

Looking at Authors

The Posture and Persona of Bernardine Evaristo and Reni Eddo-Lodge



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Author: Robin Stafleu

Student ID: 4659961

Institution: Radboud University Nijmegen

Faculty: Faculty of Arts

Program: Literair Bedrijf

Supervisor: Dr. Usha Wilbers

Second supervisor: Professor Jos Joosten

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Abstract

The impact of the Black Lives Matter on the literary world has not yet reached the academic domain, while it has been discussed in relation to, for example, the criminal justice system, music, and health care. This thesis will fill this gap by analyzing how British authors Bernardine Evaristo and Reni Eddo-Lodge position themselves, posture, and are positioned by others, persona, in light of this political and social movement. The theoretical framework on posture and persona by Meizoz and Van den Braber et al. will be utilized to see if there exists a discernable difference between these positions. The authors' website, publishers, interviews, book reviews, and reports on the Booker and Jhalak prize will be analyzed. This thesis will demonstrate that there is no discernable difference regarding the persona and posture regarding Evaristo. The case of Eddo-Lodge is more nuanced, for there is no consensus concerning how she conducts her activism; journalists describe her as a British pioneer, while Member of Parliament Keni Badenoch states Eddo-Lodge is responsible for segregating society. However, on the surface, the persona and posture of Eddo-Lodge are similar. For both authors, the link to Black Lives Matter lies in their activism and raising awareness about racial inequality. These links, however, are indirectly made by discussing Black Lives Matter ideals. Additionally, both authors have a link to Black Lives Matter's educational purpose through their work and other publications.

Keywords: Bernardine Evaristo, Reni Eddo-Lodge, Black Lives Matter, posture, persona

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Introduction

After a few dormant years, the Black Lives Matter movement made international headlines once again after George Floyd's death in May 2020. Floyd died after Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin held his knee on Floyd's neck for eight minutes. This led to mass Black Lives Matter protests that crossed over the United States border. For example, in Europe, Australia, and Mexico, people took to the streets to protest against police brutality towards racial minorities and racial inequality in general. Floyd's death and the subsequent outrage have sparked a debate regarding racial equality and put activist groups, such as Black Lives Matter, in an even bigger spotlight (Viltus par. 1). Black Lives Matter is the largest social activist movement in U.S. history (Buchanan, Bui and Patel 2020). Although Black Lives Matter received massive attention in 2020, its origin can be found in events seven years before Floyd's death. Neighborhood watch Zimmerman shot dead Trayvon Benjamin Martin on 26 February 2012. Zimmerman called 911 to report a 'suspicious person,' after which he was instructed to remain in his vehicle. Zimmerman "disregards the instructions. Moments later, neighbors report hearing gunfire. Zimmerman acknowledges that he shot Martin, claiming it was in self-defense" (Trayvon Martin shooting par. 3). The acquittal of George Zimmerman in 2013 regarding the shooting death of Trayvon Martin was the beginning of the movement (See Chase). The movement became nationally recognized due to significant street protests in 2014. This continued in the buildup to the presidential election of 2016, during which Black Lives Matter often made headlines with its protests. In 2020, Black Lives Matter reached the front pages again with its widespread protests following Floyd's death.

Black Lives Matter is often referred to as a political and social movement. Associate Professor of Political Science Alvin Tillery Jr. states that "since the summer of 2014, the BLM movement has grown into a network of grassroots organizations" (298) and a "multi-issue social movement in African American communities" (317-318). What started as a hashtag has evolved into a decentralized political and social movement. The founders "have consistently emphasized the importance that the movement remain 'decentralized,' in order to keep the movement alive and adaptive" (Chase 1106). What this entails is that it lacks an official vertical hierarchy and every person has a certain influence in how the movement is shaped. Its horizontal model, however, has resulted in numerous problems revolving around the planning of demonstrations. Regarding the Black Lives Matter movement Tillery argues that three points of consensus can be distilled from the existing scholarly literature on Black Lives Matter. He states:

BLM activists are intentionally rejecting the ‘respectability politics’ model that animated the African American Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Second, BLM activists tend to utilize frames based on gender, LGBTQ, and racial identities to describe both the problems they are combatting and the solutions that they are proposing through contentious politics. Finally, there is consensus within the literature that the BLM activists do not define their aims in terms of linear policy objectives and that they see intrinsic value in the disruptive repertoires of contention that they utilize to draw attention to their causes (300)

