

Diversity and Inclusivity as Core Values:
Understanding the Importance of the Popular Discourse to Literary Prizes

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Abstract

This MA thesis focused on the disengagement between popular discourse and literary prizes. It argued for the importance of popular discourse to literary prizes, answering the question: how can the disconnect regarding diversity and inclusivity that arises between popular discourse and literary prizes be resolved? It has done so by analysing three prizewinning works whose victories received a lot of criticism from the popular discourse: Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*, Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments* and J.K. Rowling's "J.K. Rowling Writes about Her Reasons for Speaking out on Sex and Gender Issues". First the importance of popular discourse to literary prizes is established. Second, it is demonstrated that the existing disconnect relates to the dialogue around diversity and inclusivity. Lastly, the thesis demonstrates the way popular discourse's critique shows in the literary work itself. It has concluded that the interconnection between popular discourse and literary prizes creates a need to assess an author's ideology alongside their text. This ideology can be analysed by looking at the author's discourse.

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Introduction

In the summer of 2020, J.K. Rowling's consistent attacks on the trans community culminated in her sending out a tweet denying the existence of non-cis female menstruators:

'People who menstruate.' I'm sure there used to be a word for those people.
Someone help me out. Wumben? Wimpund? Woomud? (@jk_rowling)

This was followed by an essay "J.K. Rowling Writes about Her Reasons for Speaking out on Sex and Gender Issues" where she focused on her belief that trans people are only trans when they have undergone sex reassignment surgeries (Rowling).

After these latest Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminist (TERF) statements, J.K. Rowling lost a big part of her fan base. Many famous trans men and women replied to the tweet, urging others to take a stand and boycott the author (Baker; Blum; Carpenter; Smith). Actors of the Harry Potter franchise Emma Watson and Daniel Radcliffe spoke out against her standpoint, both firmly supporting the trans community (Radcliffe; Watson). Two of the biggest fan pages of the Harry Potter books posted statements condemning Rowling, consequently erasing her name from their websites completely (Anelli; Mugglenet) Certain bookshops also joined in, refusing to sell her newest books, with one bookshop going a step further and taking the Harry Potter series off their shelves entirely (Maurice).

All these events took place outside of the mainstream media; they were critical responses of readers to an author and her books they had once loved. The example demonstrates the impact popular discourse about literature can have on the literary world. In her book *Uses of Literature*, Rita Felski establishes the importance of the reader to literature. According to her, taking the audience of a literary work into account results in the recognition of a connection between the work and our daily lives. Felski regards the knowledge in literature as being descriptive of our social life which can "expand, enlarge, or reorder our sense of how things are" (83). Because of this, literature can help shape and transfigure readers (87).

Literary works of art are very much connected to the world; as much as readers influence literature, the works themselves also have an influence on readers, consequently shaping the world around us. Christiane Luck argues that literary texts help make our language more inclusive, stating that "literary texts can help to raise awareness and thereby promote wider linguistic change" (197). Lennard J. Davis regards the novel as a "mediator between the self and the world", and states that it has a profound impact on our daily lives (4).

Agnes Andeweg argues the importance of literature to sexual liberation, demonstrating how literature helped shape ideas and notions that had not been accepted before.

The interconnection between literary works and readers thus stands firm, and nowhere is this closer than with literary prizes. Especially in this arena the bond between literature and readers is clear. Prizewinning books almost always turn out to be bestsellers. Beth Driscoll argues in her book *The New Literary Middlebrow: Readers and Tastemaking in the Twenty-First Century* that it is readers, the so-called “middlebrow”, that buy the books and make them influential (1). At the same time, Driscoll demonstrates the influence that readers have on prizes in chapter 4 where she sketches how readers use popular discourse to discuss the outcome of prizes and the influence reader and prizes have had on one another over the years. Driscoll outlines how literary prizes “despite their apparent elitism participate fully in middlebrow practices of entrepreneurialism and mediation” (4).

Readers and their opinions thus shape prizes, as much as prizes shape readers. Readers’ opinions can serve an accountability function; they motivate prizes to stay up to date on public opinion, remain relevant and maintain their connection to the audience. Lately, however, there seems to be a disconnect between the two.

Amidst the upheaval around Rowling’s essay, fans were shocked to see the essay be nominated by the BBC for the Russell prize (Deutsche Welle). However, this was not the only time literary prizes chose to ignore the public voice and follow a different path. At the Women’s Prize for Fiction (WPF) 2019, Akwaeke Emezi had to turn down the nomination of their second book as the WPF failed to keep the promises made in the previous year to loosen the restrictions around gender (Clinton; Flood; Giardina). The 2019 Booker Prize was criticized after Bernardine Evaristo had to share the prize with Margaret Atwood. Platforms shunned Atwood’s book for its privileged ideals, as her dystopian view on female reproductive rights showcased an ignorance of historic repression of Black women (Singh). Bloggers criticized the fact that Evaristo, the first Black woman to win the Booker Prize, had to share her prize, particularly given the subject matter of Atwood’s book (Brown; Singh; Essien). Furthermore, after a “refreshingly diverse longlist” for the Booker Prize 2020 (Marsden) and five years of blogs arguing for the need to refocus attention from cis white male authors to more diverse authors (Bradford; Charlott; Govinnage), Booker’s judges still awarded the prize to Douglas Stuart, the only cis white male author on the shortlist.

In all these examples, the popular discourse urges more diversity in authors and a more inclusive and equal representation of our world, however it seems as though prizes tend to disregard this appeal. It amplifies an increased juxtaposition between popular and literary

discourse, where the demand for diversity and inclusivity is not fulfilled by prizes. The question arises why this is happening and what needs to happen to have prizes and their audience reconnect.

This thesis focuses on the disengagement between popular discourse and literary prizes. It will argue for the importance of popular discourse to literary prizes and attempt to answer the question: how can the disconnect regarding diversity and inclusivity that arises between popular discourse and literary prizes be resolved?

Literary Framework

In order to gain a deeper insight into the popular discourse and its influence on literature, the literary discourse around prizes, and the discourse on diversity and inclusivity in literature, it is first important to investigate the foundational research done thus far into these concepts and fields of study.

Discourse is one of the most important concepts that is used in this research. It is a concept that lays at the core of a lot of Michel Foucault's work. In "Orders of Discourse", Foucault explains discourse in the following way:

[I]n every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality. (52)

According to Foucault, everyone is governed through the order of discourse: it is a higher set of rules that sets restrictions to thinking and the way meaning is produced. At the same time, people govern the discourse as well: as Foucault argues, society shapes and reshapes discourse through critical engagement with it.

This critical engagement with discourse is noticeable in the way popular discourse works. Popular discourse is used in studies of many different disciplines. It is described as the discourse that comprises the public opinion outside of the mainstream media. In "Talk About Racism: Framing a Popular Discourse of Race on Oprah Winfrey" for example, Janice Peck looks at the way the popular discourse on racism has changed through audience engagement with the Oprah Winfrey show. Peck identifies the audience of Oprah Winfrey's show as shaping the popular discourse on race; rather than being mere consumers of the content of the show, the audience's engagement with Winfrey contributes to a change in the discourse around race (94).

Engagement with popular discourse thus happens on a wide scale in many disciplines, however in this research it will be linked to literature. While in the example offered by Peck the drivers of popular discourse were the audience, in this case it is readers' engagement with literature on social media that drives the popular discourse. Within literature, popular discourse is shaped by the public opinion that expresses the critical voice outside of the scholarly scope and mainstream media. Beth Driscoll is an important contemporary scholar investigating this phenomenon. To her, this emerging new voice shows a new connection between the text and the reader that has never been observed before (Driscoll and Sedo). She

establishes that the popular discourse on literature happens online by and between readers, on blogs, Twitter accounts and other platforms outside the mainstream media (Driscoll). Andrew Moody places the popular discourse in the globalization of text and stresses its increasing importance to the literary field. In *The Digital Literary Sphere: Reading, Writing, and Selling Books in the Internet Era* Simone Murray also stresses the importance of the reader to literature especially in the digital literary sphere:

The digital literary sphere radically undercuts the cultural arbiter status of professional literary critics within an online context of mass amateur criticism and reflex popular evaluation (20)

Her research shows the inevitability of the influence that the popular discourse has on the literary world, stating that in current times, we cannot ignore this digital voice's opinion anymore. Rita Felski also stresses that the reader has a bigger connection to the literary field than was once believed and shows in her book *Uses of Literature* how interconnected both are. She states that, by prizing literature "for its qualities of otherness" (4) science understates "the specific ways in which such works infiltrate and inform our lives" (5).

It has been established in research as well that popular discourse is important to literary prizes. James F. English questions the real importance and validity of prizes in contemporary society and argues that in recent times, prizes have undergone a bigger "interchange between academe and the wider society" (112). He quotes Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, where Bourdieu connects Foucault's idea on discourse to this exchange between popular discourse and literary prizes: "what Bourdieu calls the 'relationship of dependence in and through independence that binds cultural power to temporal power,' has become especially vexed in recent decades" (qtd. in English 111). According to English, one of the most important exchanges between prizes and popular discourse has been the scandals that many prizes are known for, because it shows the humanity of authors which brings them closer to the public. Beth Driscoll also focuses on the importance of the popular discourse to literary prizes. She establishes the idea of popular discourse as "the literary middlebrow" that has an important and distinctive role in literary prizes. Gisèle Sapiro focused on this as well in "The Metamorphosis of Modes of Consecration in the Literary Field: Academies, Literary Prizes, Festivals" through the case study of the French Goncourt prize, where he emphasized the growing importance of the public opinion on prizes due to digital media, such as blogs.

