own value and awaken a sense of empowerment that had long been suppressed. Through solidarity and the visibility of Black excellence, she gradually develops the courage to question, resist, and reimagine the oppressive system that once defined her existence. In this way, Evaristo not only foregrounds the psychological impact of systemic racism but also demonstrates the liberatory power of representation, community, and Black consciousness in reclaiming identity.

The free spirit and enthusiastic nature of Zuleika and Alba are visible. In their childhood, they never encountered racial discrimination. They only saw that the people around them struggle to get their basic needs like food, clothes and shelter, so they dream of uplifting themselves and their community. "We were gonna steal from the rich, give to the poor, keep seventy-five per cent for ourselves and live in one of them mansions" (10). It shows Zuleika was a free-spirited person. He is highly motivated to raise the status of their

community by providing economic assistance. When she turned 11, her father forcefully married her to an aristocratic Roman man named Felix. At her wedding, she resisted at every step and tried to avoid joining the Roman family. “She resisted every step onwards, yearned for the city of Meroe and safety” (25). Despite family pressures and challenges, Zuleika's resistance and yearning signify a step toward self-empowerment and a fighting spirit towards her rights. When she reached Felix's house, she felt powerful as people used to bow their heads while welcoming her. This sudden shift of power and respect alters her identity from a nobody to a powerful woman, which she had never expected. “They bow as if I were the emperor’s wife...Janus-faced gits! I am the same girl I was last week. Or am I?” (27). When Zuleika reaches Felix's house, she gets some power as everyone bows their head in front of her. Zuleika feels that overnight, her identity has changed. She gets confused between her new and old identities. This confusion creates an identity crisis as she tries to get used to her new identity because it gives her power, but at the same time, she misses her old identity. Paul Gilroy mentions in his book “Striving to be both European and black requires some specific forms of double consciousness” (*The Black Atlantic* 1). Zuleika tries to balance between her Nubian and Roman identity. In Roman society, Zuleika gradually confronted discrimination. These discriminations take away her self-empowerment capability, rights and freedom. She even accepts that she is lucky for getting this limited power as compared to other blacks until she meets with her friend. When Alba sees her for the first time, she asks when she will invite her to her house. She said she can only decide when her spy will be absent. Alba feels very bad about the situation that Zuleika has become imprisoned in the name of marriage, and she has lost her sense:

Look at all that makeup, Zee, and that dress, you look so grown up. So when do I get to go to your manor? When I can fix it. Tranio’s the head honcho when he’s away, so it won’t be easy. I feel sorry for you Zee. Thanks! No, I’m not being bitchy. I’m glad I’m still free. (37)

Zuleika tries to match her outfit and makeup to match her standards with the Romans. By seeing the changing attitude of people toward her after marriage, she made the perception that Roman identity gives her power. She has changed her dressing sense and behaviour, but in that process, she lost her freedom of choice and identity. When Alba met Zuleika after her marriage, she felt fascinated by seeing the changing look of Zuleika. Alba identifies that Zuleika is facing an identity crisis and has lost her freedom. Alba tries to convince Zuleika that she was not born to be controlled and should fight back for her freedom. At that time,

Zuleika did not get the meaning of freedom and self-worth, which Alba mentioned. According to Zuleika, she has done her makeover in this way to achieve power.

The awareness that blacks can achieve success and power is the main principle of black consciousness. Zuleika becomes aware of her rights and identity when she hears the conversation between Dinesh and his family. He mentions that the emperor of Rome is a powerful black African boy. Dinesh praises how the emperor defeats far-flung northern places. Zuleika is fascinated by hearing that an African black man was the governor of the white Romans. “I slid in at the back, desperate to know about the world I lived in” (41). After her marriage to Felix, Zuleika confronts discrimination based on race and ethnicity. She gets habituated of the racial discrimination and even accepts that they belong to a powerless community. When she hears of Septimius, she gets inspired. For the first time, she discovers that she can be powerful in her old identity. She feels confident and aims to achieve greatness in her life:

They spoke of the great Septimius Severus, who had gone from African boy to Roman emperor, had spent many years travelling the empire from Germania to Syria, back to his hometown in Libya, who would surely one day visit Britannia, this far-flung northern outpost of empire, defeat the fucking Scots, Pict and Saxon bastards who made a steady onslaught on our cities and towns, spear every last man of them, burn their villages, castrate their infant sons, occupy their women, colonize their terra firma, make them speak our lingo, impose taxes, yay!. (41)

Dinesh's acknowledgement of the achievement of Septimius Severus inspires Zuleika to be empowered. For the first time, Zuleika hears that the emperor is of black African descent, who rose his position from being nobody to the emperor's position during the Roman Empire. He mentions the bravery of the emperor by recounting his victory in conquering Scots, Picts and Saxons. The emperor also resisted the rules of the Romans by teaching the African language to the colonial people. It signifies how he is determined to celebrate and assert the unique cultural identities of Black communities and individuals, which is at the core of the Black consciousness movement. All these descriptions of the emperor encourage them to regain pride and confidence that they could also shine in a white-dominated society. Biko stated, “We have to acknowledge before we can start on any programme designed...The first step therefore is to make the black man come to himself; to pump back life into his empty shell; to infuse him with pride and dignity” (*I Write What I Like* 29). The story of the

emperor highlights the importance of acknowledging and celebrating the achievements of black individuals. After hearing the story of the African governor, Zuleika infused a sense of pride and determination to fight against oppression. She also comprehends the meaning of freedom and value, which Alba mentioned and starts writing about her imprisonment. “Girl Weds Rich Man Who Locks Her Up” (42). Zuleika found out that her marriage did not empower her, instead confined her to a place where she could only access a little freedom. She understood that her freedom was snatched during her wedding night, and the story of the emperor empowered her to fight her own battle.

The black characters in the novel, like Alba and the emperor, enlighten Zuleika to come out of the imprisonment and live her life on her own terms and conditions. Whenever Zuleika meets with her Alba, she notices that her skin colour is not the reason for her imprisonment. Alba always tries to enlighten Zuleika and get her out of the marriage imprisonment. During a conversation, Zuleika got inspired by the story of the emperor. Alba thinks that if she attends the emperor’s event, she could connect with her roots. So, Alba forced her to give his speech. In that event, the emperor says, “I became centurion, senator, magistratus, people’s representative, tribune, legate and finally governor. Pride and defiance infused every word. But I returned home often” (144). In the event, the emperor deliberately delivers the speech to celebrate his victory and to empower their fellow mates for black solidarity. The speech enchants Zuleika and changes her thoughts about how blacks can excel in white Roman society. Fanon stated, “In no way should my color be regarded as a flaw. From the moment the Negro accepts the separation imposed by the European he has no further respite, and "is it not understandable that thenceforward he will try to elevate himself to the white man's level?" (*Black Skin, White Mask* 81). The emperor's pride and boldness reject the preconceived notion that blacks are inferior or less capable of doing things. He encourages people that a racist society cannot pull you back if you are determined to rise and shine. He also says that he confronted discrimination. White people ridiculed him for his African accent, but he fought against it and achieved great success. This statement awakens the consciousness of blacks that racism and white supremacy demean blacks, but that does not mean they have to remain silent and accept their fate.

When Zuleika attended the event of emperor, she was attracted towards him. Alba and Venus encourage Zuleika to have a secret affair with the emperor. The emperor is a strong political figure, while Zuleika is not more than a mistress for Felix. When Zuleika meets with the emperor, she feels empowered. The emperor made an effort to encourage her to fight for

her rights. He narrates his incident and how his people betray him on his journey. He narrates his incident and how his people betray him on his journey by not being united. He says he is also tired of the ongoing racism and oppression, but he wants freedom for his people:

I am tired, Zuleika, tired of barbarians clawing at my frontiers after good life, tired of freedom-fighters, secessionists, revolutionaries, seditious governors, break-away factions, religious fantasists, martyrs, spys, pirates and jumped-up officers plotting to coup d'état me. I am tired of hearing Sevva! Sevva! Sevva! Out! Out! Out! What do we want? Freedom! When do we want it? Now! (146)

The emperor wanted the liberation of black individuals from white supremacy and encouraged Zuleika to resist the oppressor. He says that after becoming the emperor of the Romans, blacks still faced racial discrimination and oppression. He is tired of fighting against the colonial rule alone. He wants his people, freedom fighters, secessionists, revolutionaries and other groups to unite and fight for their rights. The slogan reflects how desperately he desires the liberation of black people. This slogan encourages Zuleika to demand her rights and challenge the oppressor. She develops respect for the martyrs who lost their lives in the struggle for freedom and justice. She becomes aware of the oppressive system which dehumanises their community. In Zuleika's life, the emperor acted as a leader who helped her during the liberation struggle. Fanon says, "During the struggle for liberation, the leader awakened the people and promised them a forward march, heroic and unmitigated" (*The Wretched of the Earth* 168). The awareness given by the leader makes Zuleika confident in her black identity, and she embraces his culture and tradition. She also became determined to fight for the rights and spread awareness among blacks through her poetry. She wants recognition and validation as a writer. "I want exposure. I want recognition. I want a standing ovation!" (191). Historically, blacks continuously confronted discrimination and their achievement and talents have always been overlooked by the dominant society. The lines highlight the importance of recognition and yearning for acknowledgement and visibility in the white dominating society. The desire for a standing ovation shows self-affirmation and suggests that blacks should celebrate their achievement.

The Emperor's Babe explores the remarkable transformation of Zuleika due to black consciousness. The novel highlights the journey of Zuleika from identity crisis to self-affirmation and resistance against the oppressive factors that suppress her freedom and identity. The black characters in the novel, like Alba and the emperor, enlighten Zuleika about

her identity and connect her with her roots. This enlightenment helps Zuleika to know that racism and white supremacy often discriminate against blacks, but that does not mean they have to remain silent and accept their fate.

The *Soul Tourists* offers an exploration of the complexities of identity, history, and belonging, particularly as experienced by black individuals in Europe. It addresses questions of origins and belonging in both Britain and European contexts, challenging the dominant narrative of racial identity in contemporary Britain. It illustrates how second-generation Black Britons grapple with issues of cultural hybridity, displacement, and systemic exclusion. Stanley's journey becomes a metaphor for self-discovery, as he confronts not only the ghosts of historical figures but also the realities of modern-day racism, xenophobia, and the complexities of dual heritage.

Stanley, though born in England, carries inherited amnesia, which distances him from his Jamaican heritage and leaves him spiritually disconnected from his cultural lineage. His experiences reflect the struggles of Black Britons navigating an environment that often fails to fully recognise or integrate their presence. This rejection makes them alienated in their birth country. Simultaneously, distorted and negative portrayals of Africa further complicate their identity formation. Stanley, for instance, occasionally entertains the idea of returning to Africa, yet quickly dismisses it due to the dominant Western narrative: "he knew little of Africa beyond the popular image of starving peasants and corrupt governments" (153). His internal conflict is intensified by European attitudes that treat him as an outsider, despite his birthright. He yearns for acceptance within European society but is constantly reminded of his difference. Stanley's parents, particularly his mother Pearline, attempt to awaken the consciousness of his roots and suppressed Black European history. Pearline recognizes that Stanley is psychologically oppressed by a society that denies his identity, leaving him in a state of internal conflict and self-rejection. His father, despite their cold relationship, was the only figure who provided Stanley with a sense of acceptance. After his father's death, Stanley is devastated. This loss triggers an existential crisis, encourages him to reevaluate his life, identity, and aspirations:

Then my father died and now it seems – my dreams were his... so nothing had surprised me until my father's death, which I couldn't avoid. I could hand in my notice, rent out my flat to a friend. What was keeping me here? School report,

1988: STANLEY IS FREE. Gold Medal of Exceptional Bravery. Yes, it was all to please my father. Now he's gone. It's scary. 'What have you got to lose?' (52).

It depicts Stanley's deep internal conflict. The death of his father marks the collapse of the framework around which his life had been structured. The revelation that his dreams were merely extensions of his father's ambitions highlights the absence of personal autonomy. Without his father, Stanley is forced to confront the void within himself. His question, "What was keeping me here?" signals an emerging consciousness, an awakening to the possibility of reclaiming freedom, although accompanied by anxiety and fear. As Fanon asserts, "As long as the black man is among his own, he will have no occasion, except in minor internal conflicts, to experience his being through others" (*Black Skin, White Masks*, 109). Stanley's existential fragmentation and psychological disorientation expose his struggle to define identity and purpose in a society that has always defined him from the outside "I felt reckless. I don't know! Stop thinking so much and act. I'm confused!" (53). It shows Stanley's internal turmoil and existential confusion. It's a moment where Stanley is suspended between inherited trauma and the desire for self-liberation. His confusion and impulse to act reflect the dislocation and fragmented sense of self experienced by many second-generation Black Britons, making this line a crucial window into his transformation.

Stanley's sense of loss and emotional detachment is echoed when he meets Jessie at a London bar, a woman who also confronted a sense of displacement. Both characters are separated from familial bonds. Stanley mourns the death of his parents, while Jessie lives in emotional exile from her son. Their shared sense of rootlessness forges an immediate connection, leading them to start a journey across Europe in search of meaning, identity, and belonging. Jessie becomes the first person in Stanley's life to challenge his racial perceptions. A significant moment occurs early in their travels when a waitress's dismissive behavior leads Stanley to mutter, "It's because we're black" (43). Jessie, however, refuses to affirm his assumption:

'See, as soon as you leave the big cities this is what you find.' She replied with a scornful glance before muttering back, 'You can decide that or you can decide she's a sad cow and would be that way with anybody. The choice is yours, Mr Paranoid Williams.' (43)

The different opinion on the same situation highlights the tension between internalized racial consciousness and denial. While Stanley begins to perceive microaggressions, Jessie

dismisses them, urging him to adopt a universalist view. Her refusal to validate his racial interpretation ironically pushes him further toward a search for affirmation. Jessie's refusal becomes the turning point for Stanley's awareness of his need to define his identity on his terms. She also recognises that Stanley is emotionally shackled by generational trauma and encourages him to liberate himself from it. At one point, she urges him, "Go on, let it out, she urged me. Scream – I am free! I am free! I am free!" (49). Jessie's words reflect a desire for Stanley to transcend inherited pain. Yet this freedom cannot come from denial. To achieve real liberation, Stanley must understand the buried histories and suppressed identities that haunt him.

Their journey across Europe transcends physical travel and becomes a metaphorical passage through the suppressed histories of the Black diaspora. As Stanley encounters the ghosts of historical Black figures such as Shakespeare's Dark Lady, Lucy Negro, Alessandro de Medici, Abram Petrovitch Gannibal, and Pushkin's Ethiopian ancestors, these spectral presences confront him with the silenced narratives of Black presence in Europe. The ghost of Lucy Negro, the imagined Dark Lady of Shakespeare's sonnets, becomes first spiritual and intellectual guide in Stanley's awakening to diasporic historical consciousness. Her appearance functions as a rupture in Stanley's linear, Eurocentric understanding of history, introducing him to a suppressed Black narrative embedded within Britain's cultural past. This transformative moment is captured in Lucy's spectral monologue, "He felt he never, ever belonged – here was black Lucy in Elizabeth's England / a dream witnessed by your son / whose dreams had been deferred / in deference to you – Father?" (70). Lucy situates herself within the margins of British history and, simultaneously, connects Stanley to his deceased father, enlightening how intergenerational dreams and identities have been controlled by dominant racial ideologies. The reference to deferred dreams recalls the unfulfilled aspirations of Black men like Stanley and his father, who have been forced to navigate a world that weakens their selfhood in the name of assimilation and silence. Lucy's appearance initiates a psychological and epistemological shift in Stanley:

I have found a fiery woman of whom/ you would not approve, desperate/ to escape, as you could not escape/ yourself, and stirring all around /are whispers, winds, are ethereal beings, / who might just make me whole. Stanley decided to do some research, a rather pretentious term, he admitted, for such amateurish rooting about in the library. When he discovered that a Lucy Negro really had

existed in sixteenth-century London and that she used to trade outside the Swan in Turnbull Street. (70-71)

Motivated by this encounter, he begins researching Lucy Negro and discovers that she was a real historical figure in sixteenth-century London. It activates the beginning of Stanley's intellectual reckoning. Gilroy mentions, "The idea of tradition gets understandably invoked to underscore the historical continuities, subcultural conversations, intertextual and intercultural cross-fertilisations which make the notion of a distinctive and self-conscious black culture appear plausible" (188). The blend of historical fact, imaginative interpretation, and emotional resonance signals a shift in Stanley's consciousness from passive detachment to active engagement with the diasporic past. Lucy's presence ignites his journey into a re-imagined past, where Black identity is not peripheral but integral. In line with Gilroy's theorisation of Black Atlantic culture, Stanley begins to experience history not as a linear, Eurocentric inheritance, but as a dialogic space where forgotten voices and subcultural traditions re-emerge to forge a cohesive, conscious sense of self. Lucy thus becomes the symbol of Black Consciousness, disrupting colonial silence and enlightening the path toward identity reclamation, cultural affirmation, and historical continuity.

As Stanley journeys deeper into continental Europe, other ghosts appear to educate about the diasporic contributions to European cultural and intellectual history. Stanley's meeting with the ghost of Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin in old Istanbul marks another important moment in his growing awareness of Black consciousness. Pushkin, widely regarded as the father of Russian literature, embodies the hybridity and contradiction at the heart of diasporic identity. His African ancestry, traced through his great-grandfather, Abram Gannibal, an African nobleman kidnapped by the Ottomans, places him in a lineage that has been historically suppressed. Pushkin's story shows the emotional and psychological violence inflicted by Eurocentric beauty ideals and racial hierarchies. He recounts:

... my mother, Nadezhda Osipovna acclaimed as "the beautiful creole" was surely the vainest woman in all the Russia and that she hated her middle child-moi! -because I alone had inherited something of the old Negro's features, marking me out as pot ugly. She made my childhood hell. (237)

It highlights the internalized racism present within his own family, demonstrating how the dominant white gaze penetrates even the most intimate spheres of Black life. His reflection on being mocked for his African profile, "When the English artist Dawe wanted to paint me... I

wrote a poem called ‘Mon Portrait’—it’s about how my African profile would last for centuries, only mocked” (237) emphasizes how Blackness is ridiculed in white dominating society. Through this encounter, Stanley is exposed to the psychological scars given through generational oppression. Stanley finds that just like Pushkin, many great black figures resist this historical continuity through art, poetry, and cultural expression. Pushkin’s dual status as a celebrated literary icon and a marginalized person, Stanley sees a mirror of his internal conflict. Gilroy’s concept of the “Black Atlantic” (1) is particularly relevant here. Pushkin, like Stanley, exists within a transnational network of diasporic movement, cultural hybridity, and racial trauma. Pushkin’s narrative affirms the intellectual and cultural legacy of the African diaspora within European modernity, a legacy omitted from canonical histories. Stanley’s dialogue with Pushkin becomes a moment of intellectual and emotional alignment with a wider diasporic heritage. It broadens his understanding of Black identity beyond the Anglo-centric frame and situates him within a transhistorical, transnational narrative of Black creativity and endurance. Besides deepening Stanley’s historical consciousness, the meeting also challenges his previous feelings of marginalization, by linking his struggle to a larger range of Black resistance and self-assertion. Pushkin’s presence, much like Lucy Negro’s, acts as a counter-memory, enabling Stanley to reconstruct a Black identity that is proud, intellectual, and integral to European history. Gilroy says, “the need to get back to the place or moment before the country lost its moral and cultural bearing (*The Black Atlantic* 97). The encounter of Stanley with the ghost highlights the suppressed history of European blacks. As a metaphorical journey into the past, it represents the attempt to reconnect and revisit moments that have contributed to the erosion of cultural values. The ghosts in the narrative embody the voices and stories that have been marginalised or deliberately excluded from mainstream historical narratives. By engaging with these spectral figures, Stanley participates in a form of collective memory that challenges the dominant cultural narrative. In doing so, the novel suggests a collective yearning to reclaim and understand a history that has been lost or overlooked. These encounters symbolically illuminate the hidden histories of migration, resistance, and contribution and long-buried narratives beneath Eurocentric memory. Despite having a dark side in childhood, Hector’s success story also admired Stanley. Hector says, “I am of a rare breed for whom society opened their door even as they despised my people” (119). The words of Hector infused Stanley with admiration and hope. Being at a place where racial injustice was at its peak, Hector managed to get rid of everything and grasp success. Through these dialogues with the past, Stanley is forced to think about his cultural inheritance and his repressed identity. The ghosts become both historical witnesses and spiritual guides, urging Stanley toward a deeper understanding of

self. In this way, reclaiming Black consciousness involves confronting historical erasure and embracing ancestral legacies that transcend national and temporal boundaries.

