

## Book Review

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Bernardine Evaristo's literary fiction *Girl, Woman, Other* became a powerful voice for women of colour, gay, lesbian and trans individuals with its publication in 2019. Generally, the feelings and emotions of these people remain unheard because the political leaders do not bother to consider their views. The writers like Evaristo act as a torchbearer to flash the light on the sufferings of the people who are neglected at every stage of their life. Perhaps that is why, despite publishing several novels over decades, it was her eighth work of fiction, *Girl, Woman, Other*, that won the Booker prize in 2019 and made Evaristo popular and a household name. *Girl, Woman, Other* is primarily a story of twelve black women who fight for social justice, and present their otherness with pride. Her book deals with the themes like feminism, politics, patriarchy, success, relationships and sexuality. The novelist presents the condition of women at different stages of life as the age of her characters ranges from a teenager to a ninety-three-year-old lady. The inclusion of the characters of varying age groups gives us a glance at the lives of the black women and their struggles during a lifetime. This is what Evaristo said when she was asked about her motivation:

“I was very frustrated that black British women weren't visible in literature. I whittled it down to twelve characters – I wanted them to span from a teenager to someone in their 90s, and see their trajectory from birth, though not linear.”

The plot of the book seems to be mysterious in the beginning, but as we move on, it becomes very engaging, and the reader cannot leave a chapter unfinished. Each chapter has a satisfactory ending, but still, it will leave you wondering about what would happen next. It creates curiosity, and the reader moves on effortlessly to know the conclusion of the novel. Basically, this book is about struggles, love, connections, relationships, and most importantly, it is about celebrating who you are. The characters of this book are connected to one another in some way or the other. One thing that I liked was that we can witness the same scene from different perspectives. Though at times, it becomes difficult to remember the connections between the characters and reading about twelve characters under one cover becomes a bit tedious.

The novel has structurally been divided into five chapters with an epilogue. In each chapter, except the final “After-party,” one to three women are described. The characters are vibrant and bold, different from the traditional figures we see in literary fiction. While the chapters at first glance seem to present separate stories, but the women are all related in some sense, whether through blood, friendship, or mentorship. Still, it has a beautiful plot that brings together all the characters in the last chapter at one place. This book generated a sense of

caring and attachment for black lives in the heart of its readers, though it sometimes became a feminist manifesto and lost its literary aspect. All the stories highlight the success of the self-made women. Sometimes, it becomes very hard to believe that how the characters could overcome horrifying experiences such as rape, severe post tantrum depression, drug addiction etc. with so little efforts. The question arises, How do they do it? Just by their will power. We see that in the case of drug addiction, staying at home and sweating for a week cured it all. It sounds very naive and uncommon. The way her characters connect gives us a sense of poetic energy in her writing style. In her style of writing, Evaristo avoids the use of full stops and capital letters. A new sentence begins with a new line, and this device brings a poetry-like cadence to the narrative. These people muddle through, make mistakes, and figure out who they are. This work presents a liberal society and people who are ready to take stern steps to safeguard their true identity. My only discontent is that it's a bit long, so by the end, I was struggling to keep up with so many characters and recall what were the relations among the characters. It may be a book the details of which I might forget over time, but it will always remain a unique and enjoyable reading experience. I would like to re-read the book in future and recommend it to the readers of literature.