To understand the place of diversity and inclusivity in literature, it is necessary to look at both historical calls for inclusivity and current research into the topic. Especially in feminist criticism and between feminist authors it has been a greatly discussed topic. Sarah Ahmed is a

major name in the field of feminist criticism, fighting for inclusivity. In 2015 she restressed the importance of a focus on sexism and feminist theory in literature in "Introduction: Sexism- A problem with a name". To Ahmed, a decrease in engagement with feminist theory would recharge patriarchal behaviours and beliefs. Additionally, she argues that fighting for equality not only means outlining the inequality, but it also means "producing feminist not simply anti-sexist theory" (6). In *Reading beyond the Female: The Relationship between Perception of Author Gender and Literary Quality* C.W. Koolen investigated the representation of female authors in The Netherlands, realising that through the idea of a "leaky pipeline" every "step up the literary ladder more women disappear" and that it may take years before this will change (2). Moreover, male authors are read more in general, and are still perceived as more important by readers (2). Virginia Woolf and Audre Lorde focused on equality as well. In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf highlights the inequality in the literary field and points to the economic and educational disadvantage and the oppression of a sexist and patriarchal society. Audre Lorde brings this argument into the intersectional realm, highlighting the many intersecting facets of society that contribute to this inequality both in and outside literature.

Diversity and inclusivity are recent policy words, but they have been going around the literary field for a long time. They are linked through the field of sociology of literature. Pierre Bourdieu is one of the first who linked sociology and literature to one another, arguing that the two are interrelated and that they in fact contribute to a deeper understanding of each field. Georg Lukacs also investigated this relationship through analysis of the novel as an explanation of the individualistic behaviour in society. It is Lucien Goldmann and Alan Sheridan, however, who formulated an overview of the role of both fields of study towards each other. In *Towards a Sociology of the Novel*, they explained it as:

The relation between the novel form itself and the structure of social environment in which it developed, that is to say, between the novel as a literary genre and individualistic modern society. (4)

Goldmann and Sheridan thus tried to define the sociology behind a text. In issues around diversity and inclusivity, this became an important topic in the second part of the twentieth century when the depiction of minorities in books started being examined. Scientists such as Edward Saïd started analysing and criticizing the stereotypical and racial depictions in many works of literature. This functioned as a steppingstone in the development of critical social justice, a movement within research that was summarized by Özlem Sensoy and Robin DiAngelo in their book *Is Everyone Really Equal?: An Introduction to Key Concepts in Social Justice Education*. This book helped to establish the fundamental theory behind the fight for

inclusivity and equity that is slowly but surely becoming more widespread throughout all disciplines, including literature. The focus on diversity and inclusivity in literature has shown the connection to the reader as well. In *Author Representations in Literary Reading*, Eefje Claassen concluded that the identity of the author is pivotal to the literary work, as it changes the way people read books.

In “What is an Author?” Foucault tries to answer how the text and author connect academically. In this essay Foucault outlines how the author’s identity does not influence the reading of a text anymore; arguing that scholars have begun regarding texts in isolation: “[the text] only refers to itself, yet it is not restricted to the confines of interiority. This reversal transforms writing into an interplay of signs, regulated less by the content it signifies than by the very nature of the signifier” (115). Instead, Foucault focuses on the broader function of an author who is inherently linked to text through their discourse. The author’s name works as a kind of classification; their use of discourse is linked to the texts they have written.

This literary framework has sketched an overview of the popular discourse and its influence on literature, the literary discourse around prizes, and the discourse on diversity and inclusivity in literature. The definitions and applications of these concepts are vital to any study of the relationship between popular discourse and literary prizes. An in-depth analysis of these concepts thus aims to answer the question: how can the disconnect regarding diversity and inclusivity that arises between popular discourse and literary prizes be resolved?

Methodology

This thesis will answer the question: how can the disconnect regarding diversity and inclusivity that arises between popular discourse and literary prizes be resolved? It will do so through the following sub questions:

Why is literary popular discourse important to literary prizes?

In this sub question I will demonstrate the importance of literary popular discourse. This question will show the different ways in which popular discourse on literature is vital to literature and literary prizes specifically. It argues that the interconnection of popular discourse and literary prizes is vital to prizes' popularity; they can make and break both prize and author. Moreover, the popular discourse breaks with the status quo upheld by prizes and addresses important topics to help literary prizes stay relevant.

Where does the disconnect between popular discourse on literature and literary prizes manifest itself?

This sub question will establish what literary popular discourse is saying that literary prizes are not following. It will pinpoint the wishes of the popular literary discourse and the critique they have on the three authors and their works that are used in this thesis: *Girl, Woman, Other* by Bernardine Evaristo, *The Testaments* by Margaret Atwood and "J.K. Rowling Writes about Her Reasons for Speaking out on Sex and Gender Issues." by J.K. Rowling.

This part of the research will focus on popular blogs that discuss literature. The blog has been a topic of research forever caught between studies in media and literature (Steiner). Bloggers are regarded as important opinion makers (Li and Du; Shoham and Ruvio); this is where the popular discourse on literature can be observed. Research fellow in Literature An Steiner, for example, discusses the connection blogs have to the literary world. Steiner stresses the importance of book bloggers to the book trade as blogs help "promoting and aiding literature published in the book format" (473).

To determine which blogs would be important to analyse, the methodology of the research conducted by both Steiner and Pinjamaa and Cheshire is used. In both studies, there is a focus on the importance of blogging on social discourse, however Steiner identified the importance of blogs to the literary field specifically. To determine which blogs would be most useful to her research, Steiner looked at platforms specialized in book blogs. She consequently categorized book blogs into the following groups: "professional commercial book blogs", "professional non-profit book blogs", "non-professional individual book blogs",

and “non-professional group book blogs” (...). Pinjamaa and Cheshire used a similar approach in categorizing blogs to determine their differences. In this thesis only “professional commercial book blogs” will not be used, as “[m]ost of them are created in order to market a brand, a name, or a company” (Steiner 479). This will thus not give a broader picture of the popular discourse.

Does an academic reading of the authors’ works through the method of popular discourse validate their assessment?

This chapter will compare the authors to their respective critiques by the blogs; it will take the critique on the author and their text as argued by the bloggers and use it for the close reading of the works. In this chapter, there are two parts: one in which Atwood and Evaristo are compared because of the importance of this comparison due to their joint win. The second part is about Rowling’s work.

These three sub questions will contribute to developing an answer to the primary question. Chapter 1 will establish the importance of the popular discourse to literary prizes to show why the disconnect between the two should be resolved. Chapter 2 shows where the disconnect exists and how this relates to diversity and inclusivity. Chapter 3 establishes the way popular discourse’s critique is demonstrable in the literary work and thus helps to understand how literary prizes can take the critique into account when reading texts.

Chapter 1: Why is literary popular discourse important to literary prizes?

In 2011 Dutch artist Quinsy Gario exhibited an artwork named “Zwarte Piet is Racisme” (Black Pete is racist) which received a lot of attention online (Meershoek; Nederlandwordtbeter). As a result, “Kick Out Zwarte Piet ” was founded and in 2015 they protested blackface in The Netherlands for the first time (KOZP). Through sharing the topic on social media, their movement gained more visibility; it helped normalise the idea that blackface is racist and began to sway public opinion. In 2013 the #BlackLivesMatter movement was brought to life in the United States after the murderer of 17-year-old Black Trayvon Martin, a white man who attacked Martin based on his skin colour, was acquitted of all charges (CNN). In the years since then, the movement has called worldwide attention to systemic racism and police violence against people of colour. In 2021, the demonstrations and resulting global coverage helped convict Derek Chauvin, the murderer of another Black man George Floyd (Levenson).

Both these examples show how a movement can gain attention online, subsequently swaying public opinion at large. Both movements were founded in popular discourse, a critical public online voice that lives outside of mainstream media. Popular discourse is mostly found on social media where it expresses ideas and ideologies that are less visible on mainstream sources but that live in society.

The past years have been characterised by significant movements fighting for inclusivity and social justice. All these movements and foundations established their prominence in the popular discourse online, through hashtags, influencers, and blogs. These ideas are brought to life, gain attention and are then picked up by mainstream media as well. They help change the way society thinks about current events. “Kick Out Zwarte Piet” for example, helped to rid many Sinterklaas celebrations of blackface.

This chapter answers the sub question 'why is popular discourse important to literary prizes?'. It argues that the interconnection of popular discourse and literary prizes is vital to prizes' popularity; it can make and break both prize and author. Moreover, the popular discourse breaks with the status quo upheld by prizes, helping them to stay relevant. It does so by addressing matters that are topical, such as matters of diversity and inclusivity.

Foucault broke down the idea of discourse as being made up of the institutionalized rules that govern behaviour and actions. Discourse restricts and creates social boundaries. The idea of discourse within institutions creates a status quo: a norm to live up to. This is the reason why employees dress differently for different jobs; why different platforms use

different styles of writing; why some jobs are seen as more male or female: the status quo is established through the players that form a part of the discourse and that help to gatekeep its restrictions and boundaries. For years, the status quo has been shaped by a predominantly cis-white, male heteronormative view (Van Den Brink).

Beth Driscoll observes how popular discourse works with these rules of governing and institutions online in popular discourse on literature. She demonstrates how popular discourse online is different from the status quo in “Faraway, So Close: Seeing the Intimacy in Goodreads Reviews”. She demonstrates how this new literary discourse on reviews, made up entirely by the reader, has realised its own style and register. She argues that their approach is more emotional and personal than mainstream review platforms. Her research has opted for the idea that popular discourse on literature has its own voice that is important to the mainstream discourse on literature. She calls this community the “middlebrow” in earlier research (Driscoll 1): a group, hierarchically subsidiary to the elite highbrow culture that has established its own cultural relevance.