Regarding the problems Black Lives Matter is combatting, associate lecturer in the English department Adam Szetela refers to the proposed solutions as a “juggernaut of political demands” (1359). Examples of this are the end of mass surveillance and criminalization of black people, defunding the police, and amending legislation. At its core, it protests against police brutality, racially motivated violence, and unjust treatment against black people on a broader scale. The movement’s primary way to shed light on what it deems injustice is through social media platforms and protests. At times the movement resolves to diversity of tactics. This entails that it periodically utilizes violence with a disruptive purpose. In January 2021, the Black Lives Matter movement was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for “the way its call for systemic change has spread around the world” (Belam par. 1).

Black Lives Matter is a global movement and has chapters in the United Kingdom, the country of the two case studies, Bernardine Evaristo and Reni Eddo-Lodge. In 2015 the first European Black Lives Matter chapter was set up in Nottingham (Francis par. 2). Protests in the UK regarding racial injustice are not uncommon. In 2016 protestors blocked the M4 highway, with comparable actions occurring in Nottingham and Birmingham through a “coordinated day of action” (Siddique par. 2). More recently, in June 2020, there were roughly 3,000 people that protested in Nottingham. Furthermore, activists like Kerry Nugents and Liza Bilal mobilized the public by organizing 2020 Black Lives Matter marches in Liverpool and Bristol (Francis par. 3). Although the UK chapter is not as large as the main movement in the United States, it does frequent the news. It receives considerable media attention, predominantly regarding societal racial injustices.

Scholars from various disciplines have published research regarding Black Lives Matter in relation to a variety of fields, not just in relation to the criminal justice system. Research has been conducted on, for example, Black Lives Matter in relation to music. Fernando Orejuela, Stephanie Shonekan, and Portia K Maultsby wrote *Black Lives Matter & Music: Protest, Intervention, Reflection* (2018). Marcus Jerkins has written about Black Lives Matter in relation

to religion: *Black Lives Matter to Jesus: The Salvation of Black Life and All Life in Luke and Acts* (2021). In 2016, Nikita Carney published the article “All Lives Matter, but so Does Race: Black Lives Matter and the Evolving Role of Social Media.” A final example is by Jennifer Jee-Lyn García and Mienah Zulfacar Sharif, in 2015, they wrote “Black Lives Matter: A Commentary on Racism and Public Health.” Opal Tometi, co-founder of Black Lives Matter, and Gerald Lenoir, founding executive director of the Black Alliance for Just Immigration, concur that:

Black Lives Matter is often called a ‘civil rights’ movement. But to think that our fight is solely about civil rights is to misunderstand the fundamental aspirations of this movement. Today, on International Human Rights Day, we recognize the current struggle is not merely for reforms of policing, any more than the Montgomery Bus Boycott was simply about a seat on the bus. It is about the full recognition of our rights as citizens; and it is a battle for full civil, social, political, legal, economic, and cultural rights as enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Par. 1)

A field that has not yet received substantial academic attention is the literary one, despite the Black Lives Matter movement influencing the literary world quite substantially. This is most apparent in how Black Lives Matter attempts to educate people and to create awareness through reading lists. However, academic research on literature written by or about black people is not new. In 2004, for example, Farah Jasmin Griffin, from Columbia University of New York, published her article “Thirty years of black American literature and literary studies: a review.” She states that “the past 30 years have witnessed an explosion of literary production by people of African descent. Although Black writers have been publishing their work for centuries, this has been an era of institutionalizing and diversifying literature, identifying and creating a market for it, and formalizing its study” (165). Authors such as Frederick Douglass, Langston Hughes, and W.E.B. DuBois have been a consistent part of the curricula. The manner in which Black Lives Matter attempts to educate, however, is rather new. It creates its own curricula in the form of reading lists. This thesis will attempt to fill the academic research gap by researching how specific authors that appear on such lists and whose novels or stances on societal and political issues share similarities with Black Lives Matter ideals, position themselves, and are positioned in light of Black Lives Matter. The terms for this positioning are posture for self-representation of position-taking, and persona for representation or positioning by others. These terms will be explained more extensively in Chapter 1. Prior to explaining this thesis’ research

question and the concept of position-taking and the notions of posture and persona, the effect of Black Lives Matter on the literary world, and its educational purpose will be contextualized.