Soul Tourists explores identity, history, and the complexities of cultural belonging. The novel takes readers on a literary journey through Europe, guided by the protagonist Stanley's encounters with ghosts from the past. The protagonist, Stanley, undergoes internal struggles that mirror larger societal tensions and historical complexities. The ghosts serve as a metaphorical means to confront the unresolved aspects of Europe's colonial past, disrupting linear notions of time and highlighting the interconnectedness of history with the present.

Bernardine Evaristo's *Blonde Roots* is a satirical novel that disrupts the traditional narratives of masters and slaves. The book reimagines a world in which the roles of power and subjugation are reversed: blacks are the masters and slave-owners, while “whites” (5) are the enslaved population. Evaristo, who has a Nigerian and British heritage, uses this narrative inversion to expose the reality of racial hierarchy, exploitation, and oppression. The novel highlights the importance of self-empowerment and acceptance. It also serves as a powerful vehicle for challenging Eurocentric narratives and reimagining our understanding of race, power, and historical narratives.

Doris, a white European, was captured and transported to Africa. When she reaches there, she realizes that her lighter skin tone and European facial features are treated as inferior. She worked as a slave at Bwana's house. Other slaves working at the same place accept that they are inferior and work like animals. Doris is physically captivated by the power holder, but psychologically, she never accepts the bondage and narratives. She was aware of the importance of their value systems, i.e., their socio-economic, political and cultural values. “I am proud to declare that I come from a long line of cabbage farmers” (7). Cabbage farming signifies Doris's attachment and embrace of her cultural heritage. Doris' family cultivated cabbage because it flourished in European soil and became an important part of European cuisine. In Ambossa, the culture and tradition, such as monopoly, dressing sense, physical features, hair style and way of conduct are mocked by the Ambossans. Doris always rejected these narratives and followed her own culture, as she says, “I was the monogamous person holding onto the one-man, one-woman practice of my own culture” (19). The rejection of African values and traditions shows her psychological liberation and resistance towards colonial discourses. Her psychological liberation is visible:

Ambossans considered me ugly as sin... Every morning I'd repeat an uplifting mantra to myself... 'Imay be fair and flaxen. I have slim nostrils and slender lips. I may have oil-rich hair and non-rotund bottom. I may blush easily, go rubicund in the sun and have covert yet mentally alert blue eyes. Yes, I may be whyte. But I am Whyte and I am beautiful. (31-32)

The Ambossans' perception of white as ugly shows that colonization often leads to the internalization of racial stereotypes and a negative self-image. Doris's resistance against the Ambossans' narrative and reclaiming her identity through daily repetition of an uplifting mantra. The mantra becomes a tool for psychological liberation, countering the negative societal narratives about Doris's appearance. She rejects certain beauty norms, "I always thought that flat, fat, nostrils on whyte faces looked ridiculous" (30). Rejection of those beauty standards that involve altering one's racial features to fit into a dominant society shows her awareness towards their identity. Fanon stated, "Still in terms of consciousness, black consciousness is immanent in its own eyes. I am not a potentiality of something, I am wholly what I am. I do not have to look for the universal" (*Black Skin, White Mask* 135). Doris's self-affirmation, asserting her beauty, shows her confidence in her identity and roots. She proudly accepts her identity as a form of resistance against colonial ideologies. Doris's act of repeating the mantra and affirming her beauty reflects the importance of psychological liberation in reclaiming one's authentic self in the face of societal oppression. This psychological liberation encourages Doris to fight for her physical liberation. "I clutched my return ticket to my chest, always dreaming of escape" (14). Doris always searches for a way to liberate herself physically from slavery. She always tries to find ways to attain physical freedom. One day, when she finds the news of the Underground Railroad, her aim of returning home gets a ray of hope. She continues to resist and manages to escape from Bawna's house to conquer physical liberation. Doris' story highlights the importance of physiological liberation in attaining physical liberation.

In *Blonde Roots*, "The image of the other" has been replaced with "self" to challenge the preconceived notion of racial hierarchy (*Orientalism* 9). The flipping of the power dynamics and subverting the prevailing narrative of European enslavement of Africans during the transatlantic slave trade dismantles some Eurocentric narratives. The replacement spread the awareness about the absurdity of colonial discourses and deconstructs the concepts slave and the white master. The first Eurocentric narratives which dismantle that a lighter skin tone is the epitome of beauty. The colonial discourse marks the

image that lighter skin tone is considered beautiful, the novel erases that print by beautifying the darker skin tone. The colonial masters mock the physical appearance of others by describing them as pagan and exotic. In the book, the power is in the hands of blacks, so blonds are ridiculed and mocked. The mockery makes white people insecure about their feature and skin tone:

In the Burbs you rarely saw a free whytes with natural hair. They wore the perms, twist and braids of Ambossan Women, although Aphros were most in demand. The hairdressers used kinky Aphrikan hair on the Burbite women, who had theor fine hair chopped off and these bushy pieces sewn onto them so that the effect was (un) natural Aphrikan... In the Burbs tanning was all the rage too, and you could get a nose flattening job done quite cheaply. (30)

Many immigrants from North Aphrika and other countries reside in Burb. The Burbite people have lost their identity and are insecure about their features due to this discrimination. Due to Aphrikan colonialization, power is in the hands of Aphrikan, so their features and traditions are glorified by ridiculing whytes identity and features. The whyte people in Burb try to adopt the tradition and identity of that place. They start to change their hairstyle by chopping their natural hair and sewing hair extensions like perms, twists and braids. Du Bois said, "To attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost" (*The Souls of black Folk* 8). The Burb women want acceptance from the ruling power. Discrimination increased hate for themselves among the whyte, and they accept the colonial discourses. They try to look more like the ruling power, so they go for the surgeries and hair extensions. This shows that colonial rule deliberately implements such beauty narratives to manipulate colonial people and exploit them.

The image of the other has been replaced with self to challenge the preconceived notion of colonial discourses. The replacement spread the awareness about the absurdity of colonial discourses and deconstruct the concept of black slave and white master. The blacks are the master and white are the slave. The blacks give their logic and theory to prove that whites are inferior, just like white gives their logic to prove blacks as inferior during colonialism. According to Aphrika, Europa are uncivilized and primitive, so they capture these people to make them civilize. Through some scientific and logic, they justify the act of slavery and discrimination. "The natives of those lands are just now emerging from the

abominable depth of savagery which we civilised nation left behind in pre-historic times” (118). It reflects how colonial power rationalize the subjugation and exploitation of indigenous peoples by framing colonization as a benevolent mission to bring progress and civilization to supposedly primitive societies. The colonial power legitimizes their exploitation by projecting that the whites are still living in the old age times, which they left long ago. They prove themselves superior by saying:

Negro is biologically superior to the other two types. Indeed, while the Negro belongs to the genus known as ‘Mankind’, The Mongolo and the Caucosoi...to the evolved species classified as Neo-Primate... Cranio-structural defects also produce... a nonsensical language or languages; so unintelligible, in fact, that it has not yet been verified by linguistic experts whether Europa possesses one language, classified as Mumble-Jumble, several languages, or merely one language with several dialects. (119-120)

The reversal situation in novel dismantles the colonial ideology that whites belong to the superior genus. In *Blonde Roots* the Negro utilizes pseudoscientific justification to assert the biological superiority of the Negro over the Mongolo and Caucosoi. This type of categorization, prevalent during periods of scientific racism, reflects a historical context where biased interpretations of anthropological and biological data were manipulated to legitimize racial hierarchies and discriminatory practices. The Negro classifying themselves under the genus Mankind, while labeling the Mongolo and Caucosoi as part of the Neo-Primate species. This hierarchical distinction not only perpetuates discriminatory attitudes but also highlights the tactic which is often employed to justify oppression. Fanon stated “The feeling of inferiority of the colonized is the correlative to the European’s feeling of superiority” (*Black Skin, White Mask* 69). The superiority of Negro language makes European sensical language as non-sensical language. The Negro considered that European are so unintelligible that linguistic experts have not verified them. All these justification makes colonized language as superior. By replacing the inferior and superior languages the novel shows that the racial inferiorities are constructions of colonialism.

Blonde Roots highlights the principles of Black consciousness, reshaping the colonial discourse that traditionally positioned Black identity as subordinate. By inverting historical roles and offering a satirical reimagining of slavery and racial hierarchies, it reconstructed the nature of Eurocentric narratives. The subversion also dismantles the imposed otherness of

Black identity and replaces it with a reclaimed and empowered self-image. Thus, along with criticising historical injustices, *Blonde Roots* also discusses the dynamic spirit of Black consciousness, advocating for the redefinition and celebration of Black selfhood beyond colonial narratives.

In *Mr Loverman*, Black consciousness emerges as a transformative, healing force. Barry's journey, from secrecy and shame to self-acceptance, embodies a process of unlearning internalised oppression and reclaiming dignity in the face of racism, homophobia, and colonial legacies. His choice to leave Carmel and openly live with Morris symbolises a radical rejection of the norms that once silenced him. Barry's awakening not only liberates him but also inspires his daughter to challenge discriminatory beauty ideals, proving that one individual's consciousness can catalyse generational change. In embracing his authentic self as a Black gay man, Barry becomes a living testament to the liberatory power of self-knowledge, pride, and resistance.

The main Character, Barrington Jedidiah Walker, is a 74-year-old Antiguan man. Barry outwardly appears to be a devoted husband and father, but he has kept a profound secret affair with a gay man. The novel follows Barry's internal struggle to reconcile his true self with societal and cultural expectations, particularly within the black community. His marriage to Carmel is a tactic to conceal his genuine feelings and desires. Throughout the story, Barry reflects on his lifelong relationship with Morris, a man he deeply loves but can only be with in secret. The complexities of Barry's identity and the challenges of reconciling one's sexuality with societal norms have been explicitly shown in the novel. This concealment reflects what W.E.B. Du Bois calls "double consciousness", the internal conflict of seeing oneself through the eyes of a society that devalues both Blackness and queerness. For Barry, this "two-ness" becomes a survival tactic; he performs heteronormativity to avoid further marginalisation (*The Souls of Black Folk* 3), thinking, as he confesses, "Truth is, both of us were desperate to be anything other than what we was" (32). This line reveals not only the repression of Barry's true self but also the profound psychic violence which is a product of colonial norms, forcing colonised subjects to mask their identities to gain acceptance. Barry's marriage to Carmel becomes an imposed performance, a way to pass as respectable within a conservative Caribbean community and a racially prejudiced British society. Yet this strategy caused constant anxiety, compelling him to live a double life, caught between cultural expectations and his suppressed desires. Both somehow want to open up about their relationship in front of the world. The turning point comes when Barry's daughter accepts

him the way he is. Barry feels comfortable with his identity and has finally decided to accept his true identity. This acceptance liberates him psychologically, and in his seventies, he realised that he had wasted much of his life conforming to others' expectations. Berry embraces self-awareness, pride, and liberation, choosing to stop hiding his true self. He decides to leave his wife, Carmel and live openly with Morris, rejecting the colonial, religious, and cultural norms that have long suppressed his identity. This decision removes the imposed mask, symbolizes a reclamation of self-worth and dignity, not only in racial terms but also in terms of sexual identity. Berry's final realisation that he deserves happiness, love, and authenticity as a Black gay man powerfully represents the liberatory spirit of Black consciousness.

In European societies, Eurocentric beauty standards play a crucial role in shaping racial discrimination by privileging white physical features such as light skin, straight hair, and slender body types while devaluing the bodily characteristics associated with Blackness and other non-European identities. These standards diminished self-worth, particularly for young Black women who are pressured to attain ideals of beauty. The influence of these norms is evident in Berry and Maxine's experience. Despite Barry's attempts to liberate himself from the psychological burdens imposed by racism and heteronormativity, the wider society continues to impose oppressive beauty ideals on his daughter. Maxine's struggle reflects how racialised beauty standards operate within society. Maxine becomes a victim of body shaming due to her Caribbean body structure and the modelling industry's narrow aesthetic expectations. Barry observes the damaging effects of these pressures when he reflects:

Maxine's been starving herself since she was fifteen, when someone told her she could become a model, which she did... By the time she'd finished school she'd stopped looking like a giraffe-freak and had grown curves like a normal woman, whereupon the agency dropped her. I swear I've not seen that girl eat a proper meal since" (90).

This passage reveals the cruelty of an industry that simultaneously demands bodily transformation while refusing to accept the natural forms associated with Black femininity. The use of the term "giraffe-freak" highlights how Maxine's body becomes the subject of ridicule and surveillance from a young age, demonstrating how societal beauty norms discipline and regulate racialised bodies. Her self-starvation is therefore not simply an

individual decision but a response to systemic forces that equate whiteness with desirability and success.

The modelling industry's insistence that Maxine reshape her body illustrates the violence embedded within Eurocentric aesthetics. In attempting to meet these standards, she effectively tries to erase the physical traits that connect her to her Caribbean heritage. However, the irony of her experience lies in the fact that even after altering her body to align with industry expectations, she is still rejected once her body develops natural curves. Her dismissal demonstrates how the Black female body remains permanently positioned outside the boundaries of acceptable beauty, regardless of the effort invested in assimilation. As bell hooks observes in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, "Masses of black women... suffer from racism and are forever terrorised by a standard of beauty they feel they can never truly embody" (159). Hooks' observation captures the psychological impact of racialized beauty ideals that position Black women within an impossible dilemma: they are expected to conform to standards that simultaneously exclude them. Maxine's struggle also reflects the broader dynamics of internalized racial inferiority, where marginalised individuals attempt to transform themselves to gain validation within a white-dominated cultural system. Her self-denial, manifested in starvation and relentless self-discipline, reveals a desire to escape the stigma attached to Black embodiment. Yet her rejection by the modelling agency exposes the structural impossibility of such assimilation. The system itself is designed to preserve the dominance of Eurocentric ideals, ensuring that Black bodies remain marginal even when they conform.

Against this backdrop of exclusion, Barry emerges as a figure of resistance who encourages his family to reject the psychological shackles of racial inferiority. After attaining a degree of personal liberation, Barry consistently urges his children to embrace their identity rather than seek validation from oppressive systems. His guidance becomes particularly important for Maxine, whom he encourages to challenge discriminatory norms rather than internalize them. Eventually, Maxine acknowledges the empowering influence of her father's advice when she reflects: "You told me never to get hung up on racial discrimination but to turn a negative into a positive; otherwise I'd develop a victim mentality. You encourage me to break through the 'tiled roof', as you put it" (221). Barry's metaphor of the "tiled roof" signifies the invisible barriers imposed by racial and social expectations. By urging Maxine to break through these limitations, he promotes a philosophy of resilience that resists both victimhood and assimilation. Barry's perspective ultimately represents a form of

psychological empowerment that aligns with the broader ethos of Black consciousness. Rather than allowing societal standards to dictate one's self-worth, he encourages Maxine to redefine success on her own terms. His advice to transform negative experiences into opportunities for growth highlights the importance of agency in confronting systemic oppression. In this sense, Maxine's journey becomes more than a personal struggle with body image; it reflects the broader challenges faced by Black women navigating Eurocentric beauty regimes within the postcolonial metropolis. Through Barry's encouragement and Maxine's eventual realization, the narrative underscores the possibility of reclaiming identity and resisting the oppressive standards that seek to marginalize Black bodies.

In *Mr Loverman*, Black consciousness emerges as a transformative force that enables Berry to achieve self-acceptance after decades of internalized oppression. His journey reflects Black consciousness as a process of unlearning societal shame, reclaiming dignity, and embracing one's authentic self against the legacies of colonialism, racism, and homophobia. Berry's courageous acceptance of his identity not only liberates him personally but also has ripple effects on those around him, particularly his daughter, Maxine. Witnessing her father's bravery and support, Maxine rejects Eurocentric beauty standards and moves toward a more open-minded and liberated version of herself. Thus, Berry's awakening becomes a catalyst for generational change.

Girl, Woman, Other is a novel that explores fundamental ideas of Black consciousness by highlighting the awareness of black culture, identity, rights and empowerment through the perspective of different characters. It examines how the awareness of blacks about their cultural values, rights, causes and consequences of black oppression gives them the power to fight against discrimination and stereotypes. Nazinga, Amma, Yazz and other prominent characters challenge the limitations imposed by societal norms and become successful black figures.

Amma is well-educated and has a strong personality. She believes that Black people should liberate themselves from the chains that historically bound them to inevitable slavery. She resists oppression and works to break the cycle of white dominance and dictatorship. During the early phase of her career in the Hollywood industry, she confronted prejudice, stereotypical comments, and repeated rejections. Despite these struggles and systemic stereotypes, she remains resilient and determined to fight against discrimination. Throughout

her early career, she consistently took a stand against acts that portrayed Black people in offensive or degrading ways:

When she and her running mate, Dominique developed a reputation for hackling shows that offended their political sensibilities... She remembers pouring a pint of beer over the head of a director whose play featured semi-naked black woman running around on stage behaving like idiots. (2)

Amma and Dominique articulate a powerful resistance to the exploitation of Black women's bodies for entertainment. Their persistent interventions within theatrical spaces signify a conscious rejection of racial prejudice and colonial stereotypes. Amma's opposition to these portrayals reflects an understanding that dehumanisation and objectification are central mechanisms of colonial discourse, serving to justify and sustain systemic racism. Her acts of defiance align with the principles of resistance articulated by Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*, where he observes that "the liberation of Africa and the growth of consciousness among mankind have made it possible for the Latin American peoples to break with the old merry-go-round of dictatorships" (96). Amma's confrontation with a director who depicted Black women in a degrading manner, and her immediate rejection of the role by pouring a pint of beer over his head, exemplify her commitment to disrupting spaces where colonial narratives persist. Her refusal to accept limited and stereotypical roles, even at the expense of her career progression, further proves her resistance to the hegemonic structures of the entertainment industry. Moreover, Amma's establishment of the first Black theatre company in a predominantly white cultural landscape represents an act of institutional resistance, aimed at creating spaces for Afrocentric narratives to flourish. Through her activism and artistic leadership, Amma empowers her colleagues and inspires the upcoming generation of her daughter, Yazz, to continue the struggle for equality, dignity, and self-determination.

Yazz and her friends belong to the new generation that inherits the revolutionary spirit of her parents, Amma and Roland, who are advocates for progressive beliefs. They are all well aware of the fact that a racist society never gives them their fundamental rights, but they have the awareness that education gives them the opportunities to rise and access their rights. "Waris, Courtney, hard workers like her because they're all determined to get a good degree because without it they're stuffed" (41). Yazz and her friend work hard to fight against injustice. They faced challenges in the white-dominated university, but instead of complaining about racism, they all wanted to fight against the oppressive system. Their

determination to assert their right and succeed within such an institution reflects the resilience and revolutionary spirit of the new generation. Yazz Want to become a journalist, and Waris wants to become a member of parliament:

Yazz is reading English Literature and plan to be a journalist with her own controversial column...because she has a lot to say and it's about time the whole world heard her...Waris is reading Politics and want to become a Member of Parliament, to *re-pre-sent*, and will go down the community activism route. (42)

Yazz wants to pursue her career in English Literature to become a journalist. She shows her desire to express her thoughts and opinions. Her intention to have a controversial column suggests a commitment to challenging dominant narratives and amplifying Afrocentric perspectives of blacks. Through her words, she wants to inspire thousands of people. On the other hand, Waris's choice to study politics and aspire to become a Member of Parliament highlights the importance of representation within the political system. Yazz and Waris want to advance their career to advocate for marginalised communities. Furthermore, Waris's plan to engage in community activism stresses the dedication to social change and addressing the needs of their community. These career aspirations reflect the diversity of approaches to address social issues and fight against racism.

