

**A LEVEL**

**Different Interpretations**

# **ENGLISH LITERATURE**

**Girl, Woman, Other**  
by Bernardine Evaristo

**Teacher Guide**

**H472/02**



**RUNNYMEDE**

**Lit in colour**

# Overview

**This pack is intended as a starting point for engaging with a range of different interpretations and views of *Girl, Woman, Other* by Bernardine Evaristo.**

The selections identified can be used as sources for understanding, support for discussions and a starting point for further reading and research; they are designed to be accessible and student friendly.

We offer a reminder here that engagement with literary criticism is only one way of approaching AO5. Excellent answers are unlikely to include more than two or three quotations from critics on any single text, and may include none. There is no requirement that students quote specific critics or literary theory in order to succeed.

## Lit in Colour

### Lit in Colour partnership

OCR is a named partner for the Lit in Colour project. Lit in Colour was created by Penguin Books UK and [The Runnymede Trust](#), to support UK schools to make the teaching and learning of English literature more inclusive of writers of colour. The campaign published research in 2021 which investigated the barriers to inclusivity schools in England currently face.

Our involvement provides us with additional expertise and support as we diversify our own Literature qualifications.

The research led nature of this work gives us access to a comprehensive view of what teachers and students might want from us as an awarding body.

Through our work with Lit in Colour, we are able to offer a wider range of high quality learning and teaching resources. Our new GCSE and A Level texts are not just accessible but exciting, challenging and enriching learning opportunities for our teachers and students.

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**A note on JSTOR access:** As several of the items listed in this document are stored on JSTOR, we should note that JSTOR does offer free access to 100 articles a month via their free personal account.

**Content warning:** There are racist and sexist references in the original text. Terminology and expressions considered appropriate - by some critics - at the time of the novel’s publication (and shortly afterwards) are sometimes reproduced here, even though such language is often considered to be unacceptable today.

# Contemporaneous reviews

## Micha Frazer-Carroll, 'Girl, Woman, Other by Bernardine Evaristo – joy as well as struggle' in *The Guardian*



**“Other questions raised in the novel feel urgent yet timeless: how can a woman incorporate a relationship with a man into her feminist life? Should we show anger towards those who ‘get it wrong’ – even if from a position of ignorance? Whose guidance should I follow?”**



Frazer-Carroll offers an overview of the ways in which the novel grapples with range. The review praises Evaristo's ability to engage with feminist and political struggles without reducing her speakers into mouthpieces for a popular debate. Frazer-Carroll admits that at times some conversations can 'feel naïve' but generally resonate.

The review refers to the novel's 'Soap opera-style grand finale', again demonstrating how Evaristo turns to the theatre for closure. Frazer-Carroll pays tribute to the book's variety and difference and celebrates the setting of "a Britain less often depicted in fiction".

Frazer-Carroll praises how "[e]ach storyline brings the reader round to a position of empathy. The characters are flawed and complex." The review seems to characterise the novel's chief quality as its engagement with diversity and connectedness or as Frazer-Carroll calls it "the drive for togetherness."

### Find out more

Frazer-Carroll, Micha, '[Girl, Woman, Other by Bernardine Evaristo – joy as well as struggle](#)', *The Guardian*, 8th May 2019

## Sarah Ladipo Manyika, 'Bernadine Evaristo's Girl, Woman, Other is a story for our times', in *New Statesman*



**“Spanning a century, Evaristo's 12 main characters cover the stages of womanhood from adolescence to old age. [...] The language of *Girl, Woman, Other* is exuberant, bursting at the seams in delightful ways [...] Many of the protagonists in the book have suffered from sexual harassment and abuse, but none remains a victim. All are, in their own way, triumphant.”**



Manyika's review is broadly positive, focusing the ways in which Evaristo's novel seeks to represent a multiplicity of female experience and acknowledge the intersections between women and non-binary characters, as well as other intersections about class and age.

Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (our new additional text to our list for The Immigrant Experience) and the ways in which Evaristo's novel attempts in places to plug Selvon's omissions.

