International Journal of Advance and Applied Research
www.ijaar.co.in
ISSN – 2347-7075 Impact Factor – 8.141
Peer Reviewed Bi-Monthly
Vol. 7 No. 2 January – February - 2026

Search for Identity as a Diasporic Element in Bernardine Evaristo's *Blonde Roots*

Dr. Dhere Digwijay Dadasaheb
Assistant Professor, Department of English,
Prof. Dr. N. D. Patil Mahavidyalaya, Malkapur
Corresponding Author – Dr. Dhere Digwijay Dadasaheb
DOI - 10.5281/zenodo.18654683

Abstract:

New literature of various colonized countries has a search of real human life and its predicament. Post-Colonial Diasporic African fiction particularly seeks a real life through search for identity. It is a major diasporic element which is reflected in the African Diasporic women writer's fiction work. The famous Booker Prize winner African Diasporic women fiction writer Bernardine Evaristo's Blonde Roots is written in a similar ideology. Displacement, collected memories, slavery and subjugation of black women are an integral part of search for identity. Bernardine Evaristo's Blonde Roots is a satirical novel presents an alternative history of the transatlantic slavery, with Africans as the masters of European slaves.

Keywords: Displacement, Collected Memories, Slavery and Subjugation of Black Women.

Introduction:

Bernardine Evaristo is the African Diasporic writer of eight works of fiction and verse fiction concerning the African Diaspora, as well as two nonfiction publications. Her work *Girl, Woman, Other* won the Booker Prize in 2019. In her writing, she frequently juxtaposes the past with the present, fiction with poetry, the real with the fantastic and reality with alternate realities.

Search for Identity as a Diasporic Element in *Blonde Roots*:

The Ambossans, or blaks, are depicted by Evaristo as the dominant class in a world economy that depends on the transatlantic slave trade. They reside in Great Ambossa, England and the West Japanese Territories of Amarika. At this juncture, the voice of Doris, the English protagonist who is enslaved, informs us that Europanes, or whytes, must suffer the horrors of captivity. These are the economic and political underpinnings of the metropolitan area, which are thus reinterpreted as the worldwide operations of Great Ambossa. Despite being enslaved, Doris is not shown as a prisoner; instead, she speaks out against the government of acknowledgment that supports Ambossans' racial isolation and demands her freedom. Her audacity and sarcasm reveal a frightening cosmos that challenges the prejudices that persist in society as well as the traditional norm of black and white depiction. Does Evaristo, however, address the chroma problem as described by Du Bois? Nevertheless, Paul Gilroy claims that ethnic conflicts still exist in our community, aside from the shift and disappearance of earlier dispute patterns and notions of racial grouping.

Feminist scholar Rosi Braidotti recently used the literary theory of displacement—which I have gained to inform my understanding of the fiction—to elucidate her theory of nomadic principles. According to Braidotti, the search for and development of cross-cultural relationships is essential to his displacement, implying a range of diverse political strategies and the apparent

acceptance of seemingly divergent viewpoints. The phrase also refers to the simultaneous exploration of fresh modes of expression suitable for the complexity of the modern environment. Evaristo's contentious inversion and extraordinarily ambitious interconnectedness of specific location and temporal nuances known as chronotopias further reveal a feminist dimension that aligns with Braidotti's conception of transmission, as I shall show in the next sections.

Evaristo's previous verse fiction is considered a part of new queer gender views that aim to challenge and disrupt norms. She has frequently emphasized her unwavering commitment to keeping up with the shifting pro-government, multiculturalism, and distinctiveness movements. As a writer, I always take the initiative to push the envelope and venture into uncharted, often hazardous territory. Although it's risky, I can't hold myself back. Evaristo revises black issues of race and feeling of being connected in modern British society as well as their conventional portrayal in historical past. This is most evident in her prior verse fiction, *Lara* (1997) and *The Emperor's Babe* (2001), as well as her novel-in-verse *Soul Tourists* (2005). Conversely, *Blonde Roots* is notable in Evaristo's creative career because it is her first prose work. The novel's theme is clearly influenced by traditional slave memoirs, as its cover and contents reveal. By titling her book Blonde Roots and purposefully portraying her subjugated main heroine as a white blonde woman, Evaristo pays tribute to Alex Hayley's American slave novel *Roots* (1976) and *the corresponding televised live miniseries* (1977).