Black Lives Matter's Educational Purpose

In the United Kingdom, the Black Lives Matter movement and organizations and individuals that focus on racial inequality have influenced the literary field to spread awareness and educate the general public about racial injustice issues. In doing so, they position themselves in relation to Black Lives Matter. Numerous book news websites compiled and shared lists of independent black-owned bookstores and reported record sales. Additionally, several outlets shared reading lists about race and racism (Viltus par. 2). In May and June of 2020, book outlets sent out their initial official statements in response to the protest after Floyd's death to take a public stance. This occurred in a variety of ways. Viltus, writer for *Bookriot*, the largest independent editorial book site in North America, explains that "Tor Books retweeted a pro-BLM post from their parent publisher, Macmillan USA. Literary Hub retweeted Book Marks's review of *How to be Anti-Racist*. They also posted an anti-racist round-up of collected essays published on their website. Publisher's Weekly and Goodreads posted statements. They followed up with tweets sharing resources, reading lists, and other publication interviews" (Par. 7). Goodreads, the popular online platform for all kinds of book enthusiasts, published a reading list too. Suzanne Skyvara, Vice President of Marketing and Editorial at Goodreads, explains that there was a massive spike of interest from Goodreads members in "nonfiction books that help them learn about our country's history of racism and how to take action against it, so we quickly responded with an article highlighting 20 books highly rated by our members" (Qtd. in Viltus par. 8). A result of such a reading list was that people added books of this list to their own want-to-read list and read such books. This is significant because previously underrepresented or less-well-known authors now receive more attention. Moreover, societal injustices that not all people were attentive to now became more known. People who frequent reading lists are, for example, Angela Davis with *Freedom Is A Constant Struggle* and Reni Eddo-Lodge with *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race*. The relevance of this information lies in the fact that people act, thus take a stance, and in doing so, position themselves in relation to Black Lives Matter. Research into this has been restricted to news articles and has not yet reached the academic domain.

This type of reading list is not universally approved of, and authors respond to them being featured on reading lists or receiving additional attention due to Black Lives Matter influence. Prominent black American author Yaa Gyasi is known for her debut novel

Homegoing. She won the National Book Critics Circle's John Leonard Award, and more recently, the Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise in Literature was awarded to her in 2020. She states that:

I make my living off my imagination, but this summer, as I watched *Homegoing* climb back up the *New York Times* bestseller list in response to its appearance on anti-racist reading lists, I saw again, with no small amount of bile, that I make my living off the articulation of pain too. My own, my people's. It is wrenching to know that the occasion for the renewed interest in your work is the murders of black people and the subsequent 'listening and learning' of white people. I'd rather not know this feeling of experiencing career highs as you are flooded with a grief so old and worn that it seems unearthed, a fossil of other old and worn griefs (Gyasi par. 5).

She describes the experience of seeing *Homegoing* on a bestseller list as "bittersweet" (Par. 6), and the idea of elaborating on that exhausts and offends her. She states: "What I should say is: why are we back here? Why am I being asked questions that James Baldwin answered in the 1960s, that Toni Morrison answered in the 80s?" (Gyasi par. 6), and "while I do devoutly believe in the power of literature to challenge, to deepen, to change, I also know that buying books by black authors is but a theoretical, grievously belated and utterly impoverished response to centuries of physical and emotional harm. *The Bluest Eye* was published 51 years ago. As Lauren Michelle Jackson wrote in her excellent *Vulture* essay, "What is an anti-racist reading list for, *someone at some point has to get down to the business of reading*" (Gyasi par. 7). She laments the principal reasons why she is on reading lists. The primary purpose of these lists is to educate people on issues that have been present for decades and that it is not the first time these issues receive attention. Gyasi thus takes a particular position by opposing such reading lists.