Though their audience is middlebrow, literary prizes have always felt the need to be included in highbrow culture, even though their target audience is the middle and sometimes lowbrow (Swirski and Vanhanen). Having won a prize means to have “gained elite acceptance” (77), however the author’s success is dependent on the attention they receive from the middle-brow reader. They are the consumers that will eventually decide through their sheer numbers which books become bestsellers. Peter Swirski and Tero Eljas Vanhanen adopt the idea of an interconnection between the discourses on literature in their book *When Highbrow Meets Lowbrow: Popular Culture and the Rise of Nobrow*. They demonstrate the connections between the readers and literary prizes and introduce the idea of the “nobrow”: the discourse that arises when different “brows” meet one another. They argue that, instead of a hierarchical difference in how discourses talk about literature, they are in a constant dialogue on themes and topics important to the zeitgeist.

Evidence of this interconnection is visible in the way the Booker Prize slowly gained its popularity. In an article by James F. English on the strategies of literary prizes, English demonstrates that the popularity of the Booker Prize gained momentum after various, according to him, so-called “scandals” (114). He shows this through the example of the Booker Prize from 1971:

But what happened instead is that the Booker began, in 1971, to deliver a series of annual scandals, the best known of which is that of John Berger’s rude acceptance

speech in 1972, when Berger, enjoying the celebrity attendant on his *Ways of Seeing* series for the BBC, stood before the assembled Booker executives, denounced their corporation as a colonialist enterprise built on the backs of black plantation workers in Guyana, and declared that half his prize money would be donated to the London branch of the Black Panthers. (114)

English understands this event as a scandal; however, he fails to see the broader dialogue this speech was part of. In 1971 tides were turning on the public view of the Black Panther party and social justice around Black lives and colonialism in general. An article in *The New York Times* of that same year addresses the case of 13 members of The Black Panther party being acquitted of a charge of police violence. The article reads that “The members of the jury [...] reached a unanimous verdict so quickly that they surprised even themselves” (Asbury). The popular view of social justice groups was changing and 1971 was characterized by a broader recognition of the injustice people of colour were facing and dialogue on the subject. This is evidenced by the founding of the Black Liberation Front in that same year. This party “made a huge impact within the Black diasporas as well as internationally” and helped shape the way activism is organised to this day (Sigaud). Thus, while English sees the event purely as a scandal, in fact Booker’s surge in popularity occurred as a result of the attention Berger had paid to a topic the audience was invested in.

This example demonstrates two points: listening to the popular discourse is of major importance to the future of literary prizes and an author’s opinion on issues is important to both an audience and the prizes. Firstly, literary prizes need to connect to their public and need to listen to popular discourse to understand what the zeitgeist is. As the case with The Booker Prize shows, its reputation is dependent on its popularity, and its popularity originates in its capability to reflect on the audience’s investment in topics of diversity and inclusivity. This interconnection of literary prizes and their audience is explained by Stanley Fish in *Is there a text in this class?: The authority of interpretive communities*. To him, what is and what is not literature has always been a “collective decision that will be in force only so long as a community of readers or believers [...] continues to abide by it” (109). According to Fish, the literary community works together through different ways of engaging with text. He stresses the importance of the reader to the interpretation of texts because “[t]he interpretative strategies of interpretative communities are always ‘social and conventional’” (qtd. in Storey 55). As readers exist outside highbrow literary communities, they are open to unconventional and new ways of engaging with text, which brings important things to the table. “The literary

system constrains us”, Fish argues (55). John Storey explores Fish’s point in his book *Cultural studies and the study of popular culture*, adding that “readers are able to mobilise cultural resources which enable them to read against the grain of the text or to negotiate its meanings in particular ways” (66). The reader thus helps to change the way we think and work with literature; their engagement with it is important especially to literary prizes who are dependent on their support. To stay relevant, literary prizes must listen to the opinions that arise from readers’ engagement with literature.

Secondly, an author’s opinion impacts the way the audience interacts with their work. Not only can the literary popular discourse help gain momentum for prizes, it also questions and criticizes the behaviour of authors. One example of this phenomenon is the setback Rowling’s reputation has experienced in the aftermath of transphobic statements online. It shows how influential popular discourse can be, particularly in situations when readers disagree with an author’s opinions.

Thus, in answering the question “why is literary popular discourse important to literary prizes?” the examples demonstrate how the success of both the author and the literary prize are reliant on their perception in the popular discourse. Popular discourse’s perspectives are vital to their survival. Moreover, the popular discourse plays an instrumental role in breaking with the status quo traditionally upheld by prizes through addressing important topics which the prizes can build on.

Chapter 2: Where does the disconnect between popular discourse on literature and literary prizes manifest itself?

After establishing the importance of the literary popular discourse to literary prizes, it is necessary to understand where the disconnect between the two manifests itself. This chapter will investigate the popular discourse established by bloggers in particular. It will analyse three main works: *Girl, Woman, Other* by Bernardine Evaristo, *The Testaments* by Margaret Atwood and “J.K. Rowling Writes about Her Reasons for Speaking out on Sex and Gender Issues” by J.K. Rowling. By observing bloggers’ assessment of the three works, this chapter will demonstrate what popular discourse on literature is doing differently from literary prizes. It thus answers the question: where does the disconnect between popular discourse on literature and literary prizes manifest itself? It argues that popular discourse’s validation of a work is rooted in the broader dialogue on diversity and inclusivity and manifests itself through two points: they connect the author’s personal engagement with this theme to their voice and they establish a broader interaction between the text and author by assessing the author on the things they leave unsaid about diversity and inclusivity.

Bernardine Evaristo

In 2019, The Booker Prize experienced another scandal when the jury that year announced two winners instead of one. One of the two was Bernardine Evaristo, the other was Margaret Atwood. For Evaristo this meant a historical first win of the Booker Prize for a Black woman; for Atwood, who had won the prize before, it meant being the oldest author to win the prize. Many bloggers, however, were not happy with their shared win.

After the official news reached the outside world, both mainstream media (Lapointe; Sexton; Thomas-Corr) and popular discourse (Essien; Goyal; O’Connor) agreed that the win should not have been divided between two writers, arguing that Evaristo should have won alone. It was bloggers, however, who focused on the personal traits of Bernardine Evaristo as an author as well, instead of on the work on its own. They managed to address their critique from a dialogue of diversity and inclusivity, and focused on the social and historical implications of the shared win, Evaristo’s book and Evaristo herself. They argued that this historical first win for a Black woman, whose career has been dedicated to fighting for more visibility and equal rights for herself and other authors of colour, and whose Booker Prize winning novel covered the topic of racism, was overshadowed when the prize was split with a

famous white author. All three bloggers acknowledge a systematic erasure that is maintained through both literary prize and mainstream media, proposing that this is one reason why Evaristo's novel, which is a commentary on this very topic, should have won alone.

In "Why This Year's Booker Prize Has Made Me Lose Faith In Literary Awards", *BookRiot* blogger Enobong Essien points out the historical relevance if Bernardine Evaristo had won the prize on her own: "Of the 300 books that have been shortlisted over the 50+ years of this prize, only four Black women have ever made the shortlist" (Essien). Essien illustrates the systematic invisibility and erasure of women of colour in the literary world, which authors like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Audre Lorde have criticized for years (Adichie; Gay). Subsequently, Essien continues with a summary of all the work Evaristo has done to highlight the inequality between books published by Western white authors on the one hand and authors of colour on the other. Essien connects Evaristo's work to her erasure by mainstream media, highlighting the importance of Evaristo's win historically and stressing the wider importance of Evaristo's work to the dialogue on diversity and inclusivity. Essien argues that the author's ideology is voiced in *Girl, Woman, Other* as well, as the book focuses on the lives of 11 women and 1 non-binary person of colour, while "they confront issues of racism, class, gender, and sexuality" (Essien). Essien points out the greater importance of Evaristo's voice, both in and outside of her book: on the one hand, Evaristo actively fights against erasure through her book where she gives a voice to a group of people that is underrepresented in literature (Facciani et. al.; Gardner; Hamilton; Jones); on the other, Evaristo's fight against erasure goes beyond the book where she actively helps other authors of colour to express their voice (Essien). Evaristo thus speaks and writes about those that are predominantly silenced.

On *Medium*, Caitlin Brown also connects the win to the bigger issues around inclusivity and erasure that Evaristo faces. She discusses the several instances where Evaristo's win was reduced or made invisible next to Margaret Atwood, for example in some book shops where they only displayed Atwood's book as the winner or on the BBC, where in play they referred to the winning authors as "Margaret Atwood and another author" (O'Connor). It speaks to the way mainstream media participate in the institutionalized racism at play here. By erasing Evaristo's name, her win is marginalized in comparison to Atwood. This removes the importance of her win and places Atwood above her, which links to the systematic power dynamic between Black and white authors: the white author is celebrated whilst the Black author is erased and marginalized. Brown speaks out about the silencing of Evaristo and contrasts it to her vocalizing those invisible voices in *Girl, Woman, Other*; she

starts the blog with a quote from Evaristo on the book that stresses the importance of inclusivity in literature:

‘Literature speaks to our humanity and hopefully that’s what this book is doing...helping people understand and create empathy about people they aren’t necessarily coming into contact with.’ (qtd. in Brown)

Through the examples of Evaristo’s erasure by mainstream media and bookshops, Brown establishes the importance of Evaristo’s book to society, particularly because it is this very society that engages in the systematic silencing of voices like Evaristo as well as those of the types of people her characters portray. “Only Evaristo’s novel so powerfully induces empathy and identification in the reader, with such a diverse range of characters” (Brown). To Brown, Evaristo’s novel establishes a connection to a range of characters that is, as she has shown through the examples of the bookshops and mainstream media, pivotal to normalizing these voices in society, which then helps to tackle this erasure.