Manyika also offers much praise for Evaristo's linguistic style and the aural qualities of her writing, along with her sense of humour. She also draws links between this novel and Sam

### Find out more

Ladipo Manyika, Sarah, '[Bernadine Evaristo's Girl, Woman, Other is a story for our times](#)', *New Statesman*, 9th May 2019

## Ron Charles, 'Bernardine Evaristo's 'Girl, Woman, Other' received half a Booker Prize, but it deserves all the glory' in *The Washington Post*



**“A breathtaking symphony of black women’s voices, a clear-eyed survey of contemporary challenges that’s nevertheless wonderfully life-affirming [...] With the passage from gentle empathy to steely realism to wry satire, one marvels at the dimensions of Evaristo’s tonal range. [...] It’s just the style needed to carry along all these women’s stories and then bring them to a perfectly calibrated moment of harmony.”**



Charles’ review begins by acknowledging the controversy of the Booker Prize jury but noting that it had generated interest in “a truly fine novel.” His perspective of the novel is that it is effective in its scope and variety of voice. He describes the multi-perspective approach of the novel as “a series of elegantly layered stories.”

Over the course of his review, Charles offers a summary of the novel and its characters, describing Amma as the Big Bang “from

which the universe of this novel expands in all directions.” His review is extremely positive, lauding Evaristo’s creativity and empathy throughout.

### Find out more

Charles, Ron, [‘Bernardine Evaristo’s ‘Girl, Woman, Other’ received half a Booker Prize, but it deserves all the glory’, \*The Washington Post\*, 28th October 2019](#)

## Dwight Garner, 'Girl, Woman, Other, a Big, Busy Novel About New Ways of Living' in *The New York Times*



**“Like [Alison] Bechdel, Evaristo has a gift for appraising the lives of her characters with sympathy and grace while gently skewering some of their pretensions. When you are feeling your way into new ways of living, she understands, there must be room for error. [...] There’s a looseness to her tone that gives this novel its buoyancy. Evaristo’s wit helps, too.”**



Dwight Garner opens his review, following the controversial award of the Booker prize, by noting that the novel will always be linked with Margaret Atwood’s *The Testaments*, “like conjoined twins”. Unlike others, he concludes that this may not be a bad thing, almost suggesting that the sharing gives a nod to diversity and inclusivity.

His review is energetic and humorous, suggesting that the large cast of characters should each “be provided with a latte and a nametag” to ensure that keep track of who is who. He suggests that the novel “presents a landscape of abiding multicultural

sensitivity” and quotes the dedication as a way of indicating the writer’s generosity and breadth of vision. Overall the review feels positively about the novel, if not always about its length and breadth.

### Find out more

Garner, Dwight, [‘Girl, Woman, Other, a Big, Busy Novel About New Ways of Living’, \*The New York Times\*, 4th November 2019](#)

## Will Gompertz, 'Booker Prize: Will Gompertz reviews *Girl, Woman, Other* by Bernardine Evaristo' on the BBC Website

Will Gompertz begins his review in lively style, deploring the indecision of the Booker judges and exercising his own decision to choose Evaristo over Atwood for his review, since he judges that Atwood is much the better known of the two.

He outlines the structure of *Girl, Woman, Other* with its long three-part chapters, each belonging to a linked character, and suggests that quality is a little mixed: "The portraits are well-drawn if a little sketchy."

He goes on to discuss the racism depicted in the novel, showing how Amma as an actress and Bummi as a mathematician are both undervalued because of their colour. He touches on the striking style of the novel.

The review then offers some criticism, suggesting that the later stages of the novel are artistically lacking: he thinks that where the story should develop and deepen, Evaristo instead elects

to introduce yet more new characters. The novel, he implies, offers more breadth than depth, and he finds this disappointing, especially since the start is so promising.

Gompertz offers more praise, with a further reservation: "It is a strikingly contemporary novel that has plenty to say (it very occasionally spills over into lecturing), and does so with some of the finest writing I've read in a long time."