Girl, Woman, Others provides a glimpse into the character Waris and her relationship with her appearance and identity. Waris is a Muslim daughter of Somali immigrants. Waris is confident in her beliefs but insecure about her complexion. The insecurity of Waris about her complex developed due to a racist society and Eurocentric beauty standards. Besides being black, she faced marginalisation because of her Muslim identity. Yazz admires Waris and boosts her confidence, "Waris doesn't ever leave without applying a smooth paste of foundation on to her already perfect complexion... Waris says she's ugly without her face on" (57). Waris applies foundation on her face daily. Her insecurity about her complexion reflects the effect of Eurocentric beauty standards on black people. The historical stigmatization and marginalization of black individuals contribute to the development of an inferiority complex among blacks. Yazz, on the other hand, rejects the notion of a beauty standard and attempts to comfort Waris by praising Somali women's attractiveness. Yazz's remarks highlight the need to confront and demolish the Eurocentric beauty standards that the colonial discourse imposed on black communities. Gradually, Waris becomes aware of her culture and identity from her friend and mother. This awareness helped Waris to gain empowerment and liberate

herself from her servitude. Her mother, Xaanan, reminds her, “we could either decide to be crushed by the weight of history and modern-day atrocities, or we could go into warrior pose” (59). Xaanan is well aware of the fact that slavery and colonial discourse oppressed black individuals. She empowers her daughter by saying that if she does not fight for the injustice, then she has to bear the ongoing discrimination based on race and status. Her word of wisdom helped Waris to know her role in society and fight against injustice with confidence:

My suffering is mainly in my head...I was born here and I'm going to succeed in this country, I can't afford not to work my butt off, I know it's going to be tough when I go on job market but you know what, Yazz? I'm not a victim, my mother didn't raise me to be a victim. (61)

Xaanan makes her child aware of how the colonial master makes them look inferior compared to them. She boosts her confidence and determination to be successful and resists injustice. She knew that living in the white people's society was never easy for blacks, but she did not want to sit like a victim. Biko explains, “Liberation therefore, is of paramount importance in the concept of Black Consciousness, for we cannot be conscious of ourselves and yet remain in bondage” (*I Write What I Like* 49). Waris understood that she was not inferior or less capable. Her mother taught her that she is a fighter. This awareness helped her to liberate herself from the psychological bondage and started working towards the liberation of the people. She is determined to break through the narrative of victimhood and inferiority complexes.

Nzinga is a young black woman who knows the colonial hierarchical system and the inferiority complex embedded within the souls of blacks. Nzinga wants to awaken the consciousness of black people about the reality of racial hierarchy. The discussion of Nzinga with black girls enlightens their consciousness about the root cause of racial discrimination. She revealed that in her early life, she revealed that white beauty standards influenced her. Her relationship preference for blonde girlfriends indicates a lack of self-acceptance, “History of blonde girlfriend might be a sign of self-loathing; you have to ask yourself if you've been brainwashed by the white beauty ideal” (79). This line reflects the fact that white beauty standards brainwashed the blacks. She wants her fellow mate to show that being black is not the root problem, but that accepting black people as inferior creates a hostile environment for them. Nzinga's main motive is to liberate blacks from the demeaning preconceived notion of

blacks. She makes it clear that to fight against racism and oppression, black people have to clear the internalized negative connotation of black colour:

...have you noticed that the word black, for example, always has negative connotations?... Nzinga then launched into the racial implication of stepping on a black doormat rather than over it, or not wearing black socks, and don't ever use black garbage bag, she instructed, as for blackmail, blackball, black mood, black magic, black sheep, black- hearted. (83)

Nzinga's observations bring to light how language can reinforce stereotypes and biases. She highlights how language, especially when it comes to racial and colour symbolism, can perpetuate prejudices and preconceptions. The passage explores how the term black is frequently used in linguistic and cultural expressions to denote negative attributes like evil, stupidity, or inferiority. Whiteness, on the other hand, often connects to virtue or purity. Biko says, "They sort of believe I think that their natural state, which is a black state, is not synonymous with beauty and beauty can only be approximated by them if the skin is made as light as possible" (104). It explores racial prejudices, giving instances such as blackball, blackmail, and so on. These associations show how language emphasises existing biases and perceptions, contributing to the marginalization of black individuals. Black consciousness encourages the recognition of these stereotypes and biases, their historical roots, and the active dismantling of such language that perpetuates racial prejudices. This empowerment through awareness is a central aspect of the Black Consciousness movement.

Liberating themselves from servitude bondage is one of the motives of Black consciousness. Besides spreading awareness about the negative stereotype of black colour, Nzinga inspired Dominique and all other black girls to physically and psychologically liberate themselves from the oppressive white discourses. Dominique perceives how Europeans exploit them by associating negative stereotypes with the black colour:

Nzinga is so wise and knowledgeable about how to be a liberated black woman in an oppressive white world that she's opening my eyes to, well, everything, it's like she's Alice and Audre and Angela and Aretha rolled into one, seriously, Ams. (80)

Nzinga has great wisdom and knowledge to navigate the complexities of being a Black woman in a world marked by systemic oppression. Her wisdom becomes a source of empowerment, not only for Dominique but for many Black women who are seeking

liberation. Her knowledge and guidance help individuals resist and challenge the oppressive forces they face. Furthermore, Dominique compares Nzinga to Alice, Audre, Angela, and Aretha because she sees her as a powerful and inspiring figure who embodies the qualities of these influential women. Alice, Audre, Angela, and Aretha are four prominent Black women who have inspired and empowered blacks through literature and music. They highlight the importance of Black women's voices and experiences. Nzinga not only inspires through her words but also expresses it through her actions by giving respect to her culture. She follows every culture and tradition of Africa. "Nzinga sat cross-legged in the circle of women on the floor where the meal was to take place" (81). The lines hold cultural and symbolic connotations. Nzinga's choice to sit cross-legged in a circle symbolises unity, togetherness, and a shared sense of belonging within many African and African diaspora communities. It also reflects that she is giving more preference to their own culture. According to Western cultures, they prefer dining at tables, but Nzinga asserts the value of traditional practices that most Africans have forgotten due to Eurocentric customs. This act becomes an expression of cultural resistance and a reclamation of identity.

Black pride is a motive of Black consciousness as it serves as a prominent response to historical and contemporary racial prejudices. It acts as a shield against negative stereotypes, countering the damaging narratives that have sought to undermine the self-worth and self-esteem of Black individuals. This form of pride is a declaration that being black is not a source of shame, but accepting their true identity gives strength and resilience. Shirley in *Girl, Woman, Other* shows the importance of Black pride. "She's wearing a light grey pencil skirt and jacket, powder-blue blouse, grey neck-tie, black patent leather court shoes and her pride" (217). Shirley is a schoolteacher. She is very confident and comes with pride in the school. Shirley tries very hard to empower the students and infuse confidence within the black community. Whenever she comes into the school, her dress sense signifies her confidence and reflects a commitment to excelling in her chosen field or profession. The reason behind her pride and confidence is her mother. "Shirley tries not to succumb to the paranoia that comes from thinking every negative reaction is due to her skin colour... don't assume people don't like you because of your race" (224-225). Winsome taught her that skin colour is never the cause of discrimination or hate. Winsome words encourage her to achieve her aim and protect her against the negative stereotypes that demean her self-esteem. Her mother's words made Shirley a strong individual and a black activist. She helped students to educate and empower people in the school. Through her knowledge, she wants to uplift the

status of black people in society so that they can fight against oppression, discrimination and injustice. In the school, there were posters of the heroes and great personalities. Shirley gets inspired by a particular picture, which motivates her to uplift black people:

While between the lofty windows looking out on to the playing fields, Neil Armstrong walks on the moon with the caption: one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind like her every step she takes will raise these children up, she will leave no child behind. (220)

Shirley is a dedicated educator from the Black community. Her determination to ensure the upliftment of every child by educating them exemplifies the transformative power of education and its potential for social change. Shirley knew she could encourage and uplift her community by educating them, so she chose her career as a teacher. Du Bois mentioned, “The South was not wholly wrong; for education among all kinds of men always has had, and always will have, an element of danger and revolution” (*The Souls of Black Folk* 29). Shirley's efforts to educate and empower her students signify significant steps toward positive change within her community. Her commitment to raising the children represents her commitment to nurturing the next generation and challenging systemic inequalities by educating black students. “Shirley, the reason why she went into teaching in the first place, the power of education to transform lives” (247). Shirley helped Carole by giving extra tuition. Carole became the victim of sexual abuse in her childhood. She almost gave up on her life. Her mother, Bummi, puts her entire effort into encouraging her daughter. Carole did not reveal her assault to anybody. Bummi's continued effort pumped up Carole, and she decided to work hard to get admission to a reputed university. Shirley, at that time, was her school teacher. When she approached her for her help, she happily agreed to it. Shirley gave her best and succeeded in her mission. She feels pleased when Carole is successful and grasps a higher post in the white dominating society. After a long time, when Shirley meets her at a party, she sees her reflection of black pride in Carole. “Carole is no longer a grubby child but elegant, beautiful, redefined, even from a distance, it must have worked out for her then” (420). This line depicts the transition of Carole due to education. Education helped Carole to understand her value and self-worth. When her school teacher, Shirley, noticed her after years, she realised her hard work paid off and became successful in infusing her pride and confidence. Earlier, Carole used to feel that blacks were inferior, but with time, she embraced her identity with pride.

Girl, Woman, Other; portrays Black consciousness through her characters' journeys toward self-liberation and pride. Amma's theatre work is a vital form of resistance against white stereotypical roles, reclaiming the stage as a space for authentic Black narratives and challenging Eurocentric cultural dominance. Similarly, Shirley embodies Black pride as a committed educator within the Black community, representing how education can serve as a vehicle for empowerment and resistance against historical and contemporary racial prejudices. Nzinga's influence on Dominique and other Black women highlights the movement's commitment to physical and psychological liberation from oppressive white discourses, emphasising the collective awakening needed to break free from internalised racism. It also reveals that Black consciousness is not merely a personal awakening but a dynamic collective movement toward self-acceptance, cultural pride, and the dismantling of oppressive narratives.

Chapter 4

Postcolonial London as a Diasporic Space in Evaristo's Select Text

The term *diaspora* refers to the dispersion of people from their homeland, whether by voluntary migration or forced displacement. Originating from the Greek word *diaspeirein*, meaning to scatter, it was historically associated with the exile of Jewish communities. Today, it encompasses a range of global movements driven by slavery, colonialism, political upheavals, or economic necessity. Among the most significant was the transatlantic slave trade, which forcibly displaced millions of Africans, embedding cultural and historical legacies that continue to shape modern societies. As defined in the *Compact Oxford Dictionary Thesaurus*, diaspora denotes “the dispersion of any people from their traditional homeland” (Spooner, Hawker & Soanes, 242). Diaspora encompasses both voluntary and involuntary movements caused by factors such as economic instability, political persecution, war, or environmental degradation.

Diasporic communities embody a dual consciousness: while adapting to host cultures, they retain emotional and cultural ties to ancestral homelands. This negotiation generates hybrid identities and cultural forms. To conceptualise these dynamics, sociologist Avtar Brah introduced the concept of diaspora space in her seminal work *Cartographies of Diaspora*. According to Brah, “Diaspora space as a conceptual category is ‘inhabited’ not only by those who have migrated and their descendants but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous” (178). This reconceptualisation is crucial, as it shifts the analytical focus from merely studying migrant communities in isolation to examining the interactions between diasporic and indigenous populations within the same socio-spatial context.

Unlike traditional views of diasporic, which emphasise movement and displacement alone, diaspora space takes into account the co-presence, tensions, and negotiations that occur when displaced and rooted populations coexist. It acknowledges that the formation of identities, power structures, and cultural expressions in postcolonial settings emerges not solely from diasporic narratives but also from the historical and ongoing relationships between migrants and the so-called native or dominant communities. Thus, diasporic space becomes a dynamic zone of cultural production, where questions of identity, belonging, nationhood, and memory are continually contested and reimagined.

In the context of postcolonial London, this framework becomes prominent. Postcolonialism broadly refers to the historical period and ideological discourse that emerges in the aftermath of colonial rule and the subsequent independence of colonized nations. London, as the former heart of the British Empire, embodies the legacies of colonialism through its demographics, urban planning, and sociopolitical dynamics. Following the decolonization of former British colonies, significant waves of migration from the Caribbean, Africa, South Asia, and other parts of the world reshaped the city's cultural and social landscape. These postcolonial migrations were not merely demographic shifts but acts that fundamentally challenged and transformed the identity of the imperial metropolis. Today, postcolonial London is characterized by its multicultural neighborhoods, hybrid identities, and ongoing struggles over race, class, and citizenship. It serves as a space where diasporic memory intersects with local history, and where communities negotiate their place within a city marked by both opportunity and inequality. In this space, cultural practices, political activism, and artistic expressions become tools for resistance, reclamation, and the construction of new identities. The diasporic subjects in London engage with both their ancestral past and their contemporary realities, navigating between inherited trauma and aspirational belonging. Therefore, postcolonial London, when understood through the lens of diaspora space, becomes more than just a city of immigrants. It becomes a living archive of colonial legacies, diasporic culture and evolving identities. It is a contested and generative site where narratives of exile, displacement, memory, and home converge, continually reshaping the social and cultural fabric of the metropolis.

London is the capital metropolis of the British Empire and has been understood as the true seat of Englishness. In the novel *The Emperor's Babe*, Evaristo revisits third-century London to highlight the multiracial history and reject the notion of a true nation of Englishness. She shows London as a space of overlapping political ideologies, cultural rituals, ethnic complexities and social practices. Through this novel, it is depicted that in third century London Romans were the main rulers and the presence of different tribes and black has been the main highlight of the novel. Evaristo says:

I first encountered the untold African history of Britain in *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (1984) by Peter Fryer... Having grown up with the myth that Britain had been a white country until the twentieth century, it was pretty explosive read. (*Manifesto on Never Giving up* 131)

When Evaristo read Peter Fryer's *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*, she gets inspired and write her second novel *The Emperor's babe*. Her aim behind writing this novel is to erase the myth London is the country of Englishness until Twentieth century. Evaristo acknowledge the diverse and inclusive nature of British history in the novel. It rejects the conventional historical narratives and amplify the experiences of marginalized communities. Through her protagonist Zuleika, a black immigrant in Roman London, Evaristo offers a revision of the European classical past. McLeod mentioned, "The Emperor's Babe, wittily fictionalizes third-century Londinium to call attention to London's multiracial history, which stretches back over nearly two millennia" (*Postcolonial London Rewriting the metropolis* 177). The novel wonderfully depicts third-century London, using inventive narrative techniques to recreate the historical scene with humour and creativity. It serves a greater purpose than just entertainment, as it defies popular notions of London's history by depicting a multicultural metropolis at this ancient age. The representation of varied personalities and their relationships emphasises London's cosmopolitan background of nearly two millennia.

The presence of the Roman Empire, along with blacks and other tribes, depicts a new interpretation of English identity. The white group includes the Romans and the people who lived in Roman Britannia's is itself marked by internal disintegration. The novel dismantles the illusion of the initial ethnic homogeneity of the English people, a myth fueled by imperial propaganda prevailing in the nineteenth century. Paul Gilroy mentioned:

The term 'English', which is so often mistakenly substituted for [British], acts as a partial and manifestly inadequate cultural counterpart. The disjuncture between the two terms is a continual reminder not just of English dominance over Scots, Welsh and Irish people, but also that a British state can exist comfortably without the benefit of a unified British culture. (*Small Acts* 75)

With enough creativity and solidarity, all types of Britons may recognise themselves in this book, sparking their revolutionary confrontation of who they are and how they got here. In the light of the revolutionary confrontation, the novel is deliberately narrated by mixing Latin, contemporary standard English and Cockney slang. This mixture of language creatively blurs the boundaries between Roman Londinium and today's London:

Then I was sent off to a snooty Roman bitch called Clarissa for decorum classes, learnt how to talk, eat and fart, how to get my amo amas amat right, and ditch

my second-generation plebby creole. Zuleika accepta est. Zuleika delicata est
Zuleika bloody goody-two shoes est. (4-5)

The deliberate mixing of these linguistic systems emphasizes Zuleika's assimilation to the norm imposed on her just before her marriage to Felix and aimed to erase the ethnic trait. It also depicts the representation of the presence of different linguistic systems in Roman Britannia and the supremacy of the Romans at that time. When Zuleikha reached Felix's house, she was asked to abandon her "second-generation plebby creole" hints, on social positioning and the negotiation of identities of immigrants, their children or grandchildren in London. Paul Gilroy argues that the image "conveys what is being asked of the black readers as the price of admission to the colour-blind form of citizenship promised by the text. Blacks are being invited to forsake all that marks them out as culturally distinct before real Britishness can be guaranteed" (*There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* 65). Zuleika abandoned her cultural identity and heritage that make her distinct from the dominant culture to achieve true belonging and acceptance as a real British citizen. It's interesting to note that Zuleika herself serves as a tool for imperialist policies, as evidenced by the way she portrays and treats her white Caledonian slaves. "When approached, they clawed the air with filthy talons, mucus ran in clotted rivers from pinched little noses, their eyes were splattered with mosquitoes ... Fascinating, so vile, yet something just for me, id and ego. Pets" (55). Zuleika's attitude towards her white Caledonian slaves reflects imperialist practices. After her marriage, Zuleika internalises the underlying power structure of the ruling group. They are portrayed as inferior to Zuleika, who occupies a higher position in the social hierarchy due to her marriage to a wealthy Roman. She thinks that by exercising her power she will culturally assimilate with the Romans. Zuleika pretend to be the new member of the Romans "when Flix and Tranio were out... I could pretend – my very own kitchen" (57). This line shows Zuleika's desperation to be a part a Roman society. She gives up her cultural practice to be considered a true Roman. When she looks at herself, she feels fascinated by seeing the changes. These changes and expectations place a burden on Zuleika as she disregards the richness and diversity of their cultural background to conform to a narrow and exclusionary Roman identity. Whenever she met with her childhood friend Alba, she realised this burden a little harder. Zuleika feels dejected when she compares herself to Alba, who can have lovers and leave her spouse without being imprisoned, unlike her.

The Emperor's Babe belongs to a subgenre of contemporary Anglophone historical novels that are set in the past yet analyse and explore present power relations. Through the

story of Zuleika, the novel highlights the modern British culture, particularly the still ongoing difficulties of black women within the British nation-state and national images. Thus, *The Emperor's Babe* channels into literature political issues central to contemporary Black British feminism, such as black women's invisibility and their complex social positioning. Through Zuleika, a London-born young woman of Sudanese descent, highlights the multiple layers of discrimination, including gender and racial identity against black women and their impact on their lived experiences. Indeed, the narrative fabric is profoundly woven with the revelation of kinds of gender discrimination that Zuleika faces not just in her relationship with her husband, but also inside her own patriarchal family. Commenting on black women's sexualization, Paul Gilroy mentioned that the prejudiced society believes, "The average black woman would submit because she needed the money badly." (181). The story depicts Zuleika's body through the lens of a white guy (Felix), highlighting a sexist societal norm. Felix's decision to marry eleven-year-old Zuleika reflects his internalisation of sexual objectification and racialization:

She is so...exquisita, so...pulcherrima, such a delicious surprise in this, shall we say, less than dazzling little colonia. She reminds me of the girls back in Ægyptus, ... I liked the mysterious, dark ones from the south, who would oil my limbs, waft soundlessly around me leaving the lingering scent of musky sandalwood from Zanzibar in their wake. ... I have been looking for a nice, simplex, quiet, fidelis girl, a girl who will not betray me with affairs, who will not wear me out with horrid fights, unlike my pater's subsequent three wives. (15-16)

Zuleika is subjected to an orientalist view that sees her physical attractiveness and natural obedience as intrinsic to her heritage. Felix's reference to Egyptus suggests that he has encountered similar women in his past experiences. He recalls the mysterious and dark-skinned women from the south who attended to him, oiled his limbs, and left behind the scent of musky sandalwood from Zanzibar. These descriptions evoke a sense of exoticism and sensuality associated with Zuleika's origins as a Sudanese immigrant. The quotation also illustrates the patriarchal thoughts about how a wife should act. Being a black woman, Zuleika's freedom would be confined and imposed limitations by Felix. The struggle of Zuleika links to the current issue of black women navigating their socio-political identities in modern Britain by exploring their complex relationship with the Roman Empire.

Zuleika not only get marginalized based on race and ethnicity but also faces gender-biased discrimination due to the patriarchal power structure. Zuleika is a victim of cross-generational and cross-gender tensions, she has also experienced empowerment. Zuleika creates a diaspora space within her society as well as on a socio-political level. In an attempt to adapt in a multicultural society with her values and traditions, Zuleika re-positioned herself to the metropolitan culture and rules. This is witnessed through her relationship with the Emperor and her progressive improvement of her freedom by crossing the restrictive boundaries of her husband's house.