On *LiveMint*, blogger Sana Goyal focuses on the historical meaning of a Black woman winning the Booker Prize and the dissatisfaction of readers with the joint win, while also pinpointing the institutionalized racism at play within mainstream media. Goyal argues that The Booker Prize reinforced this behaviour. Goyal makes references to tweets by readers that argue Evaristo should have won alone, and also discusses a controversial headline published and later edited by The Guardian:

After its headline, ‘Booker judges split between huge event novel and obscure choice’ enraged readers online, The Guardian swiftly edited it to: ‘Booker judges try to have it both ways’. (Goyal)

As Brown pointed out, Goyal visualizes the power dynamics at play. By calling Atwood’s book a “huge event novel” and Evaristo’s an “obscure choice”, The Guardian passes off what it is in fact an opinion piece on the calibre of the books, as a news item. In using “obscure” to describe Evaristo’s work, The Guardian trivialized the many successes of Evaristo’s career. Goyal points out the dissatisfaction of readers on social media with both the joint win as well as this headline; thereby demonstrating the disconnect between prizes and mainstream media on the one hand and readers on the other.

Margaret Atwood

To understand the critique that Atwood faced after winning the Booker, it is important to examine how this was rooted in a larger ongoing debate regarding Atwood’s stance on a

woman's right to address sexual abuse. In 2015, writer and former professor of the creative department of the University of British Columbia (UBC) Steven Galloway was fired due to sexual allegations made against him during the #MeToo movement that had gained prominence during that time (Lederman). Margaret Atwood was one of the prominent authors that criticized Galloway's termination, as she believed that he had been scrutinized by the public without being able to defend himself (Grady). Together with many other Canadian authors she published an open letter to the university to defend Galloway and to demand an "independent investigation into how UBC handled the allegations" (BBC). This was met with a backlash by readers who accused Atwood of using her fame and authority to help out another writer. Furthermore, they argued that Atwood's mistrust of the survivor of the alleged sexual assault connected to the larger issues of distrust in victims of sexual abuse that the #MeToo movement was based on (Grady; Jaschik; Park). Atwood's answer to this was to publish an op-ed "Am I A Bad Feminist?" in *The Globe and Mail* in 2018 where she explained that in her view, the accusations against Galloway were not substantiated, and that there had not been a fair handling of these accusations. To Atwood, the feminists that stood behind the accusers of this sexual abuse were following a public trend without thinking for themselves (Atwood). She then argued that because of this, she was now seen as a "bad feminist", who is "acceptable neither to Right nor to Left" (Atwood). The "good feminists", those that believed the sexual allegations, to her were extremists whose "ideology becomes a religion, anyone who doesn't puppet their views is seen as an apostate, a heretic or a traitor, and moderates in the middle are annihilated" (Atwood). She concluded that if her feminism is believed to be "bad", she did not want to associate herself with "good feminism" anymore. By outright critiquing feminism that believes accusations of sexual abuse, Atwood strengthens the already existing polarisation on the subject. This is particularly the case due to her prominence and the fact that she has always been regarded as an important feminist voice. Through openly stating that feminists like her would never back these allegations, she creates spaces for many others to follow her lead, while also failing to substantiate her claims.

Atwood's use of her authority in fact links back to the most important consideration in the #MeToo cases. The #MeToo movement came to life because survivors finally opened up about sexual abuse by powerful people that had the power to ruin their careers should they speak up. Their voices were silenced up until that point; and even after an explosive international use of the hashtag and the realisation of the vastness of the abuse, people were still dismissive and suspicious of the claims as the case with Galloway demonstrates. One of the reasons there was suspicion of survivors was because voices of those in positions of

power, such as Atwood's, were dismissive of the claims made. Thus, in writing the op-ed, Atwood's words and her authority in feminist circles aided in silencing the voices of those that were more invisible than her: the survivors.

After this op-ed, Atwood was the cause of a lot of outrage from the literary popular discourse in tweets (Doc; Elliot) and blogs (Grady; Park). Her Booker Prize win a year later sparked this discussion once more, with many blogs tying her stance in her op-ed to the systematic silencing of the oppressed in *The Testaments* and its predecessor *The Handmaid's Tale* (Park; Singh). The discussion ties in with the arguments on blogs in favour of a solo win for Bernardine Evaristo, as the outcome of the joint win showed a silencing in favour of Atwood that has a striking resemblance to Atwood's personal silencing of the #MeToo voices. Bloggers argue that Atwood's voice in and outside her books continues to silence minorities around her.

Erika Thorkelson argues how Atwood has been continuously silencing the oppressed and encourages Atwood to instead, just like Atwood asks of readers in her books. In *Electric Literature*, Thorkelson empathizes with the historical oppression female writers like Atwood had to endure, who "lived under a never-ending campaign aimed at breaking down their self-trust", but criticizes the ignorance Atwood now displays when it comes to listening to the oppressed voices in contemporary society (Thorkelson). She outlines her worry about Canadian writers defending Galloway as they are "writing as if those who had filed official complaints against him were characters in a novel" (Thorkelson). Again, there is an overlap between the real and fictional world. According to Thorkelson, authors seem to lose a connection to the reality minorities face in everyday society, which shows an inherent inability to listen to the oppressed:

We've assumed for too long that the onus for reaching out is on the less powerful. We must work to upend that imbalance and make space for women of color, Indigenous women, trans women, and others who have been left out of feminism in the past. (Thorkelson)

Thorkelson thus connects Atwood's silencing of a group to a systematic erasure of minorities' voices, the "women of color, indigenous women, trans women and others" (Thorkelson). To Thorkelson, Atwood "taught [her] to listen to women's stories in particular", however, this appears to be limited to fictional women, not including the "real ones" (Thorkelson). This as well makes the line between fiction and non-fiction ambiguous, tying *The Handmaid's Tale* series to Atwood's personal ideologies. Like with Evaristo, bloggers

connect Atwood's ideologies and books to one another. This time however, it shows the negative impact this ideology can have both in- and outside the fictional world.

The silencing and erasure that bloggers established appears to be inextricably linked to Atwood's larger ideology, tying into her win at The Booker Prize as well. The dismissal of Evaristo and the erasure of her name by mainstream media that was described before bears a resemblance to Atwood's own silencing of minorities both in and outside of her books.

Sunny Singh points out this connection on *Gal-Dem*. After outlining the erasure of Evaristo by media and the subsequent empowering of Atwood's voice, she outlines the bigger and ongoing silencing in Atwood's books, "whose fictional ethnic cleansing of people of colour remains for the most part unexamined in the first novel, and whose 'sequel', which took the top prize alongside Evaristo's book, remains a testament to unchecked, unconsidered white women's privilege" (Singh). Singh links the fictional to the non-fictional by showing how both in real life and in Atwood's books, women of colour are silenced, and how Atwood enables this in real life by creating a story that erases the experiences of women of colour: "Margaret's dystopia is not that terrible things are done to women, but that the terrible things done to women of colour could be also done to white women" (Singh). Singh refers to the oppression and sexual abuse of white women in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* series; Atwood describes the continuous abuse as if it were a dystopian fiction, and not a historically accurate telling of how black women were treated. In making this argument, Singh draws attention to how Atwood's fictional silencing contributes to oppression in actuality. This again connects to the larger dialogue on diversity and inclusivity that bloggers focus on in their assessment of Atwood and her work.

Sophie Lewis connects Atwood's idea of dystopia to "horror stories about the treatment of women in Islamist-run countries – Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan or Iraq" (Lewis). In "Who Liberates the Slaves" she analyses, similarly to Singh, how Atwood's *The Testaments* is based on historical events of people of colour and how it promotes a fear of Islam that is already rooted in many Western countries. According to Lewis, the handmaid is a "halfway de-Orientalised vision of the silent subaltern in a burqa". To Lewis, this problematizes and stigmatizes Islamic women, especially as the character of the handmaid is the worst possible fate for a woman in *The Testaments*. This approach is rooted in Islamophobia and is made all the more problematic because "[t]he people in question are all white" (Lewis). Thus, Atwood not only contributes to the continued stigmatization of Islamic women, she also whitewashes the lived experiences of these women, contributing to their silencing. In addition to contributing to Islamophobia, Atwood disregards the historical implications of various

connections she makes in her book. One of the examples Lewis gives of this is the use of an “Underground Femaleroad” that is “an obvious riff on the Underground Railroad” (Lewis). Atwood fails, however, to mention the historical significance of the Underground Railroad in her book, yet again co-opting the real lived experiences of a minority (in this case Black people in the United States) for the creation of her white dystopian world. Both these points are rooted in the broader dialogue on diversity and inclusivity, specifically regarding the point that it is not a white author’s place to use the stories of the marginalized, especially when the manner in which the stories are used may contribute to further marginalization and/or silencing.

J.K. Rowling

As previously introduced, J.K. Rowling’s essay “J.K. Rowling Writes about Her Reasons for Speaking out on Sex and Gender Issues” received extensive criticism in popular discourse. Rowling has experienced a lot of backlash for her statements: employees at her publishing house refused to work on her books anymore (Waterson); the online Harry Potter community disassociated themselves from her (Anelli); famous and non-famous people alike wrote blog posts about her essay to explain their own stance on it (De Hingh; Montgomery; Penny; Radcliffe).

Rowling’s essay won the Russell Prize in 2020. The Russell Prize is a newer prize, founded in 2017 by the BBC that celebrates “plain language, pertinent erudition and moral force” (Rajan). It is a prize realised by Amol Rajan, media editor of the BBC. He is the sole instigator of the prize; the “founder, convenor, president and chair” (Rajan). He chooses the works, selects the best and decides who wins in the end. Rajan’s opinion on current affairs and works is thus the only authority that matters in the Russell Prize.