### Find out more

Gompertz, Will, ['Booker Prize: Will Gompertz reviews \*Girl, Woman, Other\* by Bernardine Evaristo'. BBC Website. 19th October 2019](#)

# Later analysis and criticism

## Stephanie Sy-Quia, 'Lion on Rye' in *The Times Literary Supplement*

It's instructive that the chief influential text identified in Sy-Quia's piece is a play: *Girl, Woman, Other* depends on the theatre for its energy and structure, not least the way the twelve principal characters are brought together in the final chapter for the premiere of Amma's play, *The Last Amazon of Dahomey*, at the National Theatre. Shange was also African-American and Sy-Quia notes a debt to African American culture and writing.

Sy-Quia's review outlines the range of the novel in terms of time and space, noting how its "long-running sentences stuffed with detail" constitute a celebration of the lives she features in all their detail and sometimes banality. The humour of the writing is acknowledged and gives Sy-Quia her title, 'Lion on rye', a response to racist Penelope's discovery that her DNA is 13 per cent African and 16 per cent European Jewish.

Sy-Quia notes that Evaristo has "an impressive command of voice" but suggests that this quality is inconsistent: she finds Yazz's expressions unconvincing at times; judges some conversations to sound more like Platonic dialogues. Overall, Sy-Quia seems to feel that Evaristo sometimes subordinates her art to her overt social and political purpose: to foreground the experiences of black British women, underrepresented in our literature as they have been.

- "Bernardine Evaristo's eighth novel is, in the author's own words, a work of 'fusion fiction', heavily influenced by Ntozake Shange"
- "Evaristo has transposed Shange's premiss to Britain, relying on twelve characters (mostly women, all black, bar one), and using them to bounce around both the twentieth century and the country as a whole"
- "[T]his is a capacious, generous novel, full of life and compassion, and a striking affirmation of the plurality of black British experience."

### Find out more

Sy-Quia, Stephanie, '[Lion on rye](#)', *The Times Literary Supplement*, [16th August 2019](#) Note, a login is required to access this content) A copy is available for free via the [Internet Archive](#).

## Sohel Sarkar, 'Bernardine Evaristo's Brilliant Take On 'Difference' In 'Girl, Woman, Other', *Feminism in India*

Sarkar first looks at the ways in which Evaristo explores intersectional identities, characterising these as 'hyphenated'. She seems particularly interested in the ways in which the 12 main characters offer extremely nuanced examination of female identities taking into account not just class, sexuality, ethnicity and disability, but also considering the ways in which characters in the novel identify as trans and nonbinary. Sarkar also focuses on the ways in which these hyphenate identities complicate what it means to be the 'Other'.

The piece then discusses the ways in which relationships between these women become not just one of solidarity, but sites of contrast and potential conflict. Sarkar also talks about the ways in which betrayal is a key consideration of the relationships in the novel and force readers to ask questions about how relationships of all kinds are under strain, as well as how togetherness can be achieved without collapsing differences.

Sarkar also talks about the contextual difficulties surrounding the Booker Prize controversy briefly towards the end of the piece. (For more on this see our 'Further support' section.)

- "Questions of Identity, otherness and togetherness define their stories. But identity and otherness are not fixed but layered and contested categories. And in this fluidity, lies the possibility of togetherness."
- "Coming from a feminist and a trans-aware perspective, Evaristo complicates the experience of womxnhood as she throws class, ethnicity, age, sexuality, trans identities and disability into the mix. As if to underscore this slipperiness, she introduces her characters in hyphens."
- "The women get past tensions and conflicts to forgive and support each other. When differences seem insurmountable and reconciliation impossible, the storyline gently nudges the protagonists—and by extension the reader—towards a position of empathy."

### Find out more

Sarkar, Sohel, ['Bernardine Evaristo's Brilliant Take On 'Difference' In 'Girl, Woman, Other', \*Feminism in India\*, 6th January 2020](#)

## Darja Zorc Maver, 'Stigma as an Attribute of Oppression or an Agent of Change' in *Acta Neophilologica*

Zorc Maver explores Evaristo's 'contemporary panoramic, polyphonic novel' and the ways in which it presents stigmatised identity. Beginning with a consideration of who exactly the 'Other' of the title is, Maver suggests that this refers to the ways in which these women are othered and thus stigmatised by society.