The three books that make up the story are mostly focused on the intertwined tales of Doris Scagglethorpe and her black invader Chief Kaga Konata Katamba I and, briefly, Bwana. Book one opens in the style of a fitting slave story as Doris attempts to escape her fate as Bwana's household slave in his residence in tropical Londolo. She embarks on a journey both mentally and physically as she uses the Rebellion—a revolution that controls the release of slaves—to help her escape through the cities abandoned underground network. Recounting her wonderful childhood in England with her three sisters, Doris describes living as a serf in the Middle Ages England that Evaristo recreates. The audience is also aware of the horrific circumstances surrounding her capture when she was ten years old and the Great Migration on a slave ship, where a number of European slaves perished after experiencing unspeakable horrors. Doris is curiously renamed Omorenomwara, indicating that this child will not decay, and acquired by her initial conquerors in New Londolo, the main port in the West Japanese Isles. As the companion of her master's nasty kid, Little Magic, with whom she plays tricks, Doris has to deal with the unsustainable nature of her new tragedy. She will nevertheless overcome her cruel first owner of slaves and return to Londolo to work as Bwana's personal assistant, demonstrating the beginnings of her future tenacity.

In Book Two, Bwana, Doris's enslaver, is shown as a storyteller who undermines the reader's expectations of a triumphant slave narrative. Bwana talks about a Dear Viewer and his memoir booklet The Flame. In this scathing pro-slavery classic, he not only lays forth his non-scientific justifications for racial prejudice, but he also describes his amazing career, from his unremarkable upbringing to his position as a successful slave merchant and capitalist entrepreneur. As we'll see later, his record cynically rejects ideas of racial dominance and supports Evaristo's analysis of the injustice of power. Despite her power and unexpected fame, Doris has no right to defy her master's resentment and desire for vengeance.

In Book Three, Doris describes the harsh punishment she receives following her incarceration and her new voyage to the West Japanese Islands. Bwana works on her plantation, Sweet Home, which represents the most horrifying system of slavery, as a sugar cane clipper. Doris and the other slaves she encounters are never subjected to oppression, despite her horrifying experiences. Even though they are forced to live as slaves and keep their heads down, they demonstrate their cultural heritage via acts of defiance. The regular lives of the slaves are turned into a delicate competition through the use of difference to enforce constructive cultural tolerance and embrace as well as various forms of togetherness. She learns to appreciate human companionship and cooperation on the crop from her closest friend Ye Memé, investigates her sister Sharon (who appears to have turned into Bwana's sexual slave), and engages in romantic encounters, all of which help her adjust to the dreadful existence on the agriculture. Similar to Doris, she pursues independence with aggression. She makes one last, desperate attempt to save the lives of her sister's and best friend's kids. With thanks to the cooperation of the various plantation leaders, they made an attempt to depart for the Maroon's tent, as Evaristo calls the area where escaped slaves hide.

However, the novel does not end here, nor will it finish with the joy that one might think. In a Postscript, Evaristo challenges the fiction by talking about the multiple fortunes of the protagonists. A cursory glance at the postscript reveals how Evaristo connects the lives of her characters to those of contemporary Britons. Because of Evaristo's hard memories of past slave discourses and her conjectured collective memory, scholars have approached the text from a post-modern perspective or from stories of connectedness and consciousness. Evaristo's multifaceted and intricate language has been seen as revealing the ways in which racial group, sexual identity and socioeconomic differences interact to shape contemporary Black British identities. This change is predicated on Evaristo's race. I have chosen to concentrate on the novel's opposition to traditional symbolizing techniques rather than Britain's sometimes disregarded role in the transatlantic slave trade and Evaristo's contradictory destruction of historical images. The topic concerning the way and for whom particular characterizations work is central to Blonde Roots, as demonstrated by Evaristo's other universe.

Consequently, this piece is written from a post-colonial ideological stance, which I frequently use to explain figurative difficulties. In addition, I clarified *Blonde Roots*' sexual identity by revisiting traditional depiction and difference stories through the use of spatial data, drawing on Braidotti's philosophical idea of displacement. John McLeod claims that from her early writings, Evaristo attempts to break through dichotomous differentiations between black history and white servitude by establishing a vision of poly-cultural interdependency. She mostly uses gender queer subjectivity and chronotopias to achieve this, which she refers to as furthering Bakhtin's idea of the historical truth. Evaristo fuses dialectic pasts within semiotic spaces, establishing new earlier unknown poly-cultural opportunities of living next each other in congenial harmony; Chronotopias combines time and space interplay, transforming them into gender queer representations. According to McLeod, Evaristo's gender queer perspective has to be acknowledged for altering old notions of heterogeneity and the typical variables of black British writing.