Rajan stressed that viewpoints Rowling puts forward in the piece itself have nothing to do with his personal ideologies. Rajan’s celebration of Rowling’s essay was based on her “bravery” to speak out about sexual and physical abuse through the context of trans issues, especially, according to Rajan, with the hatred that followed her after (Rajan). He compares this to what he perceives as being the bravery of another writer Suzanne Moore, who left the Guardian because they did not print her ideas on biological sex. Rajan is silent, however, about the effect Rowling’s work has had on transpeople. His views seem to deviate from those of his colleagues at the BBC. A year before, the BBC published an article that addressed the way in which transpeople have been treated “inhumanely” online (Hunte). Once

Rowling's essay was published, the Scotsman expressed concern about how the essay would affect trans activists as Rowling's authority was likely to persuade her many readers of her views (Davidson).

The amount of critique of Rowling's statements shows the effect her opinion has had on her readers and how it has changed the way in which they interact with her work. Bloggers tied Rowling's opinion on trans issues to her books and close read the op-ed to define the faults in her argumentation. What is remarkable about the critique on the op-ed is the general empathy that is shown towards the cause of Rowling's anti-trans sentiments, specifically that she reveals that she is a survivor of sexual and physical abuse.

Valentijn De Hingh is one blogger who sympathizes with Rowling's story and history, attempting to acknowledge Rowling's traumatic experiences but arguing that transphobia cannot be the solution. In "I'm trans and I understand JK Rowling's concerns. But transphobia is not the answer" she outlines the effects of Rowling's statements on herself and the queer community: "a beloved childhood hero has so blatantly turned herself against me and my community" (De Hingh). She addresses how Rowling's views have specifically changed the way queer readers look at her books; she outlines how, to her, the Harry Potter books used to feel trans inclusive in an outspoken way, but how that faded when the news of Rowling's transphobic views came to light. She analyses how Harry Potter had always felt like a person she could relate to, as his radical change of identity when he realised he was a wizard felt so close to her own realisation of her transness. The new insights into the author's ideologies, however, call the relatability of the situation into question for De Hingh:

An involuntary question would sometimes pop into my head as I walked into the girls' changing room with my classmates: would I have been let into the girls' dormitories if I'd been at Hogwarts? (De Hingh)

This newfound doubt arises from the insight that De Hingh has gained into Rowling's ideologies, specifically in her anti-transness. Thus, De Hingh's understanding of and interaction with the texts is altered. This demonstrates how popular discourse's interactions with texts now extends to include reader interaction with the views and ideologies of the author.

At the same time, De Hingh contextualizes the false correlations Rowling uses and tries to empathize with her situation. She does so while refuting the argument Rowling creates in which she connects a surge in trans rights to a downfall of women's safety. "Women's safety and trans rights aren't a zero-sum game; it's not that one group loses when the other group wins" (De Hingh). De Hingh shows sympathy for Rowling's fight for the safety of

women, while stressing how both women and trans issues form parts of the larger debate on diversity and inclusivity. She criticizes Rowling's erasure of and misinformation about transpeople and outlines how her authority as a famous author contributes to the spread of misinformation.

On the website of media company *The Tempest*, Natalia Ahmed also addresses Rowling's authority and connects it to her nomination for the prize, arguing that celebrating Rowling's misinformed piece now makes it seem like "she's become a figure of authority on trans rights" (Ahmed). She explains how the prize enforces and celebrates a specific dialogue of trans issues that is rooted in transphobia. Furthermore, as neither the BBC nor Rowling talk about the other side of the story, it causes the erasure of transpeople and the spread of misinformation. Ahmed also argues Rowling should have never been nominated for the prize in the first place. She links the three main requirements of the prize, "monumental, well-written, and capable of inciting change" to Rowling's text and argues that none of the points add up to a nomination in this particular case (Ahmed). Especially her stance on the last of the three shows how her argument is rooted in a dialogue of diversity and inclusivity. Ahmed outlines how Rowling's piece has resulted in the exact opposite of change: "we've seen her ideas being used by senators to block more inclusive laws – for example, one senator used her quotes to block Senate consideration for the 'Equality Act' – and this essay fuels that fire" (Ahmed). Ahmed thus calls upon the responsibility of the author and the literary prize in the fight for inclusive rights.

Laurie Penny connects Rowling's essay to the bigger threat against transpeople in Britain in their blog on *Medium* "TERF Wars: Why Transphobia Has no Place in Feminism". They outline how feminism in its core is rooted in an understanding of "sisterhood": "Sisterhood means you fight. You disagree. You infuriate each other. But you have each other's backs when it counts" (Penny). They argue the importance of both groups supporting one another to fight for equal rights together. Penny too sympathizes with Rowling's story, while pinpointing that her fight against oppression now leans on ignoring and oppressing the needs of other marginalized groups. Penny thus also demonstrates how Rowling's essay does not have a place in the dialogue on trans issues and the larger conversation about diversity and inclusivity.

Penny and Ahmed both demonstrate this disconnect between popular discourse and the literary prizes. While popular discourse makes a plea for an increase in diversity and inclusivity in literature, Rowling as the author goes direct against that by writing a piece that goes against these winds of change, and which is rooted in the oppression of others. The

Russell Prize exacerbates this by awarding her the prize, and rooting itself in this disconnect with popular discourse.

An analysis of the discussion of the work of these three authors shows that the disconnect between popular discourse on literature on the one hand, and literary prizes on the other, is very real. As Driscoll established in reader's reviews on Goodreads, bloggers also focus on the more personal side of authors that explain why they should or should not have won prizes, which for them is connected to a lack of diversity and inclusivity in literary prizes. Moreover, blogs seem to focus on the silent part in the works of the authors. Bloggers seem to point out that what is missing in a work of literature for them from a point of diversity and inclusivity. All of their points are rooted in the broader dialogue on diversity and inclusivity.

In the situation with Evaristo bloggers pointed out the disconnect between prizes and mainstream media on the one hand and readers on the other. They acknowledge a systematic erasure that is maintained through both literary prize and mainstream media, proposing that this is one reason why Evaristo's novel, which is a commentary on this very topic, should have won alone. In the situation with Atwood, bloggers argue that Atwood's voice in and outside her books silences minorities around her, which connects her personal traits to her discourse. In their view, this means that Atwood should not have won the Booker Prize, as her win both celebrates and gives authority to both an author and a book that engage in the oppression of minorities. In the situation with Rowling, bloggers make a similar argument, namely that her win is inherently inconsistent with the bigger dialogue on diversity and inclusivity.

Chapter 3: Does an academic reading of the authors' works through the method of popular discourse validate their assessment?

The previous chapter detailed the prerequisites that popular discourse has deemed essential for all literary works being considered for a prize. The author's ideologies and personal traits influence the way literature is regarded in the popular discourse; bloggers interact with text through a critical lens that links the author's discourse to the ideology. Bloggers thus hint to a connection between the text and the author and judge both through their connection to diversity and inclusivity. An important feature of the debate on inclusivity popular discourse focuses on is the way the author uses silence both in and outside the text. It shows the importance of the silence in a work the way that Pierre Macherey researched this in *A Theory of Literary Production*. According to him, the ideological and historical impact texts carry are especially displayed where text stops. To Macherey this can be analysed through a symptomatic reading: a reading that "reveals the 'unconscious' of the text – the return of the repressed (qtd. in Storey 46). Popular discourse appears to follow this line of reasoning, linking author silence to the broader dialogue on diversity and inclusivity. Their argumentation also takes literary prizes into account and calls for them to take responsibility in the issues they address.

This chapter will try to create a closer connection between the bloggers' arguments and the texts themselves. It will answer the following question: does an academic reading of the authors' works through the methods used by the public discourse validate their assessment? It will argue that a close reading confirms the way public discourse regards the text and it shows how the silence in an author's discourse either creates or denies a space for more diversity and inclusivity.

Part 1: Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments* and Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*

This part of the chapter will compare Evaristo and Atwood and their novels through the blogs' focus on their work. The broader dialogue on diversity and inclusivity will be analysed through both their use of discourse and the critique that arises in the things they leave unsaid. It will argue that with both authors, their personal ideologies and struggles show in the things left unsaid in their work: Evaristo's way of vocalizing the silence helps to create sympathy for humankind's imperfections, for diversity in its rawest form, whereas Atwood's silencing is complicit in the oppression of minorities. An analysis of these authors' texts will show that while popular discourse's application of diversity and inclusivity considerations proves to rightly validate work, literary prizes do not always follow this same line of reasoning.

Bernardine Evaristo

Bernardine Anne Mobolaji Evaristo is the author of 10 novels, 7 plays and numerous short stories and essays, all mostly focused on questions of (mixed) identity and race. Her career has been greatly influenced by her fight against the erasure and oppression of authors of colour; she is the founder of the Brunel International African Poetry Prize, co-founder of the Theatre of Black Women, the first theatre company for Black women in Britain, and organized many events that helped to give artists of colour a voice. In *Afro-European Configurations: Readings and Projects* John McLeod defines Evaristo's work as a new take on "Black British writing" that helped "postcolonial diasporic writing" (168). He connects her work to her texts and analyses how both are defined by claiming more space for Black identities. The same is argued by Cuder-Domínguez who demonstrates how she claims space for Black identities by assigning British territory to her characters. In *Fiction Unbound: Bernardine Evaristo* Sebnem Toplu establishes how Evaristo's space claiming helped rectify misinformation about the history of people of colour in the United Kingdom by giving a voice to "hitherto marginalized characters - slaves, women or victims of a patriarchal world" (xii). Evaristo's discourse as well as her politics have thus been established as focused on breaking down oppressive systems by claiming space for and informing about marginalized groups. The erasure and oppression of artists of colour has thus been a big part of Evaristo's discourse, and it is an important part of her Booker prize winning novel *Girl, Woman Other*: it transcends the boundaries of her fictional and real world. The need for her fight against this oppression both in and outside text was highlighted in the aftermath of the ceremony, where it

became clear that the divided win between her and Atwood caused the erasure of her name by mainstream media in favour of Atwood's. The BBC broadcast on the Booker Prize described Evaristo as "another author" to win alongside Atwood (@BernardineEvari). *De Volkskrant* consistently misspells Bernardine's name as 'Bernerdine' and uses a photo of Atwood solo posing with her book to accompany the article about the two Booker Prize winners (Luckerhof). *The Guardian* speaks of Evaristo's novel as an "obscure choice" alongside Atwood's "huge event novel" (Jordan). By dividing the win between a white and Black author, literary prizes gave mainstream media the possibility to again play into the systemic oppression and erasure authors of colour have been facing. Their diminishing of Evaristo's win maintains the oppression of authors of colours: it demonstrates how the white author again prevails over the author of colour. Had The Booker Prize chosen for only Evaristo as the winner, mainstream media would not have had the chance to erase her win this way. This demonstrates how literary prizes are able to influence mainstream media's response to events in the literary world. Evaristo's case shows the interconnectedness of mainstream media and prizes and how they uphold a status quo that is rooted in the oppression of minorities and celebration of the white standard. This is criticized outside their domains; not just in literary popular discourse, but also by intersectional feminists, authors and scholars as has been established in this thesis.