Authors are not the only literary actors who act or respond to the Black Lives Matter discussion developments. Numerous publishers and platforms have expressed the significance of being aware of racial injustices. However, such expressions are insufficient, according to more than one hundred authors, including Booker Prize co-winner Bernardine Evaristo, Benjamin Zephaniah, and Malorie Blackman. They sent out an open letter, calling on some of the United Kingdom's largest publishing houses, namely Penguin Random House, Simon & Schuster, Hachette, HarperCollins, and Macmillan, to reform how they conduct business (Cain par. 3). The authors propose that publishers become more transparent with their data, hire more black commissioning editors, and more black people for the marketing and publicity departments. These authors collectively align themselves with Black Lives Matter views.

Research Question

Two of the mentioned authors, Bernardine Evaristo and Reni Eddo-Lodge, are frequent subjects of conversation about Black Lives Matter in relation to literature. They have been selected as case studies for this thesis' research. Both are prominent black British authors. *The Guardian's* Alison Flood states that they "have become the first black British women to top the UK's fiction and nonfiction paperback charts, in a week where black authors lined up to slam British publishing as a 'hostile environment,' and as bookshop chain, Waterstones is being urged by staff to donate to the Black Lives Matter movement in the wake of soaring sales of black authors" (Par. 1). This ensures that there will be sufficient material about them in relation to Black Lives Matter in the form of, for example, interviews, that can be analyzed to determine how both authors position themselves and are positioned by others. Furthermore, the general topic of racism in Eddo-Lodge's novel and Evaristo's anti-racism activist character indicate that there will be a substantial corpus that can be analyzed. As explained, news articles touch upon authors and their general views on matters that overlap with Black Lives Matter. What has not yet been researched is how specific authors position themselves and are positioned by others in relation to Black Lives Matter. Additionally, Black Lives Matter's possible impact on authors has not been studied extensively. An example of such an impact may be increased coverage of specific authors, which may result in increased financial gain. An additional impact may be that authors are linked to Black Lives Matter or perhaps used by Black Lives Matter to spread a specific message. The central research question of this thesis is: how do Bernardine Evaristo and Reni Eddo-Lodge position themselves considering the ongoing discussions regarding Black Lives Matter and race equality and how are they positioned by others, and is there a clash between this posture and persona? Initial sub-questions will focus on the concept of posture. What exactly is it, and what may be reasons for authors to position themselves in a particular manner? This will be addressed in chapter 1 which focusses on the theoretical framework. The theoretical framework that will be utilized for this is predominantly constructed by Meizoz (2007 and 2010). Van den Braber et al. (2021), also worked with Meizoz' theoretical frame and complemented it for their own research. This thesis will follow their framework, which will also be explained in chapter 1. Furthermore, this thesis will investigate what type of capital is at play in the positioning process for both Reni Eddo-Lodge and Bernadine Evaristo. These theoretical frameworks will be utilized to analyze the corpus that predominantly consists of news articles about the case studies, interviews with the authors, reports, and both publishing houses of the authors will be investigated regarding how they advertise their authors. The criteria for the sources is addressed in chapter 1.

Thesis Overview

Following this introduction, chapter 1 will focus on the theoretical framework surrounding the concepts of posture and capital. Furthermore, it will discuss the methodology that will be utilized to analyze how Evaristo and Eddo-Lodge position themselves or are positioned by others. Chapter 2 will discuss the first case study, Bernardine Evaristo. She and her novel *Girl, Woman, Other* from 2019 will be introduced. Then the persona, how others position her, will be discussed, followed by a section that will discuss her posture, how she positions herself. Chapter 3 will be of the exact nature as chapter 2 but will touch upon the second case study of Reni Eddo-Lodge and her novel *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race* from 2017. Finally, the concluding chapter will synthesize the results from the previous chapters. The relevance of this research will be specified, in addition to its limits and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 1 – Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The core theory of this thesis revolves around posture. Posture was initially part of Alain Viala's concept *ethos* and later has been amended by, among others, Jérôme Meizoz. Meizoz took posture as a core concept and not as a part of an *ethos*. His theory will be central. However, in order to effectively discuss and critique Meizoz' theory it is critical that Bourdieu's field theory is discussed beforehand. The reason for this is that Bourdieu's field theory is the foundation on which Meizoz' build his own framework. Additionally, the concept of branding is closely linked to posture and will be briefly touched upon as well through the work by Van den Braber et al. Subsequently, various forms of posture and examples will be provided. Finally, the methodology section will explain how this theoretical framework is put into practice and how the corpus is structured.