Employing both feminist and semiotic discourse throughout the article, Zorc Maver examines in detail the ways in which Evaristo's characters make vivid the ways in which social constructions of race, class and gender particularly impact on the life chances of Black women and non-binary people. She posits that Evaristo is deliberate in representing these characters with agency and that her narrative structure is explicitly designed to demonstrate agency.

- "Evaristo shows how stigmatization and oppression are manifested through gender, race, social class and sexual orientation, which causes their invisibility in society and increases social injustice."
- "[Evaristo's characters] reflect their position of inequality, which points to the way to bring about changes. They do not subscribe to the role of powerless victims but are critical to the world around them."
- "Narratives function in the book's master narrative as different forms of broadcasting 'voices' otherwise excluded from or neglected within the dominant political structures. They open up and address the various forms of oppression of women in the modern world that are intersecting with each other."

### Find out more

Zorc Maver, D. ["Stigma As an Attribute of Oppression or an Agent of Change: The Novel Girl, Woman, Other by Bernardine Evaristo". \*Acta Neophilologica\*, vol. 53, no. 1-2, Nov. 2020, pp. 119-31](#)



# Applying a theoretical lens

As stated in our introductory overview, there is no requirement for students to engage with specific fields of literary theory to succeed in their study of this text. We provide the below to give an introduction to some of the theoretical lenses academics and critics have employed when examining Evaristo's work.

Some of the articles mentioned here may demonstrate more than one theoretical lens at once but we've focused on highlighting key themes of analysis. Theoretical approaches we often see with Evaristo's work are feminist and formal approaches. These are by no means exhaustive.

## Feminist studies

Given the novel's overt focus on women, it is understandable that feminist approaches would be valuable in examining Evaristo's novel. However, its deliberate centring of the voices of Black British women does require a more specific set of tools and benefits enormously from the ideas of **intersectional feminism**.

The concept was originally developed in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw to show how race, class, gender, and other individual characteristics 'intersect' with one another. Initially, the term was used to illustrate the range of disadvantages experienced by women of colour in the fields of employment and the law, but has come to be much more widely used and is another, perhaps more nuanced way, to provide a feminist analysis of texts by women with other marginalised identities.

### Find out more

Crenshaw, Kimberlé, '[Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color](#)', *Stanford Law Review*, vol. 43, no. 6, 1991, pp. 1241–1299.

(Note, a login is required to access this content)

## Merve Sarikaya-Şen, 'Reconfiguring Feminism: Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*'

Sarikaya-Şen begins with a survey of Evaristo's literary output and the ways in which she has chronicled 'the predicament of black people in Britain', before offering a brief overview of the novel itself. Sarikaya-Şen's interest is in the ways in which the novel can be read as a transmodern narrative and in Evaristo's mission to "give voice to a marginalised group of black women living in Britain".

Sarikaya-Şen initially examines Evaristo's exploration of resilience amongst women and the ways in which this is particularly problematised for black women. Sarikaya-Şen argues that the novel argues that "the resilience of the characters in the face of social, racial and gender marginalisation springs from their empathic relatedness and solidarity".

She goes on to suggest that *Girl, Woman, Other* privileges the idea of the 'network' over the 'centre', which accounts for the deliberate lack of one central voice to bring the novel together. Just as the novel's lack of a unifying voice can be seen as a strength, so can its travels across time and space; ultimately, the network enables the parts to work together, "address[ing] the singularities as well as the multidimensionality of marginalised black British women's lives".

Sarikaya-Şen also discusses the ways in which Evaristo's vision of empowerment and resilience is bound up in motherhood. Exploring the presentation of mothering with Amma, Bummi and Winsome, the article offers a reading of the text as one that explores an expansion of what 'motherhood' and parenting more broadly might entail. Sarikaya-Şen suggests that Evaristo's inclusions of non-binary and trans experiences help the novel to explore women's lives and communities in a broader sense, showing how breadth of experience continues to offer new challenges.