A British-Nigerian conceptual writer, Yinka Shonibare, illustrates and depicts this complex study of historical truth. One may argue that a large number of his works receive similar inter-sex sensitivities. He reworks classic African

and English fundamentals in novel poly-cultural contexts by sprinkling and serializing them, particularly those that are acknowledged to be emblems of either ethnic milieu. This is all illustrated in the picture I've chosen to open the chapter above. As the model of Nelson's ship HMS Triumph suggests, Shonibare's monument Nelson's *Ship in a Bottle* (2010) connects dialectical pasts with diachronic locations like London's Tahrir Square, where the statue was portrayed in 2010. African batik garments, a recurring motif throughout Shonibare's assignment, are also used to make the replica's vessels. Using these mostly African fabrics, he may dispel traditional records of British history while reassuring people of Africa's presence during Britain's colonial past. The history of the sailcloth in Nelson's *Ship in a Bottle*, however, is significantly more convoluted. They are based on wax printing methods from Indonesia, which were brought to Africa by Dutch traders who took over Indonesia. Shonibare purchasing the fabric in Brixton Sector, a symbol of exceptional intercultural exchange and one of London's most ethnically varied neighbourhoods. Its application to Hercules Victory subverts both the idea of pure British culture in general and ethnic determinism in particular in a satirical way. Both composers use sizing up of preconceptions to satirically portray on acquired societal globalization. I've chosen a few of Shonibare's essays to complement my analysis of the book.

The depiction of sexual identity through the fluctuating circumstances of the female protagonist is one of *Blonde Roots*' two main axes, considering representations based on race. There is a measurement of sexual desire missing from McLeod's description of Evaristo's sexually queer discernment. On the other hand, the text engages with current gender conversations and issues, particularly those that include a critique of biases, gendered roles and ultimately, male-dominated power structures. The novel, in my opinion, is in line with post-colonial theories in that it propagates pro-government mind-sets and highlights blades of distinctiveness that go beyond a racial and religiously constructed perspective of otherness. Doris's story, on the other hand, is a journey that, within the framework of Braidotti, aims to reinterpret master stories of personal efficacy, leaning toward conceptual migrations that question contemporary politics of recognition, as my reading of the novel will demonstrate. Therefore, following Braidotti's logic, Evaristo's major contribution can be considered one of the new motifs that suggest creative connections and interconnectedness between discourse societies that are far too frequently kept apart from one another.

Doris appears to represent the unusual journeys of a diasporic nomad who must deal with enduring racially power imbalances in several spatial dimensions. Amid the sometimes counterintuitive actions that characterize our contemporary society, relocation is not to be understood as a quantitative technique of collaborative noun multiplier, but rather as a manner of engaging the sense of hope of discrepancy as a defining motif in Braidotti's symmetry. According to this paradigm, Evaristo's investigation of the possibilities falls under the category of sex and it may address our first criticism of whether the fiction transcends the color barrier. In the next chapters, I aim to unveil Evaristo's harmonic progressions of sexual preferences and intricate pan-sexual interrelated images, and to show how they contribute significantly to the disarray of traditional ethnic and cultural stereotypes.

The post-colonial and feminist ideas that engage with depictions of discrepancy are the main subjects of the first chapter. It is predicated on the idea that the fiction explores the dual meaning of acknowledgment by challenging both

the traditional views of decentralization intended for black artists, which are mentioned as the obligation of recognition and humanistic portrayal techniques. There are numerous ramifications for this, most of which are particularly pertinent to what I've learned about the work.

Conclusion:

In this paper, the researcher tried to depict search for identity as a diasporic element throughout past experience of English protagonist, Doris who is enslaved and suffers the horrors of captivity. Here, the novel imagines an inverted world in which Black Aphrikans colonized the globe and enslaved White Europans. Thus, it explores and criticizes the history of European colonization, which began in the 1400s and reached its zenith in the early 20th century.

Works Citated:

1. Evaristo, Bernardine. *Blonde Roots*. Penguin: 2008
2. Acquarone, Cecilia Rosa. *Barriers, Borders and Crossing in Post-colonial British Fiction: A Gender Perspective*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013
3. Brah, Avtar. *Cartographies of Diaspora Contesting Identities.* London and New York: Routledge, 1996
4. Bressey, Caroline and Adi, Hakim. *Belonging in Europe the African Diaspora and Work*. London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2011
5. Clark, Hine D. Keaton D. Small, S. *Black Europe and the African Diaspora*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009