Bourdieu's Field Theory

Although Bourdieu's field theory and concepts of capital is not weaved into the corpus analysis, it lays the foundation of the theories that are. Bourdieu conceptualized society and argues that each field, for example, the economic, religious field, or, relevant here, the literary one, consists of multiple agents. Agents each play their part, react to each other, and attempt to accumulate different forms of capital. Examples of such agents in the literary field are individual authors, critics, book traders, readers, and publishing houses. Examples of capital are economic capital, which can be translated to money, or symbolic capital, which can be translated to prestige. Each agent acts with the purpose of accumulating capital, which is inherently unequally distributed and of which ownership grants access to the field's profits. Bourdieu describes it as follows:

The *space of literary or artistic position-takings*, i.e. the structured set of the manifestations of the social agents involved in the field [...] is inseparable from the *space of literary or artistic positions* defined by possession of a determinate quantity of specific capital (recognition) and, at the same time, by occupation of a determinate position in the structure of the distribution of this specific capital (Bourdieu 1993: 30)

Bourdieu's field theory then analyzes how the production, distribution, and consumption relations are determined through social interactions between the separate agents.

Jérôme Meizoz' Concept of Posture

Meizoz, a Swiss professor, author and literary critic, built upon the theories by Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Viala. Bourdieu introduced his field theory and argued that each actor takes a certain

position in order to accumulate forms of capital. Subsequent literary questions that arose questioned the manner in which, for example, authors conducted themselves and how exactly they positioned themselves within the literary field. However, as modern Dutch literature professor Laurens Ham states, “Bourdieu does not offer us a methodology for analysing the texts and activities by which authors shape their own writerly identities” (97). Ham argues that posture theory is “a good instrument for filling in this lacuna” (97). Alain Viala was the first to define posture. He states that “a position can be taken up in a number of ways: one could [...] modestly take up a favourable position or with a great show take up a modest position. This is why the notion of posture (of how a position is taken up) is useful” (Qtd. In Meizoz 2007: 83). Viala argues that posture is a component of an author’s ethos – the way in which an author conducts themselves – rather than an all-encompassing notion of an author’s position-taking.

Meizoz refined the concept of posture. In his 2007 book *Postures littéraires. Mises en scène modernes de l’auteur* Meizoz defines posture as follows:

La ‘posture’ est la manière singulière d’occuper une ‘position’ dans le champ littéraire. Connaissant celle-ci, on peut décrire comment une ‘posture’ la rejoue ou la déjoue. Qui fait imprimer un ouvrage (un disque, une gravure, etc.) impose une image de soi qui dépasse les coordonnées d’identité du citoyen (18)

By creating an ‘image de soi’, a unique self-image, an author takes position within the literary field. Meizoz describes both the object (ouvrage) and the relation with the collective as relevant for the position-taking: ‘j’y inclus la dimension rhétorique (textuelle) et actionnelle (contextuelle)’ (2007: 17). He additionally states: “La posture constitue ‘l’identité littéraire’ construite par l’auteur lui-même, et souvent relayée par les médias qui la donnent à lire au public” (17). Initially, then, Meizoz saw the creation of a posture as a process by one actor, the author. The result would be passed on to the media, which would pass it on to the public. Literature professor Matthijs Sanders argues that by understanding posture as a interplay between ‘discours’ and ‘conduite’ that the concept of posture by Meizoz was a successful attempt to connect the research paradigms of cultural sociology and discourse analysis (238).

In 2010 Meizoz amended his theory. In an English publication Meizoz states that “posture is not uniquely an author’s own construction, but an interactive process: the image is co-constructed by the author and various mediators (journalists, criticism, biographies) serving the reading public” (2010: 84). The core difference is that not the singular author, but multiple actors contribute to the author’s posture. An author then does not have the sole authority over their own posture, but can only attribute to it to a certain extent, or attempt to guide the process by, for example, coming to a consensus with their publisher or other contributing agents.