- "[The novel] shows that sisterhood and sorority can help marginalised women to heal their wounds and to find relief by relating to the suffering of other **subaltern** women."
- "Evaristo draws a strong parallel between resilient black mothers and their equally strong daughters, and she does so by considering them as individuals rather than as a stereotypical group [...] through the individual stories of its characters, the novel demonstrates that black British women's resilience and empowerment are related to their motherhood"
- "The novel draws attention to this point by looking at gender discrimination as well as race, sexuality, class and other intersections, including genealogy."

### Find out more

Sarikaya-Şen, Merve, '[Reconfiguring Feminism: Bernardine Evaristo's \*Girl, Woman, Other\*](#)', 9th March 2021, *The European Legacy*, 26:3-4, 303-315, DOI: (Note, a login is required to access this content)

#### subaltern

Since the 1980s, subaltern has become a key construct within postcolonial studies. Originally used by Antonio Gramsci as an analogue to 'proletariat' to describe the marginalised and displaced within a society, it was adopted by a group of Indian academics as a way to refer to non-elite subjects in the wake of colonial power. Ranajit Guha defined the term as "the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way". It's most notably connected with fellow theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's 1988 essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'. As used by Sarikaya-Şen, it is a term referring to marginalised people lacking social, cultural and political power.

#### Find out more

Ray, Raka and Smitha Radhakrishnan, "[The subaltern, the postcolonial, and cultural sociology](#)", in *Handbook of Cultural Sociology* ed. John R. Hall, Laura Grindstaff and Ming-Cheng Lo (Routledge, 2010), Routledge Handbooks Online.

## Studies in aesthetics and form

Aesthetic and formal studies are both approaches that engage with the perception and structure of a work.

Aesthetic studies can be said to have grown from philosophy and is an approach concerned with the 'beauty' and delight something creates, for example examining the beauty of a particular architectural structure. In literary studies, this is often seen as exploring the emotional affect of a text, as well as the beauty of language used by an author.

Studies in form, and formalism as a school of thought, focuses criticism on the structural components of the text. By this, they mean centring the text as a document, prioritising less any contextual influences, and instead referring to the linguistic and syntactical construction of the text. There is also consideration of genre and form as expressed by the text itself.

### Cédric Courtois, 'Bernardine Evaristo's 'Black' British Amazons: Aesthetics and Politics in *Girl, Woman, Other*

Courtois draws from R. Victoria Arana's approaches in his article, choosing to focus especially on the aesthetics and politics of the novel (as per his title). His article offers a reading of the role of representation and stereotypes; how Evaristo's writing offers a literary reconfiguration; as well as an examination of the ways in which the characters themselves seek to reconfigure their positions.

Courtois argues that Evaristo's style and structure is a deliberate method to resist categorisation and essentialism, mirroring the actions of her characters. He raises the point that Evaristo's novels have frequently played with the constraints of prose writing, as in her first novel *Lara* which is a verse novel. Courtois also examines the figure of Morgan as one where Evaristo explores how ideas of womanhood and gender more broadly can be problematised and either be enforced or thrown off.

- "[I]n the same way as Amma and Dominique will not be categorised in such a vile manner and are willing to transcend corporeal 'configuration[s]' and constraints [...] Evaristo will not conform to traditional conventions about novel writing."
- "[S]ome of the stories narrated in *Girl, Woman, Other* [...] demonstrate how marginalised people's bodies are managed or 'police[d]' in society, and [Morgan's] story is an excellent example of that."
- "By mainly focusing on 'black' British women, and a character who was born female and raised 'accordingly', following society's norms, but is now non binary, Evaristo foregrounds questions linked to black female corporeality but also female voice and the interruption of silence"
- "What have long been considered as normative voices—those of white, heterosexual males—are almost absent in this novel, to the exception of one such, but secondary, character, and who is quite silent."

### Find out more

Cédric Courtois, '[Bernardine Evaristo's 'Black' British Amazons: Aesthetics and Politics in \*Girl, Woman, Other\* \(2019\)](#)', *Études britanniques contemporaines online*, Volume 60 | 2021; published online 1st January 2021

## Claire Bucknell, 'Fusion Fiction'

Claire Bucknell takes the term 'fusion fiction' from an interview with Evaristo (see Anita Sethi in Author Interview section) and makes it the title for her review of *Girl, Woman, Other*. She points out the novel is quite neatly framed, starting and ending (if one discounts the Epilogue) with Amma's play at the National Theatre. Bucknell concedes that the novel has a certain looseness in structure but that the scope of the novel does demand this.