The novels bring voice to the marginal voices that have been muted because they are racially and sexually defined as inferior according to the logic of a white androcentric discourse. The African origin of Zuleika and Severus emphasises understanding the pain of a marginalised group. Severs defines England as a “less than dazzling little colonia” (Evaristo 14) showing political instability at the imperial centre. The social experience of Zuleika as a free black woman, rather than a slave, in the context of Roman London, along with her progressive climb up the social ladder, eventually led her to become the Emperor's mistress and ultimately led her to become a poet and writer to help her create her own identity.

Soul Tourists addresses questions of origins and belonging in both Britain and Europe. The protagonist, Stanley Williams, a man of Caribbean origin, and Jessie O'Donnell, a mixed-race woman, start a journey across Europe. Stanley's voyage around Europe is divided into two parts: driving from Europe to Kuwait and travelling back in time with black or mixed-race ghosts. *Soul Tourists* is a seminal work in black British literature, depicting Stanley and Jessie's struggles with their identities, relationships, and unresolved family issues. John McLeod claims:

reinventing the UK specifically to solve the particular subjective conundrums of Black British belonging adheres much more to the important literary endeavours of the eighties and nineties. In contemporary black writing of Britain there is emerging a new envisioning of the nation prompted, but not preoccupied, by racial and cultural specifics, in which [...] the notion of mixed race plays a significant guiding role. (*Postcolonial London* 48)

Soul Tourist demonstrates how Black British culture evolves from the past to the present. The novel emphasises reinventing the UK to address the changes that happen in Postcolonial London. It also highlights the subjective challenges faced by Black British individuals in

terms of belonging and identity. The presence of ghosts recalls the forgotten history of black and mixed people. It highlights Europe's multicultural and multiracial past impacts upon the entire British, as it covers both natives and diasporic ones. The ghost of these black and mixed-race characters used to acknowledge the achievement of forgotten heroes of European history. It also suggests that the figures like Queen Charlotte, Hannibal of Carthage and Pushkin have been erased from contemporary history.

The diasporic people in *Soul Tourists* are looking for a sense of belonging. All the characters are trying to find a sense of belongingness for themselves in a harsh and hostile English society. The first-generation immigrants like Stanley's parents lament the loss of the home they were forced to leave behind. Clasford was a Jamaican migrant who became a victim of racial discrimination. In Jamaica, he was a qualified chemist with a lot of respect. When he reached London, he noticed the xenophobic behaviour of whites towards him. He was always treated as a foreigner and never given a respectable job. This behaviour boosts Clasford's feelings of alienation, disillusionment, and the profound impact of his migration on his sense of identity and belonging:

When mi fus come a this blasted country, and finally seeps down to accentuate his thirst and accelerate the decay of brown skin that has been, for thirty- two years his formal application to British society, determining his acceptance or rejection, something he was always going on about. We doan belong ina this country... we doan belong, Stanley. The bitterness at his transformation from fully qualified chemist in his home country to ill- paid postman in his adopted one quite overcome. (19)

Clasford initially had hopes and expectations when he first arrived in Britain. However, his experience in Britain has been disappointing because racial discrimination has diminished his sense of self and eroded his identity. The rejection of his job applications creates a barrier to gaining acceptance and recognition in his new home. His qualifications and skills from his home country have not been fully recognised or valued in his adopted country, leading to frustration and a sense of being undervalued. The downgrade shift in his profession from a fully qualified chemist in his home country to an ill-paid postman in Britain represents the racial segregation in the metropolis. They always wish to go back to their home because they are living in a new society which never feels like home. Till his last breath, he tries to leave this place and goes to a place called home:

There's a tower block of old boxes: official documents from the years of marriage, houses rented, bought; letters dating back to the 1940s; the passport dated 1956 that he was always going to get renewed for that migration back home that was always 'next year' away. (6)

The novel portrays the first-generation diaspora as culturally displaced. Clasford struggles to adapt to his new environment but remains tied to the memories and traditions of his ancestral home. This cultural alienation, compounded by prejudice, led to a persistent sense of unbelonging. His life in England becomes marked by loss and nostalgia, as he continuously mourns what he left behind. Despite lifelong plans to return, socio-economic and political barriers keep postponing the move, reflecting the painful reality of many immigrants who find themselves homeless in foreign lands.

The protagonists Stanley and Jessie belong to the second generation of black British people; they are neither exactly outsiders in the same manner as their parents nor directly impacted by the experience of migration. They are still constantly reminded that they do not fully belong due to their origin, which is neither their place nor are they citizens of that particular origin. The black people often encounter scrutiny and suspicion from a customs officer upon presenting their black United Kingdom passport. "That customs officer fingered my black United Kingdom passport at length, glancing up to compare information to person, as if he couldn't quite believe... something" (196). These lines expose how postcolonial London, the natives treat identity and border as fixed and rigid, and they categorise others based on superficial markers such as race, ethnicity, and nationality. When the customs office noticed Jessie's United Kingdom passport, he wasn't able to believe his eyes. According to him, only white people can have a United Kingdom passport. Paul Gilroy mentioned,

Relationships between "race," culture, nationality, and ethnicity which have a bearing on the histories and political cultures of Britain's black citizens. I have argued elsewhere that the cultures of this group have been produced in a syncretic pattern in which the styles and forms of the Caribbean, the United States, and Africa have been reworked and reinscribed. (3)

The securitising of Jessie's passport by the customs officer highlights the complexities of her identity and how she is perceived by others. Despite holding a passport that symbolises her British nationality, Jessie's racial identity complicates her sense of belonging and acceptance

within her own country. McLeod stated that “the establishment of London-born transnational communities is often regarded to be ‘strangers’ to London in equal measure to their migrant parents or grandparents” (7). The customs officer's disbelief reflects deep-seated prejudices and assumptions about identity and belonging. Jessie's mixed origin also signifies the fluidity of identity as she moves between different cultural contexts and claims multiple aspects of her heritage. Cakmak says, “First-generation migrants desire to visit their home country is rooted in childhood or youth memories whereas the second and third generations have stories of their parents in their collective memory, yet their first-hand experiences contradict those stories. Therefore, when they age, they lose interest with their parents' hometown villages” (*Take Me Back to My Homeland Dead or Alive!: The Myth of Return Among London's Turkish-Speaking Community* 3). Stanley is an unhappy accountant who is unhappy because of his father's tragic death. According to Stanley, he has “no anchor” (9) after his father. His belongingness in Britain is greatly influenced by the tragedy of his father in England, as already discussed in Chapter III. At the funeral of Clasford, Stanley experiences a state of emotional loss and starts hallucinating about him:

Then we enter the dark zone, the cold zone, the abysmal abyssal plane, I try to catch him, but he is lost to me now, as he disappears over the top of the largest mountain range in the world, beneath the continental shelf in the forbidding basin, his wasted legs paddling as his brown corduroy slacks fall down, his feet limp and crusty at the heels. I am no anchor; he supposed to be mine, he is going.
(9)

Stanley's journey has not only focused on the geographical aspect but focused more on the souls of the characters to understand the concept of home. Stanley always feels a sense of homelessness, and the concept of home becomes more blurred in the hostile environment of Europe. Stanley, being a second-generation immigrant, often experiences conflict with his father because he assimilated more into the host country's culture. This generational divide aggravates feelings of isolation and disconnection from both their heritage and their current society:

How are you?' Of course this is the most ridiculous question of all, but I can't help myself. 'Not good, not bad.' Sometimes it's 'Not too bad' or 'Could be better' or 'Not bad, not good' or, on really bad days, 'Don't ask!' My immediate impulse is, as always, to embark on clearing everything up, to get one

gargantuan black dustbin bag and chuck the whole bloody room in it - including him. (7)

Stanley's relationship with his deceased father symbolises the tension between the first generation and their children. His father's Nigerian identity not only influenced him but also represented a part of himself that he never fully understood or embraced. His father's constant effort to connect him to the Nigerian culture creates a sense of alienation in his own home. He wants to go to Africa, but he was born and raised in London, so he culturally connects more with European countries. Both Jessie and Stanley found a connection with African culture, but that connection was not strong enough to make Africa as home. They also have a negative image of Africa, which further deters them from calling Africa as their home. When Stanley reached Gibraltar, he declared, "he knew little of Africa beyond popular image of starving peasants and corrupt governments" (153). Likewise, Jessie recalls how the influx of the Black Power movement in Britain, serve as a sense of oneness with "African culture" (197). She wonders, "Africa s a continent, not a country, so which of its cultures, thousands of tribes and languages is mine, exactly?" (198). Jessie is an orphan, so she lacks the traditional roots or familial ties that often connect a human to their home. She starts the journey to meet her only son Tarry, who suddenly fled to Australia and sent a postcard after a 12-year. So, the lack of family evokes the feeling of homelessness, and when she heard of black consciousness, she connected with the people more than the Europeans. The language and the culture of Africa serve as a sense of home.

Jessie starts her journey across Europe with a purpose, while Stanley begins his journey to get rid of loneliness for a while. As he met the Ghost of different coloured figures, he realised that home is not a geographical place rather it is a feeling. The ghosts that Stanley encounters are historical figures who also experienced dislocation and search for a place called home. Their story provides Stanley with a sense of continuity and connection to a larger narrative. Figures like the African-American singer, the Jamaican nurse, Lucy and others who appear to Stanley narrate different facts of the diasporic experience. Their stories resonate with his feelings of rootlessness and provide him with a sense of shared history and solidarity. As Avtar Brah mentioned, "On the one hand, 'home' is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of origin'. On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of a locality" (*Cartographies of Diaspora* 188-189). Avtar Brah's concept of home as both a mythic place of desire and a lived experience is emphasised in

Soul Tourists. The mythic aspect of home represents his father's Nigerian heritage, a place of origin he feels disconnected from and idealises but never truly experiences. When Stanley met with different ghosts, he realised that his life in London represents the lived experience of home, a place marked by alienation and cultural conflict. He makes a space in a locality where he is physically present but emotionally and culturally disoriented. The ghosts he encounters reconcile his sense of home, bridging the gap between his ancestral roots and his present reality. Brah's framework helps to understand Stanley's journey in *Soul Tourists* as a reflection of the broader diasporic experience, where home is not a singular, fixed place but a complex interplay of memory, identity, and lived reality.

Soul Tourists explores the complexities of cultural hybridity, identity, and belonging. The story highlights the fluid nature of home and identity by revisiting postcolonial London. The novel highlights the hostile environment for the migrants and its impact on the lives of the diasporas. It also explores the conflicts that arise from embracing one's roots while blending in with a new society. The exploration of border crossings and ghost encounters emphasises the interconnected history of human experiences.

Bernardine Evaristo has made a name for herself in modern literature by tackling issues of race, identity, and the difficulties of diasporas. The novella *Hello Mum* by Evaristo explores the life of a young Black boy named Jerome, whose connection with a gang in a London estate results in a tragic end at the age of fourteen. The novel explores the bitter facts of metropolitan life in postcolonial London. The whole story is narrated using a letter written by Jerome to his mother after his death. It is composed of eleven chapters with subtitles. His letter serves two purposes: firstly, clarifying Jerome's mood and the series of events that caused his death, and secondly, it highlights the teenage gangs on the inner estates in Postcolonial London. The story exposes the council estates' position as sites of entrapment and resistance, especially for black teenagers like Jerome. The council estate they inhabit is revealed as a pivotal location; a site for home, yet a space which confines the inhabitants and makes them feel entrapped, thus emerging as an instigator of crime. Patrick Munley mentioned, "The fifth stage of Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development is identity vs. role confusion, and it occurs during adolescence, from about 12-18 years. During this stage, adolescents search for a sense of self and personal identity" (12). Being born and raised in a London council estate, Jerome was confronted with numerous challenges that intensified the identity crisis and confusion of adolescence. So, Jerome's identity crisis is deeply intertwined with his socio-economic background, racial identity, and the environment in

which he is raised. He always tries to find a true Identity for himself. He usually idolizes people who look powerful and rich like Tony Montana. Tony Montana's rise from obscurity to power resonates with Jerome because it reflects his desire to escape the marginalisation and insignificance imposed by his socio-economic background and environment. "Al Pacino playing the great gangsta Tony Montana. He was my hero and everyone else's too. Why? Obvious! He was a nobody who became a somebody" (6). His admiration toward Tony Montana, the famous character played by Al Pacino in the movie *Scarface*, illustrated Jerome's identity crisis. The quote highlights Jerome's deep-seated desire to escape the invisibility and powerlessness he feels in his everyday life and transform himself into someone who has a definite identity.

Jerome has experienced identity conflicts throughout his life. He is a young Black adolescent living in a marginalized society and expected to follow the footsteps of his classmates, which glorifies violence, toughness, and gang culture. However, he is still a youngster in his mother's care and is expected to live up to social norms of decency and obedience. The pressure to align these two opposite identities creates a deep psychological conflict. Growing up in a marginalized area, Jerome also faces financial insecurity and limited opportunities, which significantly shape his sense of self-worth and potential. He feels so deeply frustrated and angry at the prevailing feeling of being a nobody that he searches for people who elevate his position in society. Paul Gilroy stated:

However, where racist, nationalist, or ethnically absolutist discourses orchestrate political relationships so that these identities appear to be mutually exclusive, occupying the space: between them or trying to demonstrate their continuity has been viewed as a provocative and even oppositional act of political insubordination. (*The Black Atlantic* 1)

Jerome gets very fascinated by Delmar and his brother Dexter and often compared their lives with himself "If I wore any of that gear I'd be mugged every day. But Delmar had built a reputation 'cos he had soldier skills. He was stuck up in his game. He had respect" (30). This quote emphasises that Jerome's unconscious attempt to reconcile the gap between his true self and the persona he feels he must adopt to survive. For Jerome, Delmar is an idealised man who represents how to be safe and respected in a hostile place. Jerome's identity struggle directly led him to join the local gang known as Kamikaze Kru. His quest for acceptance leads him to embrace the gang's principles, which revolve around power, respect and fear. Jerome feels that he cannot obtain his sense of identity and purpose through traditional means, but his engagement with the gang provides him with both. "Yeah, I exaggerated.

Couldn't help it. The bull-shit took over. They all gathered around and listened and I could tell from their faces they were well impressed" (33). Jerome's yearning for approval and affirmation from a gang is highlighted through his speech. He exaggerates his story to fit in in a society where brave and exaggerated tales of toughness can win respect. His desperate need to fit in and win the respect of the gang puts himself in risk because he is thrown into a hostile environment for which he is unprepared:

Dexter says it's time to bring you in. you ready? I was almost going to ask, 'Bring me in to what?' but I knew he'd get mad at me. I like you, JJ, he said. 'You're pretty safe these days!' I wanted to jump up and punch the air. Raaaah! At last someone thought I was COOLI!! And not just anyone but The Delmar! He liked me too! Instead I just, like, nodded, the way he nodded at most things. A kind of - yeah, whatever, I'm too cool for school - kinda nod. (59-60)

Throughout the novella, Jerome struggles with feelings of alienation and inferiority, particularly at his home and school. He feels misunderstood and undervalued in the society he was living in. For the first time, the recognition and appreciation he gets from Delmar, a powerful person in the gang, gives him the approval he desperately needs. He has such a strong urge to be accepted that he ignores his confusion and discomfort. He just accepts everything they offer by nodding his head to appear cool. When he knows that joining the gang is actually to become a drug dealer, he gets confused. He wants to reject the offer, but his true emotions in favour of projecting the gang's ideals ultimately lead him to make choices that contribute to his tragic death.

In many cities, particularly London, a significant segment of the population resides in council estates. The council estate is a public housing estate built by the local authorities to fulfil the needs of the growing population in postcolonial London. The building of a council estate is a complex, containing several houses and other conveniences like schools and shops. The most crucial issues of postcolonial London, such as imaginary borders, teenage gang groups, and crime are highlighted in the novella *Hello Mum*. McLeod mentioned, "Postcolonial London is my attempt to . . . read critically the ways in which those who have arrived from once-colonized countries in London and their descendants have since the 1950s" (3). Jerome, who resides in a council estate in London, reveals that the estate is emerging as an instigator of crime. This place not only serves as a place of residence but also acts as a place that imprisons and entraps its inhabitants. In the letter Jerome particularly draws attention to several incidents to highlight his imprisonment in a council estate, such as the the

unusual heat reflected by the tall buildings, his resentment towards his mother for forcing him to live in an estate, and the police who fly above their head in a helicopter all day and night:

Everyone was escaping their boiling hot flats that afternoon and everyone looked up when a police helicopter began to circle noisily in the sky. It was like a mosquito you wanted to squash but couldn't reach. At night their red beams swooped down like they was hunting animals when all I was doing was just standing around chatting nonsense with my boys. It was pure pressure, ya get me? (1-2)

The police helicopter circling above the estate illustrates how the council estate functions as a place that imprisons and entraps its inhabitants. The helicopter represents the outside forces that control the lives of those living in the estate, thereby transforming their residential place into a jail where they are constantly seen and suspected. The red lights that swoop down represent the violent scrutiny that the youths tolerate, and the constant inspection invades their personal space. This dehumanising gaze reinforces the feelings of entrapment and alienation within their community. So, Jerome's description of the boiling flats depicts that the people are fed up with the surveillance and the oppressive environment, and everyone wants to flee from that place. The dehumanization is a key factor that emphasises their sense of alienation and diminishes their sense of self-worth. The resident failed to fight against the marginalised group and committed suicide. "I looked up at the top floor balconies and wondered when the next person would chuck themselves off . . . I used to lie in my room at night expecting to see dead bodies falling outside my window like in films" (2). This proves that youths are not the only ones who conceive the estate as a site of confinement, but a large number of adults are also involved, who commit suicide to get rid of the estate. Thus, in the opening pages of the novella, Jerome revealed postcolonial London as a site plagued with pressuring authorities, as well as a site for a large number of suicides. In London, the diaspora's freedom has been seized by the authority.

The oppressive and borderline aspects of contemporary London are highlighted in the novel. The streets and postcodes of postcolonial London become dangerous and territorial boundaries, where crossing into a different area could lead to violence or conflict. In the book, *Manifesto: On Never Giving Up*, Evaristo says, "I met with groups of such boys, who told me . . . They felt imprisoned within their postcodes, and said it was easier for them to leave London than travel across" (137). The multicultural society of London is presented as a peaceful place, but in reality, it is marked by invisible borders that most Londoners cannot see. These invisible borders instruct teenagers how they can behave or act in a certain

situation, and what can be done. The imaginary borders reveal the existence of imaginary borders in contemporary society and show how different generations and social groups have different perceptions and experiences about the same physical spaces:

Representing or ‘repping your end’, that’s what we did. Your ‘end’ was your area code. You know, what you old-fashioned people called a postcode . . . Look Mum, you might have called the road in between the two estates Redcross Street but we called it the Front Line. You might have been able to cut through Brampton Estate to the shops, but I couldn’t . . . To be honest, it was safer to leave London than move across it. (12-13)

It depicts the contemporary issue of postcolonial London, where the city acts as a battle zone and the existence of the youth is constrained by invisible boundaries. The words repping your end and area code highlight the invisible borders, which are more than just geographic demarcations. McLeod explains, “Yet some of the difficulties faced by these latest Londoners are suggested by the queue which has formed outside the employment exchange, and the fact that this neighbourhood seems enclosed by an imaginary border” (2). The comparison between what his mother perceives as a simple street and what Jerome and his peers experience as a Front Line highlights that every generation confronts a different type of marginalization. This generational difference shows the broader socio-economic and racial disparities in London. Older generations are directly exposed to the harsh realities of discrimination, but when the estate was constructed, they thought that the estate was relatively a safer. In contrast, for young people growing up in these environments, the city is fragmented into dangerous zones, where even a simple walk can lead to death. For Jerome, her mother's postcode is not just an imaginary border rather, they are very real in their consequences. Crossing into another estate, even for something, is full of risk that it feels safer to leave the city altogether than to navigate these dangerous social territories. Through this story, the ethnic and socioeconomic division of postcolonial London is highlighted. The imagined borders that Jerome talks about are a physical representation of the structural injustices that produce and maintain these divisions.

Hello Mum serves as a powerful commentary on the ongoing challenges of postcolonial London. The story of Jerome, a fourteen-year-old boy living on a London council estate, explores the struggles and issues of youth in postcolonial London. It also highlights the problems of identity, belonging, and socio-economic struggle. Jerome's tragic journey also emphasises the psychological impact on citizens living in such an environment, where the search for identity and acceptance leads to devastating consequences.