Girl, Woman, Other is consistent with Evaristo's use of discourse and is a commentary on this systemic oppression and erasure by focusing on characters of colour and by displaying their lives and choices through an honest telling. Bernardine Evaristo is not silent about her character's flaws and displays their faults and weaknesses as much as she shares their strengths. In focusing on and creating space for their flaws, Evaristo provides commentary on the state of feminism through the same line of reasoning as Roxane Gay does in *Bad Feminist*. The book is mentioned within *Girl, Woman, Other*, specifically the line of reasoning whereby Gay showcases the inherent imperfection in a woman's fight for equality. She offers examples of contradictions that she herself has experienced, for example the frustration felt when listening to the degrading lyrics of songs that are "catchy so I often find myself singing along as my very being is diminished" (IX). She asks herself: "[h]ow do we reconcile the imperfections of feminism with all the good it can do?" (X), and argues that "feminism can be pluralistic so long as we respect the different feminisms we carry with us, so long as we give enough of a damn to try to minimize the fractures among us" (XIII). This is why Gay calls herself a "bad feminist": she is only human, and humans are flawed creatures that will make mistakes.

This is precisely what happens throughout Evaristo's novel. Its diversity in ideologies represents the intersectionality of feminism: everyone upholds a different truth and will try and work through that ideology as much as possible. Evaristo shows: we are all human, we all have our flaws. This will be shown in a close reading of two characters in the book: Amma and Yazz. It will demonstrate that Evaristo does what popular discourse advocates: she is vocal about matters of diversity and inclusivity, doing so through the character's journeys as they learn about intersectional feminism.

Yazz is the 19-year-old daughter of Amma, the director of the play that opens *Girl, Woman, Other*. Amma's story connects most characters to one another; either through their attendance to the play or their connections to each other. Yazz was brought up through her mother's ideas of feminism that were imposed on her throughout her whole life. Amma left her completely free in self-expression. She was allowed to wear whatever she wanted because Amma "wanted her to be self-expressed before they tried to crush her child's free spirit", and is taught to speak her mind about what she wants and needs (36). To Amma, this was her way of making Yazz "free, feminist and powerful" (36). Amma's upbringing of Yazz thus vocalizes the spirit of equality and feminism Evaristo tries to conjure. At the same time, Amma experiences an internal dilemma; as much as she wants her daughter to make the choices she needs to make to become the free minded spirit Amma taught her to be, these same lessons are sometimes at odds with her desire to protect her daughter. Though she wants her daughter to be free and liberated she also has to contend with the worries that parents have for their children. Amma, who took Yazz to workshops to "give her the confidence and articulability to flourish in any setting", flows between pride and fear for her daughter's safety as she takes up these lessons and puts them to use (38). She dreads letting fourteen-year-old Yazz attend a festival with her friends, persuaded by Yazz's argument how "it would be detriment of [her] juvenile development if [Amma] curtailed [her] activities at this critical stage in development" (38). Moreover, she clashes with her daughter when this fear for her wellbeing contrasts with the life lessons she has taught her daughter around the freedom of wearing whatever she wants. Amma is called a "feminazi" when she "dared suggest [Yazz] lower her skirt and heels and raise the scoop neck of her top" (38). Amma's worries are rooted in the sexualization of her daughter: she had seen "adult men ogling her daughter since before puberty" (38). Evaristo's exploring of Amma's worries through her discourse, which is concerned with the identities and experiences of communities of colour, connects this to the more important underlying implication that this part expresses: the sexualization of young girls of colour in particular. In "Colonizing Black Female Bodies Within Patriarchal

Capitalism: Feminist and Human Rights Perspectives” Akeia Benard establishes that the sexualization of young girls of colour is a remnant of colonialist perceptions. She argues that constant “hypersexualized and degrading images” caused young girls of colour to be perceived as more grown up and sensual than other women (Abstract). While Amma’s concern is with the sexualisation of a young female body, it bears noting that this sexualisation weighs even heavier as her daughter is a woman of colour. Thus, in exploring Amma’s concerns and worries, Evaristo makes a connection to the broader reflection on the sexualisation of girls of colour, a viewpoint which Benard shares. In essence what Evaristo thus displays is the juxtaposition between Amma’s wishes and the reality of the world they live in; it is a commentary on the emancipation that feminists desire, while still navigating misogynistic, patriarchal, and racist spaces. Evaristo vocalizes the obstacles intersectional feminism faces in society through the relation of Amma and Yazz.

Yazz’s development is contextualized in a different chapter on her own life that showcases how she has taken on the life lessons learned by Amma as a nineteen-year-old student. Her character shows the remnants of her mother’s upbringing and how it has developed past her mother’s ideas and expectations. She portrays the idea of wokeness in society; she is confident, aware of patriarchal systems in society and fights this with her group of friends called “the Unfuckwithables”, four girls from different socioeconomic backgrounds (41). Their thoughts on society are rooted in the problems young people in society face in recent times; they worry about climate change, student loans, high mortgages and political systems that oppress minorities. Yazz’s passion to fight the problems she is facing portrays a generation that has notoriously been fighting for their rights themselves. However, even in doing so Yazz’s flaws are displayed in her understanding of intersectional feminism. This becomes clear in her relationship with Morgan, a non-binary character who meets Yazz when they give a lecture at her university. In her enthusiasm to display her approval to Morgan’s identity Yazz tells them she “was thinking of becoming non-binary as well, how *woke* was that?” (338). Yazz’s understanding of gender is thus still rooted in society’s binary understanding of it: by implying non-binary is something a person can become, rather than is, Yazz still makes the assumption people are only born male or female. As Morgan comments as well, Yazz treats the non-binary identity as a fashion statement, “like she was going to embark on a trendy new haircut”, rather than regarding it as a valid identity (338). By showcasing this flaw, Evaristo provides commentary on the binary way of thinking instilled in society and she vocalizes the lack of education on the topic. This again shows how vocal Evaristo is about matters of diversity and inclusivity in society.

Margaret Atwood

“I kind of don't need the attention, so I'm very glad that you're getting some”, Atwood told Evaristo when she received her part of the Booker Prize in 2019. The irony of the sentence is amplified in the aftermath of the prize; in fact, coverage of their shared win in mainstream media was very much focused on Atwood, with Evaristo often mentioned as an afterthought. The comment goes to the heart of the critique she had been receiving on her authority and responsibility as an author. When mainstream media started erasing and diminishing Evaristo's name and novel, Atwood's response was a retweet of Evaristo's own critique on the erasure with the following text:

“Not good enough is right! Co is Co. Half and half. Both!”
 (@MargaretAtwood)

Atwood urges the media to be fair about the attention it gives to both authors, but never goes beyond that argument. She is silent on the implications of this erasure and does not openly critique them on their portrayal of the news. It is in sharp contrast to the attention she gives to the #metoo case of Galloway who she defended through a letter to the university, multiple tweets, an article, and an op-ed later to defend her point of view (Atwood “bad feminist”; BBC; Grady). What is striking is the choices Atwood makes in what to speak up against and what to stay silent about. While Atwood gives the appearance of standing in solidarity with Evaristo, her further silence on the matter (especially by comparison to the efforts she makes to support Galloway, for example) makes her complicit in upholding a status quo in the literary world, characterized by a lack of diversity and inclusivity.

Atwood's use of discourse is rooted in her silence on matters about diversity and inclusivity. In recent years, the opinion about her discourse shifted as the zeitgeist focused more on matters of diversity and inclusivity. Steenman-Marcusse has reanalysed Atwood's use of discourse to understand whether her socially critical voice that was inherently linked to Canadian identity still fits in a multicultural perspective of the country, while arguing that her recent work tries to navigate this shifting perspective. Tolan focuses on Atwood's consistent dismissal of being labelled a feminist and analyses how her work has both influenced and been influenced by feminist theory (Tolan). Tolan argues how Atwood's discourse, irrespective of Atwood's own silence on the topic, fits into a feminist discourse. Atwood's dismissal of being called a feminist is telling of how she attempts to remove herself from conversations about diversity and inclusivity. Consequently, Atwood's discourse, once a

socially critical voice on Canadian identity, is now subject to questions of whether it may not be outdated.

This close reading will focus on the deliberate silences Atwood leaves in her texts, and argues that it is complicit in the oppression of minorities, thus agreeing with that which popular discourse puts forward. As literary prizes have given Atwood's texts a podium, they too have been complicit in giving stories of oppression authority and creating space for them in the literary field. The close reading will be of *The Testaments* and will demonstrate that it is an inherently white dystopian future, where the things that make it dystopian show a failure to engage with the historical implications of her dystopian view to the historical oppression of minorities.