Posture Paradox

Posture can then be understood as the manner in which an author takes position within the literary field. The ‘image de soi’ indicates that this process and the outcome is unique for each actor. Nathalie Heinich, a French sociologist and former student of Bourdieu, argues that posture is linked to *régime de la singularité*, an author’s need or necessity even to distinguish themselves (In Sanders 239). Sanders, however, points out the collective dimension of posture, which becomes visible when a particular posture becomes a model for others to either accept or reject. He states: “Maar als een *posture* gemodelleerd is naar bestaande, prototypische houdingen dan kan er van werkelijke singulariteit geen sprake zijn. Singulariteit is dan evenzeer het resultaat van een *performance*, een theateraal spel tussen objectief medeplichtigen” (239). Although Meizoz sees posture as a singular process, he does state that “the number of distinctive possibilities for embodying an author function and an authorial figure is limited. Rather, there appear to be certain variations on a number of typical author ‘postures’ which in the course of history have formed an open repertoire, to be actualized at diverse literary historical moments” (2010: 81). This appears to be contradictory to his earlier notion of ‘image de soi’ and paradoxical. How can posture be authentic and singular if it over time becomes a model to be adopted by others?

There is then an academic consensus that the concept of posture is a work in progress. In his 2015 article ‘*En dat vindt u vrouwelijk?*’ *Posture versus imago in een televisie-interview met Jacques Hamelink (1969)*, Jeroen Dera states that “op theoretisch niveau is het een heikele kwestie of er in het geval van een posture sprake is van een zuivere constructie door de auteur of van een coconstructie” (256). Dera has come up with his own framework, understanding posture as the author’s representation by the author themselves, linking it to ‘image de soi’, and referring to the representation by others as ‘imago’. Dera does acknowledge that these terms are in interaction with one another. He views this a process in which the author can respond to a constructed imago with his posture (256). Dera also shows that:

De casus Literaire ontmoetingen onderstreept de problematiek van Meizoz’ posture-concept als parapluconcept voor autopresentatie én heteropresentatie. Mijns inziens is het vruchtbaarder om die twee terminologisch van elkaar te scheiden, zodat een helderder onderscheid kan worden gemaakt tussen het beeld dat de auteur opwerpt en het beeld dat regisseur en interviewer van hem (proberen te) construeren (267).

Helleke van den Braber, Jeroen Dera, Jos Joosten and Maarten Steenmeijer, editors of *Branding Books Across the Ages* (2021), concur that regarding posture being a unique self-image or a co-construction, Meizoz utilizes the term “inconsequently” (21). In their book Van den Braber et

al. focus on branding. They describe the making of a brand as an interactive process over time between authors, publishers, and readerships. They argue that branding is a complex cultural process influenced by a diverse range of actors and time-related factors (9-15). They state that “there exists a complex interplay between different actors (writers, literary agents, publishers, book traders, critics, and readers) [...], each capable of directing and diversifying the process of branding” (12). The representation of the author, both auto and hetero, are an important part of the branding process. The inconsistent usage of the term posture, however, “forces researchers to operationalize very narrowly what they understand as ‘posture’” (21). In line with Dera (2015), Van den Braber et al. choose to separate auto- and hetero-representation and thus not to use posture as an umbrella term for both. They understand posture as auto-representation of the author, and refer to the hetero-representation with the term ‘persona’. This thesis will adopt the same terms and framework, and investigate the posture and persona of Bernardine Evaristo and Reni Eddo-Lodge.

Collective Posture Models

As quoted earlier, Meizoz states that there exist “certain variations on a number of typical author ‘postures’ which in the course of history have formed an open repertoire, to be actualized at diverse literary historical moments” (2010: 81). The next sections will provide examples of such models.

Activist Author

A political author’s goal is mostly either to objectively inform, or to create awareness about injustices and spark movement. The latter may be referred to as an activist type of author. A prime example of this is Canadian Naomi Klein, who has written on various social topics, ranging from climate change to the dominance of multinationals and neoliberalism. The concept of an activist author may be well-fitted for this thesis’ research. Black Lives Matter is an activist movement focused on numerous social issues. Authors that align themselves with Black Lives Matter, or write about social issues, like Klein does, would fit in this category. The link between an activist author’s posture and persona may be complex because the author and their writing topic are not limited to the literary field. If an author writes about political issues, there are likely two opposing camps regarding that political issue. One side may agree and create a certain persona, while the side that does not agree may create a rather different one. This may indicate a potential limitation in the posture and persona research process, namely that it is

difficult to reach a consensus if the persona is created by more than one or a few like-minded people.