Mr Loverman story revolves around the immigrant who has lived in London for over fifty years. The novel emphasises how cultural identities are constructed, negotiated, and transformed in postcolonial London. Barry is a complex character: a flamboyant hackney and secretly gay man who has been in a long-term relationship with his childhood friend, Morris, while married to his wife, Carmel, for decades. The novel explores how the attitude of people towards homosexuality is in an urban metropolitan city like London. In postcolonial London, people's perspective towards sexuality is greatly influenced by the historical background of colonialism. Colonial laws and customs that made homosexuality illegal had an impact on many Caribbean societies. Through the conversation of Caribbean women, the novel examines the complexities of gender and sexuality, particularly within the Caribbean diasporic community, where traditional notions of masculinity and heterosexuality dominate. "If Melissa is one of those lesbian characters, . . . 'it is an abomination. Does it not say in Romans that if man lies with man as he lies with woman, he will surely be put to death? Same goes with woman–woman business'" (56). These lines reveal the oppressive colonial, cultural and theological views that stigmatise homosexuality in the contemporary community. Barrington, being a citizen of this society, struggles with his identity as a gay man within a Caribbean diasporic community that considers homosexuality a crime. Barry wants to live his life on his terms and conditions, so he got married to Carmel before and moved to London. His fears of societal repercussions show the systematic discrimination towards Caribbeans:

I was afraid I'd be up before a judge on some trumped-up charge of indecent exposure; or end up lying on an operating table with a bar of wood between my teeth and electric volts destroying parts of my brain for ever; or in the crazy house pumped full of drugs that would eventually drive a sane man mad. Carmel was perfect: young, fun, naive, love-struck. 'You forgotten what happened to Horace Johnson? . . . Remember the day he hanged himself in the crazy house?' (34-35)

It highlights the repression of homosexuality in his Caribbean diaspora community in London. These fears, rooted in real threats of institutional violence against homosexuality. Barry is afraid of both the state and his own community's harsh moral judgments. In postcolonial London, the diaspora communities confront oppression through rigid social hierarchies, particularly regarding gender and sexuality. McLeod stated that "London's diaspora communities are not immune from pursuing internally their own forms of

compulsion . . . while structures of state authority are by no means inevitably or perpetually oppressive” (*Postcolonial London* 11). Barry's fears of institutionalization, electric shock therapy, and false accusations reflect how state authorities, during his earlier years, played a role in oppressing queer individuals. Historically, laws in both Britain and Caribbean nations criminalised homosexuality, and the mention of Horace Johnson's suicide in the “crazy house” underlines the lethal consequences of institutionalised homophobia. The historical legacy of these horrors depicts a broader history of violence, where LGBTQ+ individuals were subjected to physical and psychological punishment, marking them as different and dangerous. The fear of being reduced to madness or death highlights the real consequences of living under oppressive regimes.

Barrington was an assistant manager at Antigua, but after his marriage, he got shifted to London. His main reason for moving was to have a good job and get away from the limitations and social pressures he had to live with in Antigua, particularly regarding his sexual orientation. Avtar Brah mentioned, “But diasporas are also potentially the sites of hope and new beginnings. They are contested cultural and political terrains where individual and collective memories collide, reassemble and reconfigure” (*Cartographies of Diaspora* 190). The diasporas often leave their homelands in search of better opportunities, personal freedom, and a chance to redefine their identities. The portrayal of each character's life depicts the struggles faced by diasporas in London. In the beginning period of their settlement history, the characters encounter feelings of alienation and the pressure to assimilate into a society that often marginalises their cultural identity. Barry's struggle reflects the Journey of Caribbean immigrants who find themselves caught between their cultural roots and the realities of their new environment. Barry's memories of Antigua are filled with nostalgia and a sense of belonging, yet they are juxtaposed with the alienation he feels in London. He recalls:

This country has over fifty million citizens, whereas we didn't even have fifty thousand in the whole of Antigua and Barbuda. Folk could get lost here, be anonymous, lead they own quiet lives. In this city you can live on the same street as your neighbours for eighty years and not even say good morning unless there's a war on and you forced to share a bomb shelter. Back home everybody kept their eye on everything and everyone. (35)

Barry's experiences highlight how postcolonial London serves as both a sites of struggle and potential hope for new beginnings. Barry himself navigates the challenges of cultural dislocation in postcolonial London while seeking opportunities for personal growth and reinvention. His nostalgia for Antigua collides with the realities of his present, creating a diasporic space where his identity is continuously reassembled. He tries to blend his cultural influences into his daughter Maxine's upbringing, "a little bit of Hampstead Bohemia into my girl's Hackney Caribbean childhood" (108). It highlights the internal conflict between preserving his roots and adapting to life in London. The novel emphasises that diaspora is not only a space of struggle but also one of hope and new beginnings. London, with its diversity and multicultural society, offers Barry the chance for personal reinvention. London offers him the chance for a new beginning, particularly in exploring his sexuality, something that was impossible in Antigua due to societal norms. Yet, the new place is also offering a sense of alienation, where the freedom of anonymity comes with the disconnection from communal bonds. Barry's effort to pass traditional and cultural values to their children and community gathering events serves as a site of solidarity by offering him a sense of belonging in a foreign land. The traditional values and communal gatherings in London provide hope, as he draws strength from those around him who navigate similar struggles. Barry struggles to balance his memories of home with the possibilities that London provides. His identity is constantly in flux, reconfigured by the clash between his longing for the past and his desire for freedom in the present. Paul Gilroy stated, "In conjunction with specific technological innovations, this routed and re-rooted Caribbean culture set in train a process that was to transform black America's sense of itself" (33). It highlights the diasporic space as space where diasporic cultures and identity are continually rooted and re-rooted. In a diasporic space, identity is shaped by both roots and routes, just like Barry's past in Antigua and his present in London continuously shape his evolving identity.

Once upon a time they must-a been built for the rich, and you mark my words, one day the rich shall recolonize them. I Barrington Jedidiah Walker, hereby predict the gentrification of stoke Newington... I'd ready been thinking about how I could make my mark in this country, defy the low expectations that indigenes had of us. (115)

Berry's acute awareness of both the cyclical nature of urban spaces and the racialised dynamics of belonging in postcolonial London. Berry recognises that the grand Victorian houses, now occupied by working-class immigrants and Black communities, were originally

constructed for the wealthy. His prediction of gentrification suggests a critical understanding of how capital reasserts its dominance over marginalised spaces. He articulates a personal response to structural racism.

In postcolonial London, Barry experiences both the freedoms and dangers that come with his diaspora identity. On one hand, London offers him anonymity and a greater potential for personal freedom compared to his native Antigua, but on the other, his Caribbean diaspora community in London enforces its hierarchies of morality, especially regarding gender and sexuality. Barry's community holds tightly to conservative, religious values, which condemn homosexuality and push individuals like Barry to hide their true identities for fear of shame or even death.

Girl, Woman, and Other features twelve female voices from the African diaspora. The women trace their lineage back to several countries like Malawi, Ghana, Barbados, Nigeria and Ethiopia and represent the first, second, and subsequent generations of immigrants. The first generation of immigrants, who are inextricably linked to their home country, carry their home cultures with them to the United Kingdom. The people also fight to preserve their culture while struggling to survive in a hostile and prejudiced environment. The tremendous variety of Black British women helps to illustrate human diversity in the metropolitan city. The structure and interconnected narratives of *Girl, Woman, Other* suggest a broader topic of human connectivity and interdependence.

Diaspora space emerges as one of the major social phenomena that examines the experience of international migration and shifting borders around the globe. In the novel *Girl, Woman, Other*, the effect of migration on insiders as well as on the outsiders in terms of identity and ethnicity is visible. The concept of ethnic mobility and evolving identity is highlighted through the characters of the novel. The different characters in the novel challenge the notions of identity and ethnicity as fixed by offering a complex portrayal of the intersecting dynamics that define diasporic existence in postcolonial London. The novel emphasises how the diasporas, as well as the natives, are affected due to migration and settlements. The first generation of immigrants very closely follows their culture and tradition. The second generation becomes sandwiched between their parents' homelands and their homeland, England. The novel's characters are torn between being accepted by English society, which sees them as outsiders because of their racial and ethnic identities, and the expectations of their parents, who frequently adhere to cultural norms and customs from their

native country. Characters struggle to balance their sense of self with the expectations and opinions of others, which leads to a deep sense of dislocation and alienation caused by this tension. Bumi in the novel also give a lot of preferences to her culture. She tries to bring her daughter Carole back to their own culture. Carole was born and raised in the English society of London, so she adopts some of the English culture and detaches herself from her African culture:

She wished Carole had come home to continue celebrations with the pot of bush stew Bummi had cooked specially, hoping that now her daughter had graduated, she would return to her real culture and even eat with her hands again instead of side-glance her mama for doing so, as if she was a savage from the jungle. (151)

Bummi yearns reconnect her daughter to cultural traditions and practices that may have been passed down through generations. She wished Carole to return to her real culture and eat with her hands. She desired to preserve cultural heritage and the practices that connect individuals to their historical and ancestral roots. Bummi's act of cooking a traditional meal and her hope that Carole would embrace it represent an effort to maintain and pass on the values and practices that define their cultural identity. However, Carole's response, which involved side-glancing her mother while she ate with her hands as though she were a 'savage from the jungle,' perfectly captures the conflict between roots and route. Carole's viewpoint exhibits a break from her cultural roots and an alignment with modern Western norms and values. The concept of colonisation in Gilroy's statement can be applied here. Carole's perception of her mother's cultural practices as savage is a form of cultural colonisation, where Western norms have taken precedence over their parents' cultural heritage. When Carole got married to Freddy, an English man, he was assimilated into Nigerian culture shows the fluid and dynamic nature of cultural exchange and hybridity due to diasporic communities. "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" (185-186). Freddy's assimilation into Nigerian culture illustrates how cultural boundaries are constantly negotiated, transformed, and transcended within diasporic communities. Through his engagement with Carole's cultural heritage, Freddy embodies the spirit of cultural exchange and hybridity, challenging traditional notions of identity and belonging and embodying the dynamic and fluid nature of diasporic identity formation.

The novel seeks to demonstrate the overlapping effects of race, class and gender in postcolonial London. One striking example of exploration of intersecting identities is found in the character of Dorminique and Amma, a middle-aged lesbian playwright of Afro-Caribbean descent. In postcolonial London, Amma struggle with every injustice that comes her way and makes a space where she can belong completely. Due to the traditional notion of identity and ethnicity, Amma finds it difficult to survive in London. Both characters reject the tradition notion of identity and sexuality at multiple dimensions, including her race, gender, sexual orientation, and socio-economic background. Amma and Dorminique experience many uncertainties as a result of the unclear territory of the immigrant's life. In today's globalised world, the diasporic subject is destined to live in the diaspora space where the circumstances of both the past and the present shape their daily existence, and they are filled with love and longing for their lost home and country. The present state of diasporas is directly linked to past experiences. So, these experiences serve as the basis for reconstructing life in the new location. Amma and Dominique faced prejudice due to their diasporic identity, but with time, both formed an impactful identity. Amma was raised by her mother, Helen, an English native, and her father, Kwabena, a journalist from Ghana who was compelled to move to the UK after supporting the independence movement. In high school, Amma became an activist. She took on a radical political persona in her twenties. Along with Dominique, I founded the Bush Woman Theatre Company with the goal of uplifting diasporic people and overthrowing the conventional theatre industry, which supported white supremacist ideology.

Amma and Dominique stayed until they were turfed out, had worked their way through numerous glasses of red wine they decided they needed to start their own theatre company to have careers as actors, because neither was prepared to betray their politics to find jobs. (13)

The passage highlights the intersecting dynamics of race, gender, politics, and artistic expression within diasporic communities in London. Amma and Dominique's decision to establish their own theatre company reflects their agency and resilience in the face of systemic barriers, as well as their determination to carve out spaces where they can authentically express themselves and pursue their creative aspirations on their own terms. Avtar Brah said, "Diasporic journeys are embarked upon, lived and re-lived through multiple modalities: modalities, for example, of gender, 'race', class, religion, language and generation. As such, all diasporas are differentiated, heterogeneous, contest spaces, even as they are implicated in the construction of common 'we' (*Cartographies of Diaspora* 180-181).

Besides being immigrants, Amma and Dominique faced challenges for being women and lesbian artists. For both of them establishing their own theatre signifies their hyphenated identities of being a black, queer and women in the patriarchal society. They refuse to be defined by narrow stereotypes or limited by external expectations, instead carving out spaces where they can authentically express themselves and pursue their aspirations. In doing so, they contribute to the construction of a common 'we' within the diaspora, forging connections and building solidarity across differences.

The novel examines the consequences of the postcolonial legacy in transforming contemporary London by highlighting the hidden reality of the postcolonial London metropolis. The famous myths and expectations of the diasporic people who never visited the metropolis are shown through the character of Dominique. When Dominique saw the reality of postcolonial London, the image of utopian London transformed into dystopian London. Dominique says:

She headed for London where people proclaimed their outsider identities on badges... when I was accepted into a very orthodox drama school, I was already politicized and challenge them on everything, Amma the only person of colour in the whole school she demanded to know why male parts in Shakespeare couldn't be played by women and don't even get me started on cross-racial casting. (7-8)

When Dominique moved to London, a diverse and cosmopolitan city, she heard that people openly express their identities as outsiders or minorities. When she reached London, she finds that the scenario was entirely different. McLeod explains, "many of the difficulties facing newcomers to the city, such as their expectations of London nurtured from afar and the prejudicial attitudes" (*Postcolonial London: Rewriting the metropolis* 2). Dominique's experience at a traditional drama school highlights the clash between her politicised worldview and the conservative norms of the institution. As a politicised individual, she questions and challenges the status quo, refusing to conform to the traditional expectations placed upon her. She also questions the gender norms in Shakespearean theatre and her frustration with cross-racial casting barriers. All these highlights how Dominique gets frustrated when she knows the truth.

Girl, Woman, Other skillfully knits together the tales of many women from different racial backgrounds, generations, and identities. It highlighted the complexity of diasporic

existence in modern-day London and examined the intersectionality, resiliency, and belonging in diaspora cultures through her different characters. The novel also rejects the traditional notion of culture and identity by showing that hybridity goes both ways, and even the brutality of European cultures towards other cultures did not prevent them from being influenced by the diasporic communities.

Chapter 5

Living Memory and Slave Sublime in Evaristo's Select Text

The concept of “living memory” (198) and the “slave sublime” (37) examined how the history of slavery and its memory affect black identity and its culture. The concepts of both these terms are distinct yet interconnected ideas that address the experiences and legacies of slavery. Living memory refers to the individual or collective memory that remains intact through cultural, social, or oral traditions. Memory of a situation, particularly the traumatic experiences of slavery, engages an individual with the past. Gilroy emphasises that living memory is not merely a passive recollection but an ongoing story that is active in the present through stories, rituals, or cultural practices. “The memory of slavery, actively preserved as a living intellectual resource in their expressive political culture” (*The Black Atlantic* 39). The traumatic experience and struggle of slavery are not simply remembered as a historical fact, but continuously engaged with and preserved within Black political and cultural expressions. This memory becomes an intellectual resource that shapes ongoing political struggles, artistic expression, and identity formation. Even after physical liberation, the trauma of slavery passes on from one generation to another. In his book, *The Black Atlantic*, Gilroy stated:

The telling and retelling of these stories plays a special role, organising the consciousness of the "racial" group socially and striking the important balance between inside and outside activity-the different practices, cognitive, habitual, and performative, that are required to invent, maintain, and renew identity . . . there is a direct relationship between the community of listeners constructed in the course of using that musical culture and the constitution of a tradition that is redefined here as the living memory of the changing same. (198)

The statement emphasizes the role of storytelling through music and cultural practices in shaping the culture and identity of racially marginalized communities, particularly the African diaspora. The function of storytelling is not only confined to artistic or cultural expression, rather it is essential to awaken the consciousness of marginalised people. In this sense, storytelling through music, performance and oral tradition acts as a communal activity that unites individuals within the same racial group and forms a collective identity. The narratives shared through these cultural forms serve as repositories of historical memory that will be reinterpreted and passed down through generations. Gilroy affirms the direct link between the listeners engaged in these cultural practices and the formation of tradition, which

he redefines as the 'living memory'. He suggested that identity is not fixed and it is constantly maintained, renewed and recreated through the different forms of cognitive, habitual, and performative practices that are involved in identity formation. Cognition helps to understand a person's perception, memory, language, problem-solving, and learning. Storytelling helps to organise these thoughts and perceptions by providing a framework for understanding historical experiences and their impact on the present. Habitual practices, such as rituals, customs, and everyday behaviours, reinforce the community's shared sense of self, creating continuity between past and present. Performative practices, particularly through music and performance, allow for the public articulation of identity. These performances are not only expressions of internal identity but also signify the fluid nature of identity. So, the notion of living memory challenges static representations of Black identity by showing that the community is not merely shaped by its past but also by its ongoing reinterpretation of that past. Gilroy's idea reflects the continuity of certain cultural elements (such as musical traditions or shared historical narratives) that exist alongside their constant transformation in response to these circumstances.

Slave sublime signifies the philosophical and aesthetic representation of the violence, suffering and horrors history of slavery. The slave sublime highlights the trauma and suffering of enslaved individuals. The philosophical and aesthetic concept of the sublime was first used in the 18th century. The foundational works that defined the sublime as an overwhelming experience that evokes awe, terror, or admiration in response to something powerful or incomprehensible were Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful* and Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgement*. Gilroy mentioned, "A small but telling insight into this can be found in Edmund Burke's discussion of the sublime" (9). Burke associated the sublime with emotions of surprise and fear at something outside of human control, frequently brought on by natural forces. When the sublime term gained popularity in literary circles, spontaneously the slave story also emerged as a significant literary style especially in America during the 18th and 19th centuries. Slave narratives portrayed slavery as an institution so horrifying that it defied common understanding. In 20th century Paul Gilroy used the concept of the slave sublime to analyse how the traumas of slavery could be represented in literature and culture. He says:

It was entirely in keeping with Du Bois's thematic orientation that a lynching provided Johnson's nameless, picaresque hero with a means to reflect upon his own status, on the centrality of terror in stimulating black creativity and cultural

production, and on the failures of modernity in the South. Sensitised to the power of the phatic and the ineffable conjoined in the enduring potency of what I call the slave sublime. (131)

Paul Gilroy explores that the legacy of slavery and racial violence stimulates the creativity and cultural production among blacks. He refers to W.E.B. Du Bois's thematic orientation in literature, where moments of extreme violence, such as lynching, become a reflection on the status of black individuals within a racially oppressive society. In James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, the nameless protagonist witnesses a lynching, which forces him to confront racial terror in multicultural society. Gilroy argues that despite the ideals of progress, equality, and human rights associated with modernity, lynchings and other forms of racial terror persisted, revealing the flaws and contradictions of modern society, especially in the South where racism persist. Gilroy highlights that this racial terror became a powerful catalyst for cultural and artistic creativity. The experience of extreme violence and systemic oppression gave rise to different cultural expression, such as music, literature, and oral traditions, which communicated the emotional and psychological impact of slavery and its aftermath. These cultural forms allowed African Americans to resist the dehumanization imposed upon them and express their resilience in the face of ongoing trauma. This creativity cultural expression, trauma, racial terror, violence, resistance and resilience is termed as slave sublime by Paul Gilroy. In this context, the slave sublime captures the indescribable horrors of slavery and racial violence, which are so vast and traumatic. However, black cultural expression through living memory like music, storytelling, and other forms finds ways to communicate these profound experiences.

Both of these concepts living memory and the slave sublime are useful for exploring the ways in which historical trauma, particularly slavery, continues to impact cultural consciousness and representation today. They are often used in literature, cultural studies, and historical research to interrogate the complexities of memory and representation.

One of the novel's most important contributions to discussions on race and history is the depiction of slavery before European colonialism. While transatlantic slavery is seen as the defining form of racialized oppression, *The Emperor's Babe* highlights how the enslavement of individuals has been a long-standing practice across different civilizations, evolving to fit the economic and social needs of various societies. However, key differences exist between ancient slavery and transatlantic slavery. In the novel, Evaristo examine

Roman London through the eyes of Zuleika, a young Sudanese girl growing up in Roman Britain. The novel centers on the experience of being Black and female in precolonial era.