The Testaments is the successor of *The Handmaid's Tale*, both dystopian novels geographically set in The United States. *The Testaments* is specifically set in Gilead; a fictional territory characterized by extreme religious ideologies around the oppression of women and reproductive rights. *The Testaments* is based on the written accounts of three women who are linked to Gilead: Aunt Lydia, Daisy, and Agnes. It is through their experiences and point of view that the story is told, and it is through the imagery used to describe them that we ascertain that theirs is an inherently white view of the world. Though Atwood never explicitly states the whiteness of the characters, her imagery points to it. This for example happens in the way that she describes the skin of women in the book as being "peachy and blotchy" (10). Terms such as "peachy" are characteristic in their proximity to whiteness and are historically used to describe skin that is of a lighter complexion. Skin which is typically described as "translucent" or "porcelain" and which turns "peachy" or "rosy" when regarded through the male gaze in particular. In this instance, "the man eyes that were always roaming here and there" (9). The same imagery is used when Agnes refers to a nightmare about herself in which she sees "pink and white plum fragments of myself scattered over the ground" (11). Again, pink and white are a reference to white skin. Finally, all three characters use similar descriptors when speaking of other people in Gilead as well. For example, when Agnes imagines what a handmaid must look like: "had the Handmaids once been like us, white and pink and plum?" (16), or when she examines a handmaid's face, which was "flat white" (103).

As posited above, Atwood's discourse is also shaped by her silence, which plays an important role. In *The Testaments*, Atwood does not explicitly state whether the characters are white or not. It is precisely this choice which contributes to upholding the status quo predominant in our society today. We operate in a world in which whiteness is seen as the

norm, and it is only through intentionally breaking that norm that we create space for the understanding of a society that is multidimensional and multicultural. Atwood refrains from doing so, thereby upholding whiteness as the norm.

Because Atwood upholds this idea of whiteness as characterizing the dystopia, she creates something akin to a segregationist or ethnically cleansed future. The problem with this approach goes even further, however. Atwood's dystopia retells historical events through a white lens. Had the dystopian future been diverse in its voices, then it would have amounted to an interesting commentary on human errors of the past, perhaps even offering tales of caution for the future. In centring whiteness and not exploring how race plays a role in the characters' lives, however, it fails to engage with the historical implications surrounding these events. Atwood places white people in the role of the victim in situations where white people have historically been the perpetrator, thereby trivializing and whitewashing the events themselves. This happens for example in the rights addressed to women in Gilead. The regime believes women to be of less power than men and focuses on their ability to provide offspring. They are oppressed by the men, are stripped from their freedom; every part of their lives pivots upon their duty to the men. The way that Atwood describes oppression here bears resemblance to the treatment historically of fugitives and enslaved people. One such example is the lesser value that is given to statements made by women. After finding out one of the women she teaches is sexually abused by her father, Aunt Lydia tries to come up with a plan to have him convicted. She realises that a testimony of the women he had sexually abused would not be sufficient, as "four female witnesses are the equivalent of one male, here in Gilead" (252). This status of women is resembling the historical status enslaved people had through the "three-fifths compromise", a law that applied to enslaved people would count as $\frac{3}{5}$ of a white person. The status of women reads as a comment on this system, however as the imagery upholds the status of whiteness of these women Atwood ceases to provide critical engagement with the historical place of white people in the scenario she sketches. The perpetrator is portrayed as the victim. The same false correlation is made when Aunt Lydia describes how Gilead was formed. The first day the system was formed, she was taken from her job and put in a stadium with other women where they had to wait and where they were treated "subhuman" (143). She describes the horrid and dirty conditions of the space, where too many women are staying together with "foul toilets", "no toilet paper" and "no towels" (142). It resembles the accounts of refugees at border camps who describe being put together in similarly unhygienic conditions whilst being subjected to degrading treatment, much like Atwood describes (uniteforsight). This is yet another example of how Atwood fails to

critically engage with the historical role of white people in these stories. Atwood's silence on these matters again demonstrates her failure to engage with the resemblance of her dystopian world and the historical oppression of minorities.

Part 2: J.K. Rowling's "J.K. Rowling Writes about Her Reasons for Speaking out on Sex and Gender Issues"

J.K. Rowling is best known for her children and Young Adult books; especially the Harry Potter series that made her famous. She is best known for her fantasy novels; in 2002 she wrote the foreword to *Magic*, an anthology on fantasy stories in Britain. According to Anna Katrina Gutierrez, fantasy novels for children have become more and more globalized and therefore intertextual (XIX). She explains how globalization has caused children to be more connected to the rest of the world, with fantasy novels following suit. Ahmad and Ibrahim analysed this idea of intertextuality in Rowling's Harry Potter books through discourse analysis to understand the role the books play in children's literature, especially when it comes to gender issues and patriarchal structures. They demonstrate the patriarchal system present in the Harry Potter books and question its presence in a children's book whose role it is to "entertain or instruct young people" (668). Furthermore, especially in recent years, Rowling has been criticized for specific reformulations of character development outside of the Harry Potter series. Specifically, readers criticized her comments about Hermione Granger actually having been a person of colour and Albus Dumbledore being gay (Burton; Cooper), while highlighting examples of her racist depictions of the few people of colour in the books (Igoe). Criticism of Rowling was further amplified when she repeatedly shared transphobic views online, culminating in the summer of 2020, with yet another tweet and the publication of the essay discussed in the introduction and chapter 1. Before Rowling's comments on trans issues however, she had long enjoyed a solid fan base of queer readers who felt at home in the Harry Potter series. According to them, Harry's sudden identity crisis after finding out he is a wizard bears a lot of similarities to the sudden changes a trans person experiences after coming out (De Hingh). Once Rowling opened up about her ideologies, however, readers' opinions of her book and the analysis of the text changed.

Apart from her children's books, Rowling has written detective stories under a pseudonym, Robert Galbraith. The name itself sparked a discussion of its origin, especially after Rowling's transphobic tweets. Queer news site *Them* wrote a story about how the name resembled that of an American psychiatrist called Robert Galbraith Heath, who used shock therapy in conversion therapy for queer people (Lang). Additionally, journalist Katherine J. Igoe analysed the detective series and concluded that it showed a lot of similarities to Rowling's own ideologies. Examples she uses are the detailed racist stereotypes, as well as transphobic descriptions. Igoe highlights one specific example of a transwoman whose male

features are extensively described and whose preoperative situation is used as a threat against her (Igoe). This again demonstrates the change in analysis of Rowling's work after her ideologies came to light.

The now infamous op-ed on her website is what instigated these renewed analyses of Rowling's other works. It was published during Pride month, on the 10th of June 2020. The op-ed argues for a link between a surge of transness and consequent downfall of women's rights, which this work will argue constitutes a false correlation. Additionally, Rowling's status as a famous authority places her in a position of authority, an authority which, it will be argued, she weaponizes to push a transphobic agenda. This close reading will demonstrate how all of these elements have led to a change in how popular discourse regards her texts and will show that Rowling's discourse has become rooted in anti-transness.

In the second paragraph of the op-ed, Rowling argues that she had supported Maya Forstater, a tax specialist, because she had been wrongfully fired according to Rowling. She argues that Forstater's termination was caused by "'transphobic' tweets" (Rowling). The parentheses Rowling uses demonstrate she is calling into question the transphobic nature of the tweets. To her, this shows how a woman lost her job due to her opinion on something which was questioned by trans activists. Rowling's argumentation indicates that she believes the tweets were, in the first place, not transphobic in nature. Additionally, she seems to believe these tweets formed insufficient grounds for termination. Furthermore, she outlines how Forstater took her termination to court while arguing that "a philosophical belief that sex determined by biology is protected in law" a case which Forstater lost (Rowling).

What Rowling fails to mention here though, is the extent of Forstater's harassment that led to her termination. Forstater insisted on misgendering and deadnaming one of her co-workers (White and Mulready) and backed her views up with tweets about transwomen being men. Forstater was also never fired; her contract was simply never renewed. After this, she went to court to back up her point, which she lost. According to the judge her treatment of her co-worker and her behaviour online were "incompatible with human dignity and the rights of others" (qtd. in White and Mulready).

It follows that what Rowling is doing in this situation, is a case of cherry-picking for the sake of her own argumentation. While it is true that Forstater's loss of employment was linked to her transphobic comments, implying that she was terminated due to a mere series of tweets is a misleading representation of the case. This results in what is in fact a false correlation due to Rowling remaining silent on the other side of the story. Rowling's

argument suggests that trans rights in this case infringe upon women's rights, in this case Forstater's right to employment.

The same false correlation is made when she mentions Magdalen Berns. Rowling states she was bullied online for following Berns on Twitter, who "was a great believer in the importance of biological sex" (Rowling). This again downgrades the truth and scale of Berns' actions. Berns is known for her controversial transphobic videos and in fact has openly embraced being called 'transphobe' and 'TERF' (Montgomerie). She has a history of attacking trans people and non-binary people online, for example by comparing them to "blackface actors" to downgrade the validity of their gender identities (qtd. in Montgomerie). Rather than focusing on these realities, however, Rowling tactically chooses to focus on the parts of Berns' identity that evoke sympathy for her case. Berns is described as "an immensely brave young feminist and lesbian who was dying of an aggressive brain tumour" (Rowling). This particular framing by Rowling takes the focus off the trans issues at hand, instead weaponizing the bullying by trans activists and cloaking Berns' views in her victimhood. Again, this demonstrates a false correlation between trans activists claiming space and speaking up against transphobia (in this case online) and a woman supporting another woman's right to freedom of speech (in this case through following her on social media). Rowling's argumentation indicates that these two are interconnected, with trans activism actively breaking down women's rights and support systems. Again, this false correlation exists because Rowling withholds parts of the story.