Celebrity Author

In *A Concise Companion to Contemporary British Fiction* (2006), James F. English and John Fro, discuss British fiction and state that “[it] is not a site of “a grand struggle between art and money;” it rather is a “complex system in which different kinds of agents or players conduct transactions involving distinct forms of capital” (45). This is also based on the theory of Bourdieu. However, English and Frow add a certain type of agent, namely the celebrity author or the ‘blockbuster’ phenomenon. A prime American example is Stephen King and perhaps the most well-known British celebrity author is J.K. Rowling, who also became the first billionaire author. English and Frow explain that “as the example of Rowling indicates, extraordinary commercial success can sometimes lead to widespread interest in the figure of the author herself, just as this kind of popular attention to the person can be leveraged into commercial success for the work” (43). At times, there is a shift regarding what is deemed most important for the reader. This most often used to be the book, but nowadays, celebrity authors are the central aspect and selling point, and their works receive less attention. This type of author may be an interesting case study. As Dera (2015) argued, the posture of an author can influence their imago (persona). If the posture focusses on the author themselves, rather than their work, it is interesting to research if the persona follows or does devote substantial attention to the work.

Logically, one cannot position oneself as a celebrity from the onset of their career. An author becomes a celebrity by accumulating sufficient social capital and by the approval of an adequate portion of the public. But once this has been achieved, the celebrity status can be utilized or even exploited.

Those who wish not to be positioned

Almost the exact opposite of a celebrity author is an author who shies away from the limelight, prefers to remain anonymous and their work be the central point of attention. An excellent example of this is Ali Smith. Smith’s work is most often labeled modernist (See Horgan 2016), and in line with Bourdieu’s theory, it might make sense for Smith to profile herself as a modernist author. This is because the modernist label is linked to high-brow literature, and an author of such genres can then obtain prestige and social capital by profiling themselves as such. Smith, however, refuses to actively engage in the branding and marketing process of herself, although she is not unaware of its benefits. In an interview with Dr. Tim Parnell, a

Senior Lecturer in English at Goldsmiths, University of London, it becomes apparent that Smith identifies as an ‘anything’ author (00:02:38-00:02:41). She refuses to position herself as anything specific and strongly desires her work to be the central point of attention and discussion. Parnell asks if she would position herself in a modernist position. Smith answers, “I wouldn’t position myself anywhere. As soon as you take a position, it’s like you’re in an armchair you can’t get out of [...] I can see that it would make sense to people to position me there [in the modernism genre]” (00:04:30). Smith sees positioning as a limitation, restricting the author to stay in their lane rather than a useful way to obtain social capital. There are few interviews because she does not want to be in the limelight. Consequently, the research on Ali Smith is being conducted by the receivers of her work, the readers and critics, and not so much by herself or the publisher’s marketing team.

Gwennie Debergh’s chapter in *Branding Books Across the Ages* discusses an additional example of an author who shies away from branding, namely Hugo Claus. She describes that:

The literary branding of Hugo Claus (1929-2008) rests on a paradox: he built his image on his refusal to let himself be branded. While most of his fellow writers presented a relatively distinct and clear-cut self-image, Flanders’ most mediatized writer of the twentieth century seemed to constantly strive for the opposite. Claus resisted being typecast and cultivated an image of elusiveness. He presented himself as a chameleon on a lyrical, biographical, and sartorial level, and opted in interviews for the tactics of the masquerade and the lie (177).

Debergh’s case study shows that an author has a large part in their branding process. Additionally, it demonstrates that an author can quite well influence the branding process of themselves by others, the persona, both by consistently acting in a particular matter, and by dictating which interviews to take and with whom. It also shows that branding an author as a particular something may be an arduous task since it is possible few sources can be analyzed. Although Debergh’s case study concerns branding, it is also relevant for posture research.

Limitations

Posture research is not without its limitations. These are primarily the subjective nature of the corpus’ interpretation and the fluidity of an image. Regarding the former, Dera (2015) states:

Het is belangrijk daarbij onmiddellijk aan te tekenen dat het door mij geschetste posture en imago berusten op mijn interpretatie van de uitzending. In zuiver theoretisch opzicht is ieder posture immers een imago, omdat het beeld van een auteur uiteindelijk door de onderzoeker wordt geconstrueerd en gemedieerd (258).