In the Roman world, slavery was not strictly racialized, as enslaved individuals came from diverse regions, including Britain, Africa, and the Middle East. In contrast, transatlantic slavery established blackness as an inherent marker of servitude, creating a racial hierarchy that endured beyond abolition. Additionally, pre-colonial slavery was often linked to war, debt, or punishment rather than racial identity. The institution of slavery has been present since the beginning of civilisation, marking the slave sublime that continues from the past till contemporary times. Pre-colonial slavery is depicted through the Caledonian slave girls Zuleika receives, whose trauma, resistance, and forced assimilation into Roman culture illustrate the varied experiences of enslavement before the rise of modern racialized slavery. As Zuleika describes, “Two ginger girls arrived, captured up north, the freckled sort (typical of Caledonians) . . . When approached, they clawed the air with filthy talons, mucus ran in clotted rivers from pinched little noses” (62). The capture of these two young girls, named Valeria and Aemilia, from their place and using them for their pleasure and profit. This incident highlights the widespread presence of slavery before colonial rule, wherein individuals were trafficked across vast territories irrespective of their ethnic backgrounds. Since these girls belonged to a Celtic tribe, their enslavement demonstrates that pre-colonial slavery was not determined by racial identity. Furthermore, the treatment of these enslaved girls reflects the historical reality that slavery, regardless of time period, was a dehumanising institution that stripped individuals of autonomy and subjected them to the control of their masters. When Aemilia and Valeria try to escape Felix's place, he orders his servant to torture them by chaining them up to the trees. “As a bloody trophy, before they escaped out the window and climbed on to the roof, howling. I awoke. Cold to the marrow. Alone. Tranio! Shut those fucking cats up!” (56). These lines portray the cruelty and dehumanisation ingrained in the blood of Romans. In the Book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Franz Fanon talks about the Zoological names used by the colonizers. He argues that the master often used zoological names while addressing the oppressed people to assert harsh and repressive behaviours towards the oppressed group. “The terms the settler uses when he mentions the native are zoological terms... bereft of all humanity, those distended bodies which are like nothing on earth” (41). The comparison of enslaved individuals to animals is a recurring motif in colonial and pre-colonial slavery, reinforcing their perceived inferiority and stripping them of humanity.

Valeria's narrative serves as a form of living memory, preserving the trauma of displacement and forced servitude. She recalls about her past life, contrasting it with her current suffering. In a conversation with Zuleika, Valeria says:

Oor hame was a big roon stone hoose. De hail of oor village could feast inower it. After wark, everyone gaithered for denner... would tell stories aboot de goads, oor granfaither was chief Druid... fir we were ayeways being attacked by tribus. Mammy would leid de sodgers into battle, hir lang heir flying behind like fire, standing on hir chariot. (57-58)

Valeria describes their past life and signifies how the institution of slavery has completely transformed their life from a peaceful state to a harsh and complicated life. Her memory witness how the invasion of the Romans transformed her peaceful existence into one of suffering and brutality. She said that before the invasion of Romans, they lived in a large house that could accommodate the whole village. After work, everyone would gather for dinner and narrate stories about the Gods to one another, but after the Romans' invasion, their tribes were continuously attacked by them. They get subjected to physical and emotional abuse by Romans, who use their power and authority to control them and take away all their freedom. Valeria describes the brutality and violence that happened when they got captured. "One tid we were attacked in de nicht, no one expecked it wi de sey so roch, Mam was killed ootricht, hir heid taeken away on a spear" (59). The sudden, violent nature of the attack and the gruesome details of Valeria's mother's murder encapsulate the overwhelming terror of subjugation. The massive killings show the brutal face of the Roman people. Valeria and Amelia were captured during an attack by the Romans, who snatched all the comfort and rights from their life by making them slaves. The moment of capture and enslavement marks a rupture in their sense of self, a phenomenon that echoes across historical accounts of displacement and forced servitude:

Valeria and Aemilia do not work hard enough, the peacock fans I bought last week barely flutter either side of me. They complain of tiredness. 'Madam, oor arms ache so.' I take a deep breath me out, and tell them that dragging boulders of granite in a convoy of this nation's bipedal exports across the midday deserts of Egypt will help enrich their understanding of the word tired. At last the muted pad of a gong sounds. (73)

Zuleika's words show the exploitation and brutality of enslaved individuals in Roman culture. When Valeria and Aemilia complain about the aching of their arms while fanning her with peacock feathers, she accuses them of not working hard enough. Her lack of empathy for the girls, as well as her opinion that they are not working hard enough despite the complaint of exhaustion, reveals the cruelty and inhumanity present in Roman society. Furthermore, the comparison between the works of the girls and the labour of slaves in Egypt shows how the Roman Empire and colonization exploited and enslavement other peoples. Her statement about the muted sound of a gong reflects the belief that the voices of the oppressed did not get any attention from the authorities if they benefited from their suffering.

Zuleika's marriage to a wealthy Roman senator, for instance, mirrors the coercion and lack of agency faced by enslaved women. Throughout the novel, Zuleika experiences sexual violence, reflecting the broader reality of how enslaved and subjugated women were often subjected to sexual exploitation. As she painfully recounts, "Legs straight, you like me tight, it is your size (and shame), you tore me unformed, drew blood before eggs ripened" (*The Emperor's Babe* 75). This passage underscores how sexual violence was a normalized part of patriarchal oppression, further entrenching women's subjugation within a system that devalued their autonomy. While she is not legally a slave, her status as a young, black, foreign woman in Londinium places her in a position of extreme vulnerability. Her experience aligns with how women of African descent have historically been subjected to systems of control that blur the lines between slavery and forced subjugation. In this way, *The Emperor's Babe* engages with the aesthetics of the slave sublime, juxtaposing beauty, desire, and power with exploitation and systemic violence.

The depiction of slavery in *The Emperor's Babe* exposes the institutionalised dehumanisation deep-rooted in the history of human civilisation. Zuleika's experiences and the stories of other enslaved characters show how power structures strip individuals of autonomy, reducing them to commodities for exploitation. The novel highlights how slavery, both in its ancient and colonial forms, has relied on physical violence to maintain dominance. The theme of living memory plays a crucial role in preserving the voices of the marginalized, ensuring that their suffering and resilience are not lost to history. Similarly, the slave sublime exposes horror and dehumanisation associated with the institution of slavery.

Blonde Roots reverses the historical roles of slavery, where Africans enslave Europeans. The novel is a perfect example of how the memory of slavery is delivered through literature. The reversal of racial role makes the reader persistently experience the terror of slavery during slave trade and understand the Afrocentric perspectives. By portraying the cruelty of slavery in a manner that defies accepted depictions, the book directly addresses the slave sublime. The slavery history and the conditions of slaves during the voyage and their condition in a foreign country is visible. It allows the reader to explore the constructed nature of racial identities and the complex dynamics between power and oppression. In *Manifesto*, Evaristo says:

My plan had been to write about the transatlantic slave trade but to do something very different with this history, to defamiliarize it in order to offer new perspectives on it. This slave trade occupies four hundred years of world history, it devastated the lives of millions, and left a toxic legacy that remains today. My family tree has its own slavery branch, but even if it hadn't, it's one of those subjects that fascinate us because of its global significance as a terrible crime against the human race. (135)

Evaristo have an ancestral history of slavery. In *manifesto*, she claims that her approach about the transatlantic slave trade in the novel, emphasizing her desire to offer new perspectives on the events. She recounts the tragic and violent history of slavery by creating an imaginative world where Africans enslave Europeans. This reversal writing challenge conventional descriptions of history and expose the constructed nature of racial power dynamics. The story highlights the heroic narratives of Western civilization and the impact of slave trade on African people. It also emphasizes the legacy of slavery and the importance of the transatlantic slave trade as one of the most devastating and long-lasting crimes against humanity.

Blond Roots depicts the two sides' perspectives of the same coin through Kaga's and Doris's narrations about slavery. The view point of slaves, master and slaver trader exposes how narratives can be subjective, unreliable, and shaped by those in power. Chief Kaga Konata Katamba is one of head in the Atlantic Slave Trade, "He made his fortune in the import-export game, the notorious transatlantic slave run, before settling down to life in polite society" (4). Katamba brought slaves through the Middle Passage to gain profit from

the slave trade. Masters buy slave to use them as free labor. In the whole process, only the slaves face brutality and torture. Katamba, while giving his lame excuse he says that:

I am a reasonable man and a man with reasons: No. 1 As one of my country's Captains of Industry it is my duty to maintain business standard because the 'Great' in Great Ambossa . . . No. 2 The right to property is the right of mankind, whether it be land, oxen, house, ship, articles, child, wife or slave.
(110)

A slave trader and slave master's viewpoint are depicted in the above quotation. They both rationalizing their actions and justified within the framework of economic and societal norms. Their justification is completely contradictory to the experience of the slaves. From their perspective, the transatlantic slave trade is viewed as a legitimate business work and it is vital to sustain wealth and maintain country economic condition. The slave trader frame slavery as a duty to uphold economic growth and national status. Gilroy stated, "I have already mentioned the idea of history as progress. Apart from that thorny perennial, the slaves' perspectives require a discrete view not just of the dynamics of power and domination in plantation societies dedicated to the pursuit of commercial profit" (55). The master views the captivated slave as property that are essential for wealth accumulation and the smooth running of their estates. Furthermore, the master treats slave as an object like land and property. They believe that the right to own property, including human beings, is a fundamental right, which justifies to own a slave for their basic needs. "It is therefore in defence of my rights that I had to undertake the arduous re-capture of the wretched slave girl Omorenomwara" (110). So, both the perspective of slave trader and master reflects capitalist mindset, where profit and economic progress are prioritized over human dignity. The brutal realities of slavery are justified through the language of duty, property rights, and rationality.

Since the beginning of human history storytelling and music is considered as an influential element in preserving the historical memory. Besides humming folk song by Doris, the novel highlights the use of music, and storytelling in preserving cultural identity and coping with the trauma of enslavement. Doris's experiences reveal how enslaved people used oral traditions, communal singing, and memories to express emotions that were repressed. Doris expressed the unsaid word in the form of music. "Pa released me from the chain, wrapped me in his arm, stroked my hair backward with the soft pad of his thumb" (61). The lyrical recollection of her father's gentle actions functions as both a personal lament and

critique of the dehumanizing effects of slavery. Through her memory, Doris not only preserves her humanity but also resists the removal of her identity. The loving image of her father captures the deep emotional separation caused by slavery. Gilroy says that “The memory of slavery, actively preserved as a living intellectual resource in their expressive political culture, helped them to generate a new set of answers to this enquiry” (39). Doris's perspective on transatlantic journey and slave history depicts the harsh brutal system of slavery, but in the novel a white woman enslaved by black African colonizers. This inversion allows the reader to re-examine history from a fresh perspective and reveals the horror of slavery and its dehumanizing impact on individuals. In the opening lines of book two, Doris's statement “Dear Reader, It woe betides me to be the bearer of bad news” (112), immediately breaks the fourth wall and establish an intimate connection between Doris and the reader. Her story reflects on the ways histories has been constructed and point out the painful history she has witnessed. “Trade is cruel and inhumane, who bemoan the sufferings of these wretched creatures as if we and they are one and the same” (112). Doris's narration mock those who rationalize the brutal realities of slavery with their justifications. She highlights that transatlantic slave trade degrade the value of a human. The slave traders treat them like an animal. Doris was suddenly and brutally kidnapping while playing hide-and-seek. Her physical state depicts how they were beaten and carried away without consent. “I couldn't breathe properly, my hip bones dug into his shoulder, my head filled with blood that began to stream out of my nose. I remember that I wet myself” (58). While capturing Doris the kidnaper hits on her head. When she became conscious, she was unable to breath properly and even the blood streaming from her nose. Gilroy says that “the relationship between master and slave foregrounds the issues of brutality and terror which are also too frequently ignored” (54). The minute detailing of the incident narrated by Doris depicts the forced, traumatic migration experienced by people during the transatlantic slave trade. It also deconstructs romanticized versions of colonial history, which often ignores the violence and brutality happened during slave trade.

Doris's storytelling depicted the forced migration of enslaved individuals not only faced physical displacement but also confront forever separated from their homes, families, and cultures. Beside displacement and separation, the enslaved people confront physical and psychological abused during the journey. Through Doris narration the story reveals the horrifying conditions of the slaves in the transatlantic slave trades “he suddenly stopped and dumped me on the ground like a sack of beets” (59). The dehumanization of enslaved

individuals begins with kidnapping and deepens as they are transported on a slave ship. “I had already lost my family . . . soon lose my language and my country” (60). The dehumanization strips away Doris's autonomy and identity, reducing her to an object to be owned and traded. The journey from land to ship intensifies her loss of humanity:

He walked so quickly I choked against the iron collar like a billy goat being dragged up a hill. I wanted to tap on the shoulder and tell him that I wasn't one of the local poachers and I wasn't a prisoner of war, either, and that I'd never stolen anything in my life, . . . I was a prisoner of someone whose conscience had signed a contract with the Devil Long ago. I belong to him now. (60-61)

The iron collar symbolizes both physical and psychological abuses of enslaved individuals. Their life has been controlled and objectified by slave raiders. They are treated as an animal like goats, stripped of their human right and forced into suffering. When Doris was choked against the iron collar, she was unable to understand the situation. Her inner thoughts reveal an intense mental conflict, contrasting her innocence and autonomy with their new reality of enslavement. The line, “my first hours of bondage had an almost instant maturing effect” (61), suggests a rapid emotional shift from innocence to survival. The whole incident happened with Doris transform her from a child to an adult. Her internal struggle starts with a hope, imagining their father and others heroic figures might rescue them. The hope quickly transforms from expectation to prayer, and ultimately realize that their hopes of escape and familial rescue are futile. This emotional progression of denial, bargaining, and anger highlights the psychological trauma and abandonment. The realization that they now belong to their imprisoner depicts the psychological abuse of enslavement. The forced acceptance of a subjugated identity diminished their self-worth. Gilroy declares that “the slave ship remains a useful image not only for its self-conscious moral power and the striking way that it aims directly for the sublime in its invocation of racial terror, commerce, and England's ethico-political degeneration” (16). The experience of Doris in the ship depicts the dehumanization and terror imposed upon enslaved Africans. While transported from her hometown, she met with a lot of other enslaved people. They all tie tightly and the people in the ship looks like “Goats, sheep and chickens in coops were winched bleating and Squawking on boards” (76). The comparison of humans to livestock emphasizes the degradation of people, as the captives are stripped of their personal autonomy, with bruised and bound bodies carried onto the ship like an object. Their physical state “bruised and sopping wet” reflects both their physical and

psychological subjugation, as they are brought into an environment that strips them of dignity and choice.

The Middle Passage was a journey of terrible suffering for millions of enslaved Africans. The chapter entitled “The Middle Passage” (75) depicts these horrifying scenes, where slave on the ship were starving, confront physical violence and even dying from the unbearable torture. In the ship people were placed below deck and men and women had placed separately. Males were chained tightly as compared to Women. Many enslaved died during the journey and others suffered more from diseases and harsh treatment. The dead bodies of the people were throwing into the ocean and survived people fates decided by the masters of a brutal system. Throughout the journey the enslaved individuals were subjected to violence:

Slaps, punches, pulls and kicks turned into a free-for-all among the women. The crew crowded into the hold, cheering, goading and roaring as Hildegaard head-butted Bethany so hard her forehead split open, and Bethany wrapped her fists around Hildegaard's plaits, trying to pull them out. (82)

It captures the terrifying moment of brutality, chaos and dehumanization among enslaved women during the Middle Passage. The crewmembers packing as many men as possible below deck. They use physical violence such as Slapping, punching and kicking to take control over the people. Gilroy mentioned, “This turn towards death as a release from terror and bondage and a chance to find substantive freedom” (63). To avoid further suffering they committed suicide “In the early days I tried holding my breath in a childlike attempt to suicide” (83) or starving themselves believing that after death their souls can return home. “We were all starving . . . The crew took aside those observed to be not eating. The punishment was to place hot coal so near the offender’s lips, they blistered” (82). The torture and the condition of the captive slave placed them in a worse condition. They find that death is the ultimate way to their freedom. Some enslaved to rebel by not eating meals. When the crew noticed it, punishment for attempted rebellion was severe. The experience of harsh punishment through hot coals further enforced violence among the enslaved. The situation of enslaved become worse day by day. Some of them were killed by giving silly reasons. One of the slave head was broken and they crewmembers even did not care about it. This horrifying incident leave a painful scar in the heart of enslavement, where they are not only brutalized by their oppressors but are also denied the empathy. While some died due to ship condition

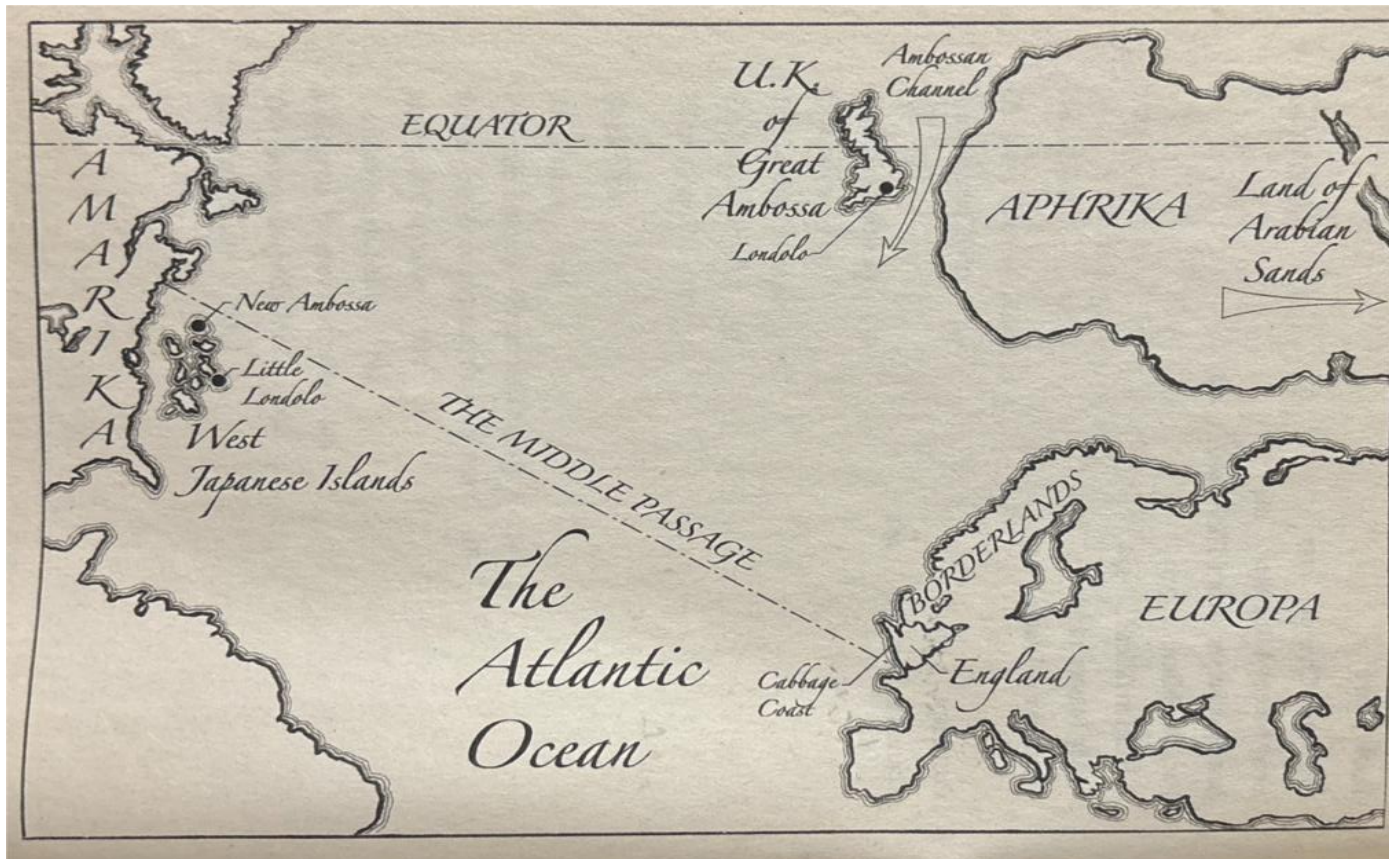
and protest “We were weak, we were dehydrated, we were starving, we were going to die and Samantha finally did” (90). Samantha’s death captures the harsh and deadly conditions that enslaved people endured on the Middle Passage. During these voyages, which could last from weeks to months, the death rate was high. “There were 400 slaves at embarkation, and 227 survived” (91). From the start to the end of the voyage almost 50 percent people survived rest all died. The causes of death were primarily malnutrition, dehydration, disease, and the effects of brutal treatment. Doris also noticed her fellow passengers’ conditions are even worse than those who died on the ship. “Then I saw Granwyn . . . The right side of his face was twice its normal size. His left ear had been severed. . . His chest had collapsed . . . His genitalia were a mess” (91). It depicts the physical abuse tolerated by the enslaved. The distorted, swollen face, severed ear, and damaged chest and genitals symbolize the extreme violence which strips away dignity and depersonalises a person to a state of extreme physical suffering. Enslavers often targeted different part of the body to assert dominance over their captives. Stancy J. Lattman says:

The experience of captive Africans being chained so intimately together reduces individuality to the most fundamental degree: the bodily excrements and the shared capacity of such dehumanizing, psychic violence function as a key element of the collective, historical memory of depersonalization and objectification. (*The Slave Sublime* 120)

The trans-Atlantic slave trade reflects the systemic violence and dehumanization of enslavement. The masters and slave traders prioritize profit over humanism. Doris’s forceful migration and stripped of her identity show how humanity is reduced to physical labor and suffering. The shared experiences like punishment method, trauma of family separations, physical abuse objectification, suicide and death rates in the overcrowded slave ship with lack of privacy, remains as a historical trauma of collective dehumanization experienced by Africans. The historical trauma of physical and emotional abuses become a part of a living memory that transfers her individual experience from one generation to others.