The review goes on to show how, although the novel is long and sprawling, an attentive reader can find links between different characters and parts of the story which allow relationships and ironies to emerge. Evaristo's 'fusion fiction' assists in creating these links: Bucknell recognises the connections between prose and verse in this fusion.

Bucknell comments on the ways in which these loose connections allow Evaristo to accommodate different voices and her characters to make judgements of each other. She notes that the multiple narratives 'supply the reader with perspectives and insights the individual characters don't share.' Bucknell identifies that the novel ultimately approaches its women with a deep awareness of nuance and complexity as '[n]one of these characters supports all black womanhood, or black personhood; there are always some identities they will not stand for.'

### Find out more

Bucknell, Claire, '[Fusion Fiction](#)', [London Review of Books](#), 24th October 2019

(Note, a login is required to access this content, an archived copy is available [here](#).)

- "Amma isn't Clarissa Dalloway, though, and this isn't a novel about her party. *Girl, Woman, Other* is vast in its historical and geographical scope . . . and criss-crossed by the lives of 12 very different black British women and their lovers, families and friends."
- "Evaristo uses line breaks to convey experiences that would be difficult to talk about in full sentences [. . .] a hybrid 'disruptive' style that pushes prose towards free verse, allowing direct and indirect speech to bleed into each other and sentences to run on without full stops".
- "[The novel is] shaped by intersectionality – 12 narratives, each bringing together multiple strands of identity, each informed by multiple social contingencies – but this form is what keeps it in pieces, a complex collection of fragments that aren't meant to speak as one."

# Author interviews

## Alison Donnell, 'Writing of and for Our Time'

Alison Donnell is Professor of Modern Literatures and Head of the School of Literature, Drama and Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia. Here, Donnell interviews Evaristo for *Wasafiri* a literary journal founded by Susheila Nasta to offer 'cross-cultural dialogue and provide a space for the publication of distinctive new work from across the globe.' The Arts Council describes *Wasafiri* as 'Britain's only international magazine for Black British, African, Asian and Caribbean literature.'

Bernardine Evaristo is not only a writer but also an academic teaching creative writing and a longstanding advocate for the inclusion of writers and artists of colour. As such, she is a helpful commentator on her own work, and makes clear that her purpose in writing this novel was to redress the fact that 'black British women are an almost invisible presence in literature.'

Evaristo's writing is always politically aware but also filled with an appreciation of humanity; she knows that her characters will be less than perfect, and is prepared to criticise them herself through satirical writing (the portrait of Nzinga, or Cindy, is both entertaining and devastating) or have them criticise and belittle each other. Evaristo's aim is inclusivity, but the same cannot always be said of her characters

Evaristo and Donnell conclude the interview by discussing the importance of making changes to the curriculum throughout education

- "My aim with *Girl, Woman, Other* was to explore the variety of who we are as black British women. Not to be representative, as some have suggested, because that plays into the idea that we are not as individualised as the rest of the human race[...]. To describe my twelve creations as representative would be a disservice, but I do think that having twelve protagonists adds to the representation of our narratives."
- "Privilege is a trope running throughout the novel; it conditions how women are seen as 'other' by white society but also, at times, by each other. They other each other!"
- "In writing *Girl, Woman, Other*, it was important to look at some of the overlooked aspects of black British history, such as my rural, Northern characters who were born in Britain decades before Windrush folk arrived. The novel situates us firmly in the British landscape and cityscape. You could call it an anti-Brexit, anti-parochial, anti-patriarchal novel."

## Find out more

Donnell, Alison, '[Writing of and for Our Time](#)', [Wasafiri](#), 3rd October 2019, 34:4, 99-104, DOI: 10.1080/02690055.2019.1635776  
(Note, a login is required to access this content)

## Anderson Tepper, 'The Little Book That Could: How Bernardine Evaristo Became an International Writer-to-Watch in 2019'

Anderson Tepper picks out feminism as an important element of *Girl, Woman, Other*. His reference to "black feminism and activist theatre" relates closely to Evaristo's own life with the founding of *Theatre of Black Women* in the 1980s, reflected in Amma's experiences in the novel. Tepper opens his interview with a query about similarities with Shange's play *for coloured girls...* which leads to a discussion about influences and aims with Evaristo's writing.