Another false correlation is made when she addresses her hatred of the acronym 'TERF'. The term stands for 'Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminist' and Rowling argues that it is yet another weapon that trans activists use against women who are undeserving of the bullying and harassment. Rowling provides two examples of this, in her opinion, unfair bullying. She mentions a mother who kept her child from transitioning to protect them, and a woman who felt unsafe "because they're allowing any man who says they identify as a woman into the women's changing rooms" (Rowling). It bears noting that neither example includes enough information to determine to what extent bullying took place, or whether this bullying was linked to the perception of these women as being TERFs. Next, Rowling denies the existence of trans exclusionary behaviour in TERFs, stating "they include trans men in their feminism, because they were born women" (Rowling).

In fact, there are two important flaws in this final argument, both of which reinforce the idea of trans exclusionary feminism. In the first place, by stating that TERFs accept one specific group of trans people, Rowling demonstrates that not all trans people are included in

'her' feminism. Secondly, she conflates the idea of gender and sex, failing to affirm trans men's trans identities. Rather, she focuses on their gender as assigned at birth, thereby denying their transness. Again, the argument demonstrates her use of false correlations and her tactical withholding of truth; in her view, trans activists have coined the term TERF, using it as a weapon against feminists and constituting an attack on feminism itself.

A third correlation Rowling sketches that is rooted in false statements is the connection between women's safety and trans people's freedom to use and access rooms that match their gender identity. What Rowling fears is a surge in sexual abuse caused by an increase in recognition of trans identities: "When you throw open the doors of bathrooms and changing rooms to any man who believes or feels he's a woman – and, as I've said, gender confirmation certificates may now be granted without any need for surgery or hormones – then you open the door to any and all men who wish to come inside" (Rowling). In her eyes and argumentation, a man can now pretend to be a woman, step into a dressing room without problem and commit sexual assault. In making this link, however, Rowling makes a significant jump, choosing to ignore social norms that give rise to societal safety nets. When a person wishes to access a changing room, there is no official representative who ascertains whether that person is accessing the correct changing room. In these situations, passport control or the showing of a birth certificate or other legal document are not the norm. The safeguards that exist are societal norms and rules which tell us that in our society, you go to the changing room or other gendered space that corresponds with your own identity. And yet, Rowling's safety concerns are brought on, and seemingly justified by, changes to Scottish law. Specifically, Rowling states that she is "triggered" by the Scottish gender recognition plans which will make it easier for trans people to receive their gender confirmation certificates. Once again, it bears noting that gender confirmation certificates are a matter of recognition before the law. As such, they have little to no bearing on one's choice of gendered space. On the website of the Scottish government the proposal of the bill itself also recognizes the false correlation many like Rowling have made:

"We recognise that there are men who seek to abuse women and we want women to be safe from that violence. We have taken action to change the law to protect women from such abuse. This is a global issue and not a new issue for Scotland or indeed the UK. And it is not the fault of trans people. It is the fault of the abusive men. Which is why we will continue to address violence against women and girls through our Equally Safe strategy which takes a gendered approach." (Justice Directorate)

They stress the false correlation made when connecting the rights of trans people to “abusive men” (Justice Directorate). This is what Rowling also forgets in her wish for the safety of women; she connects the rights of trans people to legally identify as the right gender to a situation in which an abusive person would walk into a gendered room and sexually assault someone. The two are, however, not connected. As previously stated, your legal gender has never been a prerequisite to visit any dressing room or bathroom. By connecting the two Rowling feeds into this dialogue of trans people being seen as predatory, whilst also engaging in yet another false correlation.

An analysis of Rowling’s arguments in the op-ed shows that she engages in an oversimplification of complex questions of gender identity and humanity. In doing so, she creates a myriad of false correlations, taking truths out of their context and weaponizing them for the sake of her own argumentation. What Rowling’s op-ed in fact is built on is the marginalization and/or deliberate silencing of important facts that would otherwise work contrary to her own argumentation and ideology. The way in which Rowling has crafted this text and the response of popular discourse to the text confirms that which popular discourse has argued; that an author’s ideologies and personal traits have become inextricably linked to the way literary texts are regarded by the reader. Additionally, that author’s silences have as much influence on the broader dialogue on diversity and inclusivity as the words that they write. Finally, author’s ideologies and the way in which these play a role in their texts are made all the more impactful when these authors have a certain amount of influence. In the case of both Atwood and Rowling, the author’s enormous influence and seeming authority on the issues in question add to the weaponizing of certain views.

Conclusion and discussion

This thesis has focused on the lack of engagement between popular discourse and literary prizes and tried to answer the question: how can the disconnect that arises about diversity and inclusivity between popular media and literary prizes be resolved?

In the first chapter the importance of popular discourse to literary prizes was outlined. It has outlined their relevance to both literary prizes and authors; it has demonstrated that the interconnection of popular discourse and literary prizes is vital to prizes' popularity; they can make and break both prize and author. Moreover, the popular discourse breaks with the status quo upheld by prizes and addresses important topics to help literary prizes stay relevant.

In chapter two this relevance was analysed to understand where the disconnect manifests itself. In this chapter, popular discourse on writers is analysed using blogs that discuss Bernardine Evaristo, Margaret Atwood and J.K. Rowling. An analysis of the work of these three authors demonstrated the disconnect between popular discourse on literature on the one hand, and literary prizes on the other. Like Driscoll established in reader's reviews on Goodread, blogs also focus on the more personal side of authors that explain why they should or should not have won prizes, which for them is connected to a lack of diversity and inclusivity in literary prizes. Moreover, blogs seem to focus on the silent part in the works of the authors. Bloggers seem to point out that what is missing in a work of literature for them from a point of diversity and inclusivity. All their points are rooted in the broader dialogue on diversity and inclusivity.

The third chapter shows how the interconnection can be seen academically. It demonstrated that a close reading confirms the way public discourse regards the text and it showed how the silence in an author's discourse either creates or denies a space for more diversity and inclusivity. Evaristo's way of vocalizing the silence helped to create sympathy for humankind's imperfections and created space for diversity in its rawest form. Meanwhile, Atwood's silencing is complicit in the oppression of minorities and Rowling creates a myriad of false correlations and takes truths out of their context to weaponize them for the benefit of her own argumentation. What Rowling's op-ed in fact is built on is the marginalization and deliberate silencing of important facts that would otherwise work contrary to her own argumentation and ideology. This shows the difference between Evaristo on the one hand and Atwood and Rowling on the other: the ways in which they are or are not vocal on matters of diversity and inclusivity matters. The analysis of these authors' texts thus shows that, while popular discourse's application of diversity and inclusivity considerations aims to rightly

validate work which create space for diversity and inclusivity, literary prizes do not always follow this same line of reasoning.

An analysis of the interconnection between popular discourse and literary prizes establishes important new conditions that literary prizes will need to apply in the evaluation of literature. As was established in chapter 1, it would be in the best interest of literary prizes to make sure popular discourse's wishes are met. Therefore, the perspective of a prize should change accordingly and take into account the criteria and conditions important to popular discourse. This would mean it needs to understand and consider the merits of the human being as well as the work. This would result in the assessment of an author's character; it means assessing whether they are diverse and inclusive and whether their ideology is one which the prize sees as representative of the values as expressed by the popular discourse. This assessment consequently makes it less possible for an author to be commended for an ideology that is not inherently diverse or inclusive. For example, providing less of a podium for transphobic topics, and more visibility for those topics that showcase diversity and inclusivity. An application of these conditions means that literary prizes now have an additional goal; beyond simply finding the best literary work, the goal is to find *the best person that represents* the values the prize stands for.

There are, however, complexities to this approach. An assessment of an author's values requires literary prizes to first engage in an assessment of their own values and how these relate to diversity and inclusivity. To understand how a prize's values relate to diversity and inclusivity they need to answer the underlying questions: what discourse and ideology does the prize support? Every prize has its own themes and topics that it is invested in; for example, the Women's Prize For Fiction focusing on creating a podium for women, or the Lambda Literary Awards which recognize LGBTQ authors. By questioning the relationship between these values and diversity and inclusivity, prizes set a framework through which they can analyse an author's discourse.

Once literary prizes have a thorough understanding of their own values and a corresponding framework for analysis, they must assess to what degree the author's values match. This results in prizes evaluating an author based not only on the specific work being judged, but also on the author's person, their ideologies on a larger scale, and the issues that the author is silent on. Prizes can evaluate this by analysing an author's discourse as a whole: for example, through their presence on social media, the opinions they express in op-eds and the work that they do outside of their writing. As an academic reading of text through the lens

of popular discourse has shown, these provide insight into how the discourse of an author is shaped.

To facilitate an assessment of an author's discourse, literary prizes can rely on the expertise of sensitivity readers. Sensitivity readers add an extra layer to the editing of a text, pinpointing sections of text that are inconsistent with values of diversity and inclusivity. For example, a sensitivity reader may focus on the whiteness in a dystopian novel or a false correlation that encourages transphobia. Thus, the use of sensitivity readers in the judgment of literary prizes would help to ensure that the values and ideologies expressed by the author match those values which prizes have established for themselves.

Further research can help develop the methods for analysis of an author's discourse better. Chapter three of this thesis has already given a small outline of how this can be realised; however further studies can help to better our understanding of the way the ideology of the prize and that of the author fit together. What is important here is that prizes must ensure they do not become popularity contests. Especially in today's society the social media persona of an author helps them become popular; prizes need to make sure they outline their code of conduct on this topic specifically to maintain an equal chance for all authors. Moreover, there are many other cases that need to be analysed to better understand the connection between an author's discourse and the meaning of their work. Last month Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie published an essay which was rather similar to Atwood's and Rowling's, both in form as in the subsequent storm that followed it. It would be interesting if follow-up research focuses specifically on the op-ed as a literary form, and its influence on society and an author's work.

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