Blond Roots is a historical revisionism fiction that reverses racial prejudice, dislocate time and the places like “Europa” (7) and UK located in the country “Aphrika” (6) as The United Kingdom of Great Ambossa. Its locations are contrary to the common world map except for the middle passage. This contradictory map is used to transform preconceived notions of Europeans. he inversion of the map emphasizes the arbitrary nature of racial

hierarchies and exposes the ways in which history has been shaped by European dominance. The middle passage in the map remains unchanged as highlighted the transatlantic journey and the persistent legacy of slavery. Despite the reversal racial hierarchy, the violence, exploitation, and trauma associated with the middle passage remains central issue. It highlights that oppression and brutality are not tied to a specific race or group but to the systems of power that exploit human lives for economic gain. The map of the text is showing below:



(Blonde Roots)

The Trans-Atlantic slave trade is evident as an ongoing historical event of inhumanity and harassment. The history of slave from colonization and its legacy in contemporary world is depicted in the novel. Paul Gilroy concept of transnationalism "Atlantic as one single, complex unit of analysis" (16) is represented in through the Journey of captive slaves from different countries through middle passage "as far away as Spain, France, Belgium, Portugal, Denmark and Germany. . . Regardless of social status, profession, political or religious persuasion, we were all going to the final frontier of Europa" (62). The enslaved from different countries through the same routes highlights the slavery history as a sequence of intercultural and interracial interactions that are implicitly interconnected across borders. The

Atlantic Ocean acts as a space of cultural, economic, and social exchange, where the identities and destinies of people across nations have one destination and same status in the society. Doris's journey from her own country "Europa" (7) to "The United Kingdom of Great Ambossa" (6) and then to Kaga's plantation field "Paradise Island" (172) depicts major events happened in the history story of slavery from the past to the contemporary times.

The condition of slaves at the land of Great Ambossa highlights the suffering and the moral degradation of the oppressors. The depiction of the slave auction capturing the unimaginable horrors of the slave sublime. "Nevertheless, with the terrible accounts of the Grey continent . . . my heart, at the barbarism I would encounter on the shores" (122). It captures how Europe is a site of barbarism for whites. The persistent of dehumanization and brutality confronted by enslaved individuals upon their arrival at the port of New Ambossa. "Upon arrival at the port of New Ambossa, I was subjected to the traditional slave market scramble . . . They grabbed at the slaves they wanted, tied us up with rope or simply dragged us out of the pen by whatever limbs or the body parts they could lay their hands on" (93). Doris's experience at the slave market marked the beginning of new forms of exploitation and subjugation, rooted in economic imperatives and cultural practices that systematically erased individuality and humanity. Doris initially believed that the end of the ship journey might bring relief from the horrors of enslavement. However, upon reaching the land of Ambossa, she finds that the violence and degradation continue persistently. "The victor bound my wrists with rope so tightly they bled, then dragged me out of the pen like I was a goat" (93). The lines show the systemic violence of slavery and exploitative economic system. The tightly binding of the wrist that causes injury is not incidental, so it demonstrates the normalized violence that was integral to the system of slavery. This brutality ensured that the enslaved remained submissive. The actions scene described the enslaved were forcibly removed from their homelands, dehumanized, and subjected to violence to transform them into tradeable goods. The scene at the slave auction represents a ridiculous spectacle of commodification and brutality. The image of enslaved people being dragged by limbs or body parts highlights the slave sublime, where the overwhelming terror and violence transcend. Gilroy "Slavery is seen in an ethical light but is primarily presented as an exploitative economic system of an international nature" (28). The slave auction represents the transformation of human beings into commodities. The slave market shows how the buyer prioritizes economic gain over human dignity. Doris's collapse and the stampede that follows symbolize the exploitation happened to them at the work places:

He tied me to a post, inspected my scalp and ears, pulled apart my lips and invaded my mouth with fingers . . . He cupped my chest, slapped my bottom like it was a cow's shank and squeezed each thigh to test its musculature. Then he made me sit down and spread my legs so that he could inspect' my vagina, pushing those meaty fingers of his inside my virginal self. I didn't cry. I was determined not to cry. At the end, I had to stand up and bend over so that he could 'inspect' my anus too. (93).

The scene shows the transformation of Doris from a human being into a commodity. It portrays the physical and sexual violence suffered by enslaved individuals during the process of commodification. The enslaver's actions like inspecting her body in the most aggressive ways, and evaluating her physicality reduce her to an object. The detailed examination of Doris's body, from her scalp to her thighs just like a livestock at a market. Each action evaluating musculature, inspecting points to the enslaver's focus on their economic value. The dehumanization inherent to the system of slavery, where bodies are reduced to object that commodified human beings for labor, reproduction, and profit. Besides physical abuse the scene also portrays sexual violence suffered by enslaved women during the process of commodification. Gregory E. O claims in his paper that "The transfer of bodies was marked by slave pens, auctions, sexual assaults, and eventually a difficult readjustment to a new environment and new work regime" (220). The inspection of Doris's vagina and anus goes beyond economic assessment, highlighting the institutionalized sexual assault that enslaved women often endured. Such offensive practices were normalized under slavery, reflecting the dual exploitation of women as laborers and as potential sources of future enslaved individuals. "My three were sold on . . . Each child was placed into the guardianship of a wet nurse, until they were sold" (21-22). Women's reproductive capacities were commodified to sustain the system of slavery, making such violations a calculated part of their exploitation. The women also encounter with rape and other assault in their lifetime. "She was gang-rapped by the three kidnappers shortly after capture" (15). In all the above cases, the abuse of Doris and other female displays the position of women in slavery. It is demonstrated that along with physical as well as psychological abuse women also confronts sexual assault.

Blond Roots depicts that the legacy of slave is not restricted to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, rather it even continues in the contemporary era. In fact, slavery is existing as a central element of modernity and important moment to the development of Western economic systems. Dori's final sentence hints the slavery sublime in the present day shows how the

descendants of slave owners continue to gain the benefits of the exploitative labor system established during slavery:

In the twenty-first century, Bwana's descendants still own the sugar estate and are among the grandest and wealthiest families in the United Kingdom of Great Ambossa, where they all reside. The cane workers, many of whom descended from the original slaves, are paid. (261)

In the postscript, the condition of post-slavery is showing in the text. The successor of slaves on the plantation field only differs from their ancestors in terms of payment. The reference to Bwana's descendants owning sugar estates and being among the wealthiest families in the United Kingdom of Great Ambossa portrays that the legacy of slavery is not confined to the past but also continued in contemporary economic and social structures. Gilroy mentioned, "The Black Atlantic as a counterculture of Modernity" (1). The contemporary discrimination and marginalization cannot be understood in isolation. The socio-economic and cultural connections formed between Africa and Europe in the past transatlantic period still continue to influence the modern world. The exploitation of cane workers and generation of wealth through plantation by Bwana's descendants reflects how the economic systems established during the transatlantic slave trade continue to benefit certain classes while others remain oppressed.

The exploration of living memory and the slave sublime in Bernardine Evaristo's *Blonde Roots* highlights the brutal realities of enslavement and their persistence in contemporary societies. Through the memory of enslaver and the slave sublime the horrors of the Middle Passage, slave auctions, and plantation life drawing attention to the physical and psychological trauma imposed on enslaved bodies.

Bernardine Evaristo's novel *Soul Tourists* explores the fusion of slave sublime and memory. It tells the story of two travelers, Stanley and Jessie, as throughout their journey they encounter ghosts from the past. The novel highlights that the past isn't just something we read about, rather it's alive and interacts with the characters. The ghosts who share their stories is a transhistorical phenomenon, which transcend specific times and places and also actively shaping the contemporary world. The sublime connects the past's horror to the present and linking different locations through shared histories of suffering and resilience. It shows the harsh realities of history, like slavery and exclusion. Memory and the sublime are connected in the story as the ghosts don't just tell sad stories, but it helped Stanley to see the

beauty, strength, and lessons in their experiences. These lessons remind that history is all about the stories which connect with the emotions. Through Stanley's journey, the novel shows how memory and storytelling help to preserve the past social and cultural history.

Stanley's journey shows how memory and storytelling help to preserve the past social and cultural history. His journey transcends time and space by travelled into the past of each country he visited. Before starting the journey Stanley's mother ghost, representing the historical, cultural, and personal aspects of diasporas. Her every action and words are filled with Caribbean culture and tradition. In fact, her distinctive voice is more than just a stylistic choice. Its narrative tool reflects main aspects of memory and its intersections with identity, history, and resistance:

Pearline whose cooking aromas still fled the kitchen, fried garlic and onions hissing in a pan, curried goat in a pot on the stove, and his favourite- rum-soaked fruit cake baking in the oven . . . Pearline whose antique cook's knife, with its smooth ivory handle, gathered dust in a draw because when he used it he could feel her strong hands sawing deep into hundreds of succulent hams, the Sunday roast, gammon. (4)

Pearline's voices are filled with sensory and emotional details like her voice, the smells of her cooking, and even an antique knife. These elements create a living memory that bridges the past and present and influences Stanley's identity and heritage. Her voice, food, and presence involve a rich cultural and familial history. Gilroy says, "After slavery, the memory of the slave experience is itself recalled and used as an additional, supplementary instrument with which to construct a distinct interpretation of modernity" (71). Pearline's dialogue, "Oh! Yu remember yu have a yard?" immediately signifies yard as both a literal home and a metaphor for cultural and communal belonging. Pearline's invocation of the yard recalls Stanley a cultural essence that tied him to African diasporic experience. This experience reflects the intimate nature of memory within the framework of modernity. The meals, like garlic, onions, curried goat, and rum-soaked fruitcake, worked on the sensory bridge between past and present. Food, in this context, becomes a repository of memory, preserving the legacy of the African culture and its adaptation within modernity. These cooking traditions demonstrate memory as an additional instrument that transforms historical trauma into a distinct interpretation of modernity. The act of cooking becomes a way to reclaim their traditions and resist the removal of diasporic histories in the narrative of the contemporary world.

The concept of the slave sublime in *Soul Tourists* emerges through the novel's depiction of historical traumas, particularly those linked to slavery, racial exclusion, and oppression. The sublime, a term often associated with awe and terror, emerges through Stanley's encounters with ghost such as Hector and his friend Joseph who was very keen to know the past of Hector, who attained a social status after being belong to the marginalized group. He declares, "Fear not: as your official biographer I will preserve it for you," (117). Joseph statement highlight role of storytelling in preserving erased narratives. The ghost pledge to preserve the story reflects how oral histories, witnesses, and personal accounts become vital repositories of the past. The storytelling in the novel not only represent trauma but also transmits lessons, emotions, and identities across generations Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic* says, "The memory of slavery becomes an open secret and dominates the post-slave experiences that are interpreted as its covert continuation" (208). The legacies of slavery persist beneath the surface of modern life, shaping racial and cultural experiences long after the formal end of slavery. The trauma and horror of enslavement is not confined to history but actively resurfaces in systemic inequalities, cultural expressions, and collective memory. The insights on black culture through these spectral figures evoke awe and horror, embodying the resilience and suffering of those marginalized by history. The story of these prominent personalities emphasizes how nineteenth-century stories of slavery, redemptive suffering, and triumph over oppression transitioned into new narrative forms. The spectral figures embody this shift, blending historical trauma with personal testimony to persevere history as a living resource of cultural memory and resilience. Through encounters with historical ghosts, such as black figures marginalized by European history, Stanley confronts the realities of racial injustice. The novel uses the supernatural to serve as an actively update historical memory, urging the characters and readers to engage with the past on an emotional and visceral level:

You must begin with my islands, Guadeloupe and the terrible Saint-Domingue... I grew up with sugar cane. Sugar cane for Europe's sweet tooth. She is such a monstrous evil bitch! . . . Slavery on Saint-Domingue is the cruelest anywhere Plantation beasts are treated better . . . Millions have been enslaved to satisfy our lust for sugar. (117-118)

The ghost's vivid narrative bridges historical exploitation with contemporary reflections on memory as a living intellectual resource to preserve black culture. The stories of redemptive suffering and escape from slavery gave way to narratives confronting colonial exploitation and transatlantic trauma. The ghosts Stanley meets exist beyond temporal boundaries,

narrating personal and collective histories. The memory of enslaved revealed that the lust for sugar resulted in dehumanizing millions of people. The horror and cruelty of slavery is exposed from the story of Hector, who was the first black colonel in the French Army. The brutality of slavery, where human lives were commodified for Europe's economic greed. Evaristo transforms these narratives into a living intellectual resource, that are preserved through expressive culture, generates critical responses to history. The ghost's story, layered with agony and pride, underscores the duality of trauma and resilience, forcing Stanley to confront the painful legacies of racial injustice. Hector's success, despite his painful origins, reflects Gilroy's notion that Black identity is shaped by struggle and survival across transnational experiences. The spectral figures thus shift the discourse from passive remembrance to active engagement with the past, where memory is both a site of pain and a foundation for cultural resistance.

The ghosts Stanley meets serve as living resources of the slave sublime. Bernardine Evaristo's *Soul Tourists* masterfully employs the slave sublime to depict the inescapable grip of historical trauma and memory on contemporary Black identities. The spectral encounters highlight that the memory of slavery becomes an open secret, continuing to shape post-slavery experiences. The passage, "My people came out of nowhere, Joseph, were transplanted onto an island, and memory real," (122) reflects the sublime endured by the descendants of the enslaved. The visceral imagery in "The hoe, the road, the rape, the tongue split by a knife, then slowly ripped apart like the tough, succulent flesh of the yucca" (122) exposes the brutalities inflicted on generations of enslaved and marginalized people. The repetition of "shame, shame, shame" (122) emphasizes the image and hatred in the heart of the present generation toward the lust for sugar plantation. The inhuman treatment of laborers leads to slave sublime, where racial hierarchies, inherited trauma, and systemic inequalities persist beneath the surface:

Long before she and Clasford moved to London, and taught me to honour my parents but not those who went before, stuffed anonymously into an airless attic trunk with moth-eaten clothes and discarded mementoes . . . Clasford always said that Jamaica delivered him and England destroyed him, but he was wrong, Joseph, you see both formed him-one with sun, the other with rain challenges simplistic narratives of migration and belonging. (122)

The passage challenges simplistic narratives of migration and belonging. The legacy of colonial rule is embedded in Jamaica's social hierarchies and collective consciousness, mirroring the ways in which slave trade history continues to shape contemporary racial and national identities. *Soul Tourist* presents history as an ongoing negotiation, where identity is shaped not just by past oppressions but by the act of remembering and reclaiming lost narratives. Hector and Joseph conversation highlights the suppression of historical memory, as Gilroy's argument that "Writers, particularly those closest to the slave experience, repudiated the heroic narrative of western civilisation and used a philosophically informed approach to slavery in order to undermine the monumental time that supports it" (197). By refusing to engage with a linear, monumentalized version of history, *Soul Tourists* instead emphasizes fragmented, lived experiences that expose the ongoing repercussions of colonialism. When Stanley's apprehend the slave history, his heart filled with respect for those who survived the slavery era. He also gets how England destroys Jamaican by using their colonial power. The ghosts and memories actively challenge dominant Eurocentric accounts of history. The dual forces of Jamaica and England, description reinforce the complexity of diasporic identity, one that is not simply about oppression or liberation but a synthesis of multiple historical forces. Through these stories it is proven that history is not a fixed past but an ever-present force shaping identity and consciousness. The ghosts do not simply haunt; they compel Stanley and the reader to recognize the interconnected legacies of colonialism, slavery, and migration. Therefore, the novel affirms storytelling as an act of resistance, a means of reclaiming Black history and positioning memory as an evolving, disruptive force against hegemonic historical narratives.

Soul Tourists presents memory as a living entity, one that refuses to be confined to the past. Through the interplay of the slave sublime, historical trauma, and spectral storytelling, Evaristo illuminates how suppressed histories continue to shape contemporary Black identity. The novel represents how memory, storytelling, and the ghostly presence of history serve as powerful tools in resisting historical amnesia and asserting the enduring relevance of Black experiences.

Bernardine Evaristo's *Mr Loverman* explores the intersections between living memory and the slave sublime, particularly in how the novel engages with the histories of colonialism, slavery and forced labor. The protagonist, Barrington Walker's Journey shows the persistent effects of historical expectations, while the narrative structure and themes indicate the complex aesthetic of the slave sublime. In the novel, living memory functions as

an ongoing conciliation with the past, where Barrington's personal history is deeply tied to the broader colonial and postcolonial experiences of Black Caribbean migrants in Britain. His memories of Antigua, his troubled marriage with Carmel and his struggles for financial independence all reflect the weight of historical expectations and economic realities passed down from colonial rule. As Barrington reflects, "Yes, Maxine, some folk get only one life, which, if they fuck it up, ain't no joke, and some folk have two lives goin' on contemporaneously" (110). The dual character portrays by Barry reflects the tension between his personal history and the collective colonial past, as Barrington constantly navigates between his Caribbean heritage and the expectations imposed upon him in Britain. McLeod says, "London's diaspora communities are not immune from pursuing internally their own forms of compulsion which mobilize hierarchies of gender, sexuality, age, class, caste and other social categories of identity" (11). His struggles with economic survival and societal validation reflect the postcolonial experience, where individuals are often caught between nostalgia for their homeland and the necessity of assimilation in their new environment. The colonial past continues to shape the present, manifesting in economic inequalities, labor exploitation, and the enduring structures of power that complicate Barrington's quest for self-definition.

The concept of the slave sublime appears in *Mr Loverman* through economic constraints, labor exploitation, and systemic inequalities persist within the Black British experience. The historical suppression of Black working-class struggles highlights the silencing of enslaved voices, reinforcing how exploitation evolves across generations. The murder of Delroy Simmons serves as a haunting moment that emphasizes the brutal realities of contemporary structural violence. Barrington recalls:

I went to the to my front door and saw a car has crushed into the lamp-post opposite Blue Datsun. Without any ado, I ran in my slippers . . . The driver had been shot; he was slumped back, his face a bloody mess . . . Then I recognized him. A Jamaican fella called Delroy Simmons, local electrician, sometimes worked for me. The official story was that he'd been in a bust-up outside the Casablanca over some woman and been shot up by the gangsters who frequented it. Word on the street was he'd been cheating on his woman with a 'batty' man. (113-114)

The passage emphasizes the precarity faced by Black laborers, where economic vulnerability is combined by social marginalization and community policing. The murder of Delroy Simmons is not just an act of violence but a stark reminder of how easily Black lives, especially those in precarious economic positions, can be subjected to injustice without accountability. “Our emotions with pints all night, quietly contemplating the dangerous world we was living in” (114). Delroy's violent death, described through Barrington's perspective, reveals that the way Black lives and deaths are frequently manipulated to fit a socially acceptable narrative, rather than being seen as complex human tragedies. The fact that Delroy was an electrician, a profession that represents skill, independence, and social contribution makes his murder even more tragic. His story reflects the barriers that Black worker's economic contributions do not necessarily shield them from violence and social exclusion. The incident also proves the contemporary echoes of historical forms of labor exploitation and violence. Gilroy mentioned, “Slavery is seen in an ethical light but is primarily presented as an exploitative economic system of an international nature” (28). Just as enslaved individuals were subject to unaccountable brutality, Delroy's death exposes how even in modern contexts, Black workers remain vulnerable to forces that seek to control, punish, and even kill them. The precarity mentioned in the passage, therefore, is not just about financial instability but also about the social structures that continue to place Black individuals at risk, making their lives disposable in the face of both economic hardship and violent policing.