The interview also touches about the different heritage Black British writing has than African American writing, Evaristo's engagement with gender and sexuality in the novel, as well as where else art might mirror Evaristo's own experiences.

- "[T]hat's how the book was built: with one character leading to another in a quite organic way. I wanted to have a diversity of backgrounds, experiences, and qualities, all of it!"
- "At some stage I decided there would also be a rural family who are living in the north of England. Our experience in this country as black people has been very urban because we were not welcome in the countryside. So locating this family there felt like a radical thing to do."
- "Underpinning all my work is the assertion, "We are here and this is who we are. And who we are is a myriad of things and not necessarily what you expect.""

### Find out more

Tepper, Anderson, ['The Little Book That Could: How Bernardine Evaristo Became an International Writer-to-Watch in 2019'](#), *Vanity Fair*, 13th December 2019

## Anita Sethi, 'Bernardine Evaristo: "I want to put presence into absence"'

Sethi's interview ranges asks Evaristo about her motivations, influences and ambitions for her work as well as the role her own experiences have played in her creations and her experimentation with literary form. Across the interview, Evaristo identifies key ideas about her novel, her approach to writing and the trends across her work. Evaristo also mentions writers who have influenced her work, as well as recommendations for contemporary writers and her recent reading.

- "I wanted them to span from a teenager to someone in their 90s, and see their trajectory from birth, though not linear. There are many ways in which otherness can be interpreted in the novel – the women are othered in so many ways and sometimes by each other. I wanted it to be identified as a novel about women as well."
- "I have a term I came up with called fusion fiction – that's what it felt like, with the absence of full stops, the long sentences. The form is very free-flowing and it allowed me to be inside the characters' heads and go all over the place – the past, the present. For me, there's always a level of experimentation – I'm not happy writing what we might call traditional novels."

### Find out more

Sethi, Anita, ['Bernardine Evaristo: "I want to put presence into absence"](#), *The Guardian*, 27th April 2019

# Adaptations

## Radio

The book was [adapted and abridged in a ten part series for Radio 4](#) in June 2020. As of August 2021, these are still available for listening on BBC Sounds.

## Television

It was reported in March 2020 that the UK's Potboiler Television has secured the rights to Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*. "We are delighted to be working with Bernardine on bringing this vibrant and joyous novel to the screen. It is a vivid and authentic as well as important story of our times," says Gail Egan.

Find out more in Potboiler Television's [press release](#)

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## Further support

For more information regarding the Booker Prize controversy:

Hirsch, Afua, ['Judging the Booker prize: 'I'm proud of our decision', \*The Guardian\*, 16th October 2019](#)

Jordison, Sam, ['What happened?!, \*The Times Literary Supplement\*, 25th October 2019](#)

(Note, a login is required to access this content)

Singh, Sunny, ['As the first black woman to win the Booker Prize, Bernadine Evaristo deserved to win alone', \*gal-dem\*, 15th October 2019](#)

For an in-depth profile on Evaristo, Rebecca Liu's profile of the author in Prospect Magazine is a good place to begin.

Liu, Rebecca, ['How Bernadine Evaristo won the Booker', \*Prospect Magazine\*, 2nd May 2020](#)

A conversation between Evaristo and Amelia Gentleman ahead of *Windrush Day* in 2020 is illuminating.

Evaristo, Bernadine and Gentleman, Amelia, ['Bernadine Evaristo: "It's shocking that people don't understand Britain's involvement in slavery"', \*The Guardian\*, 19th June 2020](#)

Alan Yentob explores Evaristo's life and work in this episode of *imagine...* ahead of the release of her new, non-fiction book *Manifesto: On Never Giving Up*

BBC, ['Bernadine Evaristo: Never Give Up', \*imagine...\* BBC, August 2021](#)

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