Barrington's reflections on property ownership provide a commentary on generational resilience: “I'd already been thinking about how I could make my mark in this country, defy the low expectations the indigenes had of us, exploit an economy that, compared to our poor-poor islands, was a financial paradise” (115). Barrington aware about racialized economic hierarchies and socio-economic limitations placed on Caribbean migrants. “We had chosen to emigrate, so we expected foreignness, whereas they hadn't chosen to leave their home but all of a sudden it was full of foreigners” (118). British society, shaped by colonial histories, viewed Black immigrants as a low-skilled labor force rather than as individuals with entrepreneurial potential or intellectual capacity. Barrington, in positioning himself against these low expectations, acknowledges the barriers but also asserts his ambition to surpass them. Barrington recognizes the economic structures in Britain as something to be leveraged for personal gain, turning the logic of colonial capitalism on its head. Historically, the British Empire extracted wealth from the Caribbean, exploiting its labor and resources. Here, Barrington reverses that dynamic—where Caribbean immigrants, instead of being passive

subjects of economic oppression, actively navigate and take advantage of Britain's relative financial stability. Barrington's aspiration to financial independence is, therefore, not simply about personal success but about resisting the continued economic suppression of Black individuals. His desire to "make his mark" is an act of defiance against historical and structural constraints that sought to limit Black economic agency.

In *Mr Loverman*, the concepts of living memory and the slave sublime work together to highlight how history remains a persistent force in shaping identity. Barrington's journey toward financial stability is not just a personal struggle but a broader commentary on the inherited constraints of colonialism, forced labor, and economic suppression. His eventual success in property ownership signals a break from the past, yet it also underscores the endurance of historical narratives that continue to shape Black labor and economic realities.

Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* is a novel that interconnects multiple narratives of Black British experiences from the beginning of the slave trade till contemporary times. Among the novel's critical engagements, the notions of living memory and the slave sublime emerge as central themes contributing to its postcolonial discourse. By interrogating the persistence of historical traumas in contemporary Black identities, Evaristo centres the spectral presence of slavery in the lives of her characters. *Girl, Woman, Other* engages with the concept of living memory that is a continuous, embodied, and affective recollection of the past and the slave sublime, an aesthetic and philosophical framework that acknowledges the overwhelming, ineffable horror of slavery.

Girl, Woman, Other employs living memory to link the past with the present, showing how historical injustices and cultural erasures continue to shape contemporary Black identities. Memory in this context is not merely an act of recollection, but rather a lived experience, deeply embedded in the psyche and daily realities of the novel's characters, particularly evident in the character of Amma, whose activism and artistic endeavours reflect a deep awareness of Black British history. Amma's journey is informed by a desire to resist the erasure of Black narratives, making her work a conduit for living memory. Her plays, particularly those centred on Black feminist history, serve to pass down memory, much like oral traditions preserved ancestral knowledge during slavery. Amma's engagement with theatre as a medium of Black storytelling reflects this tension, as she consciously bridges oral traditions with contemporary performance to counter the erasure of Black histories. Her work operates as living memory, functioning both as resistance and reclamation. This is evident in

The Last Amazon of Dahomey, which is deeply rooted in historical narratives of African female warriors. Amma's play is a historical reconstruction and an act of defiance against the ongoing exclusion of Black voices in mainstream theatre. As Amma contemplates her work's impact, she acknowledges that she has long fought against exclusion: "Amma then spent decades on the fringe, a renegade lobbing hand grenades at the establishment that excluded her until the mainstream began to absorb what was once radical and she found herself hopeful of joining it" (2). The use of war imagery in this metaphor conveys the intensity of her struggle, framing her artistic career as a battle for recognition and space. Paul Gilroy notes:

Different genres in black expressive culture have responded to the aporetic status of post-emancipation black art in quite different ways. . . reveal a common degree of discomfort with the novel and a shared anxiety about its utility as a resource in the social processes that govern the remaking and conservation of historical memory" (218-219).

Moreover, Amma's decision to centre her play on the Dahomey Amazons, a historical group of female warriors highlights her commitment to reclaiming Black women's histories from obscurity. By dramatizing their legacy, she transforms historical memory into a powerful contemporary statement about resistance, empowerment, and the erasure of Black female agency in dominant historical narratives. So, her play illustrates how memory, when wielded through art, can serve as a radical force for change, bridging the past and present through creative expression.

Hattie, the oldest character in *Girl, Woman, Other*, embodies the role of a living archive, preserving both personal and collective Black British history. As the grandmother of a sprawling family, her memory is not confined to individual experience, rather it spans generations, connecting past and present through oral storytelling and lived experience. During a Christmas gathering, Hattie reflects on the legacy of her family's land, which has been in their possession for over two hundred years: "She's lived in this place ninety-three years now, this farm isn't just her home, her hyem, it's her bones and her soul" (367). This assertion expresses her deep connection to the land, not merely as a physical space but as a repository of history. She understands that her responsibility extends beyond ownership; she must ensure that the younger generations comprehend its significance. Hattie's resistance to selling the land reflects her commitment to safeguarding Black history against the encroachment of capitalist and colonial forces. She refuses to let her children and

grandchildren sell the farm to “foreigners like those Russians or Chinese to build a luxury hotel or turn it into a golf course” (344) revealing an underlying anxiety about the erasure of Black heritage. The land is not just property it is a historical site of Black labour and survival, much like the ancestral spaces Gilroy references when he states that “the memory of slavery, actively preserved as a living intellectual resource in their expressive political culture, helped them to generate a new set of answers to this enquiry” (39). Memory, for Hattie, is an act of resistance against both historical and personal erasure. Her husband, Slim, a Black American, carries with him the painful memory of racial terror in the United States. While recounting the terror Slim reveals the story of his little brother “Soaked in coal oil before he was strung up on a sugarberry tree and set alight while still alive in front of thousands cheering” (335). This vivid imagery serves as a stark reminder of the systemic brutality faced by Black Americans, a history that Slim insists must not be forgotten. He justifies the anger of negro by recounting the terror that happened with them, which continues in the future:

Negro had reason to be angry, having spent four hundred years in America enslaved, victimized and kept downtrodden it was a powder keg waiting to explode she replied they were a million miles from America and it’s different here, Slim, not perfect but better he said his little brother Sonny was the children’s uncle and they needed to know what happened to him and about the history of a country that allowed him to be murdered, and it’s your duty to face up to racial issues, Hattie, because our children are darker than you and aren’t going to have it as easy they had these conversations until she was able to see things from his point of view. (356)

The narration highlights how memory functions as both a painful reminder of injustice and a necessary tool for survival. Slim insists that their children must understand the weight of history because these traumatic histories do not remain locked in the past, they shape the consciousness of the present. Hattie and Slim’s intergenerational transmission of these memories ensures that their descendants do not forget the systemic violence that shaped their lineage. Slim’s awareness that his children will face inequality based on their skin colour emphasizes the idea that the trauma of slavery and racial terror leaves a residue that affects subsequent generations. This intergenerational trauma is not just a historical relic but a living reality that shapes the consciousness of the present. Hattie and Slim’s conversations about racial issues reflect their commitment to breaking the cycle of silence and denial. By confronting these painful histories, they equip their descendants with the knowledge and

resilience needed to navigate a world still marked by racial inequality. This intergenerational transmission of memory is both a burden and a gift. It ensures that the past is not forgotten, but it also forces each generation to live with the weight of history.

In *Girl, Woman, Other*, Evaristo uses living memory and the slave sublime to explore how the legacies of colonialism, slavery, and racial violence continue to shape Black identities. The story of Amma, Dominique, and Hattie highlights how memory is not just a passive recollection of the past but an active force that informs identity, resistance, and cultural survival. The novel asserts that the past is never fully detached from the present, rather, it lingers, shaping contemporary Black consciousness. By preserving and transmitting these histories, whether through activism, storytelling, or personal reflection, the characters ensure that the trauma and resilience of Black history are neither forgotten nor erased but carried forward as a form of empowerment and resistance.

Conclusion

The study has critically explored the growing relationship between the postcolonial metropolis and Black consciousness, with particular emphasis on the portrayal of London in the selected novels of Bernardine Evaristo. Conceptualized as a socio-political and cultural construct, the postcolonial metropolis emerges from the historical processes of imperial expansion, transnational migration, and global interconnectivity. London, in this context, operates not merely as a geographical location but as a symbolic space occupied with colonial legacies, racial negotiations, and diasporic identities. Through its deep-rooted colonial legacy and persistent racial tensions, London provides a vital framework for examining how imperial residues continue to influence the everyday realities, identities, and struggles of diasporic communities.

Bernardine Evaristo's identity as a mixed-race British woman of Nigerian and English heritage, and as someone who identifies with the LGBTQ+ community, positions her work as central to the discourse on the postcolonial metropolis and Black consciousness. Growing up in postcolonial London, a city marked by deep racial, cultural, and socio-economic divisions. Her narratives reflect this lived experience, portraying the city as a space of contradiction as a site of cultural diversity and opportunity, yet a space full of systemic racism, homophobia, and historical erasure. As such, her fiction engages directly with the tensions and negotiations involved in inhabiting a diasporic, metropolitan identity shaped by colonial legacies. Evaristo's contribution extends beyond fiction into theatre and activism, where she has used performance as a powerful tool of resistance and representation. As a co-founder of the Theatre of Black Women in 1982, the first theatre company in the UK formed by and for Black women, she helped carve out a space for Black female voices in a domain long dominated by white, male perspectives. Her early engagement in theatre reflects a deep commitment to counter-hegemonic storytelling, using the stage to challenge stereotypes, affirm cultural identity, and confront institutional exclusion. This resistance to dominant narratives is a core aspect of her creative philosophy and seamlessly aligns with the ethos of Black consciousness, which advocates for psychological liberation, cultural pride, and the rejection of internalized inferiority. In both her literary and performative work, Evaristo actively deconstructs Eurocentric archetypes and insists on the multiplicity of Black British identities. Through this lens, her work not only fits within but significantly enriches the study of the postcolonial metropolis and Black consciousness, as it brings to light the complex

intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and space in shaping diasporic subjectivities in modern Britain.

The first objective is to trace the genesis of the postcolonial metropolis and race has been a foundational framework in locating London as a complex urban entity shaped by its imperial past and the socio-political even after decolonization. The theoretical framework of scholars such as Paul Gilroy, Franz Fanon, W.E.B. Du Bois, John McLeod and Edward Said has shown how the postcolonial metropolis functions as a site of convergence, where histories of colonialism, patterns of migration, acts of resistance, and formations of cultural hybridity intersect. London, as represented in Bernardine Evaristo's novels, emerges as both a symbol of opportunity and a territory marked by structural inequality, racialized exclusion, and cultural negotiation. Within this urban city, Black consciousness appears as a powerful and necessary response to these exclusions. It is not merely a reaction to systemic oppression, but a conscious movement of self-articulation and psychological liberation. Rooted in the philosophies of W.E.B. Du Bois, Frantz Fanon, and Steve Biko, Black consciousness in Evaristo's narratives becomes a form of cultural awakening, an assertion of dignity, and historical memory against the erasures and distortions of colonial and neo-colonial discourse. It enables the characters to reclaim not only their individual and collective identities but also their rightful presence in the metropolis.

The second objective, to understand race and ethnic complexities in the select texts investigated how Evaristo's novels depict the racial and ethnic complexities that shape Black British identity. Through a collection of diverse characters like Zuleika, Stanley, Doris, Jerome, Barrington, and Amma, the research captures the intersections of cultural hybridity, generational trauma, and systemic racism. The selected novels demonstrate that identity in the postcolonial metropolis is constantly negotiated within a matrix of social hierarchies, inherited memory, and institutional exclusion. In *The Emperor's Babe*, the racialised experiences of Zuleika and historical figures such as Septimius Severus reveal that, even in ancient Roman London, power and belonging were stratified along racial lines. Similarly, *Soul Tourists* transcends temporal and spatial boundaries, using the spectral presence of forgotten Black figures across Europe to show that racism is not a relic of history but a pervasive force that continues to inform Black existence across eras and borders. *Blonde Roots* takes this examination further by inverting the racial roles of the transatlantic slave trade, dismantling the present racial hierarchies and revealing race as a socially constructed fiction maintained through violence and ideology. In *Hello Mum*, the systemic

marginalization of contemporary Black youth is explored through the inner voice of Jerome, whose personal struggles show the psychological and social costs of racism, cultural stereotyping, and class disparity in modern Britain. *Mr. Loverman* shifts the focus toward the intergenerational experiences of Caribbean immigrants, where Barrington Walker and his family navigate the weight of racialized expectations, linguistic assimilation, and cultural repression in a society structured by Eurocentric values. *Girl, Woman, Other* summarizes the full spectrum of Evaristo's engagement with identity, offering a polyphonic narrative that traces the lives of Black British women across generations. The novel critiques colonial legacies, assimilation pressures, and the internalization of racism. Through characters like Amma, Dominique, and Hattie's descendants, the novel proves the nature of racial identity as a fluid identity which constantly changes due to individual histories and socio-political forces.

The third objective, to study the construction of black consciousness in the select novels of Bernardine Evaristo, explored the construction and dynamics of Black consciousness in Bernardine Evaristo's selected novels as a powerful framework through which her characters confront, resist, and redefine the racial, social, and psychological boundaries imposed by dominant narratives. Through the perspective of different thinkers like Frantz Fanon, Steve Biko and Paul Gilroy, the analysis has demonstrated how Evaristo's work articulates Black consciousness not simply as a movement but as a lived, evolving process rooted in self-awareness, cultural pride, and historical reclamation. The characters such as Zuleika, Stanley, Doris, Barrington, Amma and other minor characters present Black consciousness as an internal and external journey toward psychological liberation. *The Emperor's Babe* explores how Alba and the Emperor infused Zuleika with empowerment, transforming her from a victim of an inferiority complex into a figure of resistance against the oppressive forces that suppress her freedom. *Soul Tourists* explores identity, history, and the complexities of cultural belonging through a transnational perspective. The novel takes readers on a literary journey across Europe, guided by the protagonist Stanley's encounters with ghosts from the past. These spectral figures serve as symbolic representations of erased Black presence in European history, interrupting dominant historical narratives that erase black historical figures and contributions in European history. Stanley's internal struggles, alienation and a sense of disconnection are not simply personal but reflective of societal failure to acknowledge the historical depth and diversity of Black existence in Europe. *Blonde Roots* extends this historiographic project through its bold speculative inversion of the

transatlantic slave trade. The reversal of racial power dynamics exposes the constructedness of racial hierarchies. Doris's physical struggles with Afrikan beauty standards serve as a powerful allegory for the internalization of colonial ideology. In *Mr Loverman*, Black consciousness is shown as a personal journey that helps Barry finally accept who he is after years of hiding and feeling ashamed. As a gay Black Caribbean man living in Britain, Barry has always felt pulled in different directions because of both his race and sexuality. His story shows how hard it can be when society expects people to hide parts of themselves. But over time, Barry starts to unlearn this shame. He begins to see his true self with pride and dignity. When Barry finally decides to live openly and honestly, it not only changes his own life but also inspires the people around him. His daughter, Maxine, is especially inspired by his courage. Seeing her father's psychological liberation, she rejects narrow beauty ideals and becomes more confident and open-minded. In this way, Barry's personal growth becomes a spark for change in the next generation. *Girl, Woman, Other* presents twelve interconnected stories that come together to challenge mainstream history and centre the lived experiences of Black British people. Amma's theatre work acts as a form of resistance, pushing back against white-dominated roles and reclaiming the stage to tell real Black stories. Shirley, as an educator, shows how pride in Black identity can grow through community leadership and teaching. Nzinga's influence on Dominique and others highlights the importance of liberating both the body and mind from harmful ideas passed down by white, colonial. These characters show that Black consciousness isn't just about personal pride, it's a collective journey toward self-acceptance, cultural confidence, and breaking free from systems of oppression.

The last objective, to analyse postcolonial London as diasporic explored in Chapter 4: Postcolonial London and Diaspora Space and Chapter 5: Living Memory and the Slave Sublime. Together, these chapters look at how Bernardine Evaristo presents London not just as a city, but as a place shaped by migration, memory, and the long-lasting effects of colonialism. Through her diverse characters and powerful storytelling, Evaristo brings attention to lives and voices that are often ignored or silenced in mainstream history. London, in her novels, is not a simple backdrop it is a living, changing space where different cultures, histories, and identities meet and clash. The works shows how the city is marked by the traces of the empire and by the everyday experiences of those who came from former colonies. In *The Emperor's Babe*, Zuleika's story gives voice to people who have long been excluded because of their race and gender. The novel shows how slavery and racism were deeply rooted even in ancient times, and how these systems used violence and power to strip people

of their identity and freedom. Zuleika's journey is a living memory to preserve the pain and resilience of those who suffered, making sure their stories are not forgotten. *Soul Tourists* continues this theme, following Stanley and Jessie as they travel across Europe, uncovering hidden Black histories. The novel explores what it means to belong, especially when your identity is shaped by both your roots and the society you live in. In *Blonde Roots*, Evaristo uses the reversal of the transatlantic slave trade to highlight the deep trauma and violence of slavery, showing how its effects still shape lives today through both memory and history. In *Hello Mum*, the story of Jerome, a young boy living in a London council estate, shows the struggles of identity and belonging for Black youth. His tragic story highlights how social and economic conditions in postcolonial London can shape and even destroy lives. In *Mr Loverman*, Barry leaves Antigua for London in hopes of a better future. But his life in the city is full of challenges, especially because he is a gay Black man. He faces racism in society and rejection from his own community, which holds strict views on sexuality. His journey shows how history and identity are always present, shaping personal choices and struggles. Evaristo also shows how the weight of the past through the legacy of colonialism and economic hardship still influences his path to success and self-acceptance. Finally, *Girl, Woman, Other*, beautifully narrates the stories of Amma, Dominique, Hattie, and many others to show how memory, activism, and storytelling can become powerful tools of resistance. These characters do not just remember the past, they use it to build strength, identity, and community in the present. The novel captures the discrimination and marginalisation that many Black people face in postcolonial London, while also celebrating their resilience, culture, and contribution to the city.

Overall, Evaristo's fiction presents postcolonial London as a space of both struggle and possibility. Through the lens of diaspora, her characters reclaim identity, resist erasure, and find power in remembering who they are and where they come from. In this context, "Metropolitan Dispossession" provides a helpful framework for understanding the lives of Black diasporic individuals in postcolonial London. MD suggests that diasporic individuals exist in a paradoxical state, present in the city but without spatial ownership. This dispossession is not just about economics or housing; it also affects cultural memory, historical recognition, emotional space, and narrative control. London, as a postcolonial metropolis, is seen as a structure of selective belonging. It grants access to the city but simultaneously denies Black individuals their full identity, history, and place within the

narrative of the city. MD sees literature, especially Bernardine Evaristo's works, as a space where this dispossession is both exposed and challenged.

While this study provides significant insights into the intersection of the postcolonial metropolis and Black consciousness in the selected novels of Bernardine Evaristo, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The research primarily focuses on Evaristo's fictional narratives and does not extend to her non-fictional writings, poetry, or theatrical works, which could have offered additional perspectives on her engagement with race, identity, and diaspora. Furthermore, the study is confined to the British postcolonial context, specifically London, and does not include comparative analysis with other postcolonial urban spaces such as Paris or New York, which could broaden the understanding of diasporic experiences. The research also predominantly adopts a literary and theoretical approach, which may not fully encompass the real-life experiences of diasporic communities navigating systemic oppression in contemporary metropolitan settings. While the study highlights racial and ethnic complexities, it pays comparatively less attention to other intersecting identities such as gender, sexuality, and class, which are also crucial in Evaristo's work. Lastly, as with any interpretative literary study, the findings and conclusions remain subjective and shaped by the selected theoretical frameworks, leaving space for further exploration from interdisciplinary or empirical perspectives.

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