The results of posture and persona research may differ between scholars, while the analyzed corpus is similar or identical. Reaching a consensus may then prove to be an arduous task. Representation changes over time and is thus fluid. An author's persona may be one of non-establishment, but winning a prestigious literary prize may quickly alter that. This will become apparent in the case study of Bernardine Evaristo. Additionally, societal standards alter, and more often than not products and people with them. A prime example, albeit one outside the literary field, is Aunt Jemina, a syrup and pancake mix brand. Quaker Oats, the product owner, decided to remove the image and change the name. The image of a black woman has changed more than once. Initially, she was dressed as a minstrel character, and "in recent years Quaker removed the 'mammy' handkerchief from the character to blunt growing criticism that the brand perpetuated a racist stereotype that dated to the days of slavery. Quaker, [...] said removing the image and name is part of an effort by the company to make progress toward racial equality" (Kesslen par. 2). A brand may change then according to contemporary societal standards. This is the case for products, but a person may change its views on certain aspects, and thus how they position themselves, as well.

Methodology

To put the theoretical framework into practice and answer the main research question of how the posture and persona of Bernardine Evaristo and Reni Eddo-Lodge is constructed news articles, websites and reports will be analyzed. Chapter 2 and 3 will begin with an introduction to its respective author and their novel. The subsequent section will analyze the persona of the author, followed by a section that focuses on the posture. The central question for chapters 2 and 3 is whether a clash between the constructed posture and persona can be discerned. This will be done by analyzing how the publishers frame their authors and by analyzing reports and news articles to see if there is a discrepancy between the two. In the case of Evaristo, this entails the Booker Prize report and, in the case of Eddo-Lodge, the Jhalak Prize. The corpus that will be analyzed consists of news articles, interviews with the authors, both written and in video format, agents responsible for the authors (for example, a publisher), and book reviews. A vital aspect to analyze in these interviews is the author's introduction and their book and the way of questioning. Are the questions leading and open or closed? Naturally, the answers are a vital aspect of the analysis as well.

Since the general question of how authors position themselves or are being positioned in light of the Black Lives Matter movement, each source in the selected corpus is viewed from the movement and its relevance.

Corpus Criteria

Meizoz argued that an author's posture is construed by multiple agents, rather than the singular author (2010). The corpus, then, consists of a range of sources from multiple agents, including news articles, personal websites, video interviews, and literary prize reports. The sources that are analyzed have been selected based on their content after an initial analysis of over a hundred sources that link Evaristo and Eddo-Lodge, as well as their novels, to the Black Lives Matter movement. The database of Nexis showed over 3,000 hits with the terms 'evaristo' and 'girl woman other', showing that there is a high number of sources available. The available time and scope of this thesis does not allow for an examination of all these sources, nor are they all suited for analysis. Consequently, a careful selection was made. The sources that have been selected all contain relevant statements or findings that are suitable to incorporate in this analysis. However, a result is that the sources' origin vary considerably, ranging from *The Guardian* to *The Hindu* to *the Berliner-Zeitung*. Consequently, the posture and persona that is construed by all agents is general, and not, for example, a purely British one.

For both Evaristo and Eddo-Lodge's posture, the corpus consists of their own website, their publisher's website, an analysis of the literary prize they won, and conducted interviews with third parties. The core criteria for these sources was that that they had to be personal and be from a relevant time frame, namely after the author's respective novel had been published, 2017 for Eddo-Lodge and 2019 for Evaristo, and Black Lives Matter had become a relevant topic of discussion.

Chapter 2 – Positioning Bernardine Evaristo

This chapter will discuss the first case study: Bernardine Evaristo. The first segment will introduce Evaristo and explain why she is a suitable case study for this type of posture and persona research. The second segment will provide a synopsis of her book *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019), the novel that quickly rose to the top of the British charts. This is essential background information since the book's content is frequently discussed in interviews and because it plays an extensive role in the posture process. The main question for the third segment is how the persona and posture, or hetero- and auto-image, of Evaristo are constructed and if there exists a discrepancy between the two. Regarding the persona, the corpus consists of the Booker Prize report and an analysis of Evaristo's publisher, Penguin Books. The final segment will discuss the posture of Evaristo. The primary source type for this part of the analysis is news articles. As chapter 1 demonstrated, it is important that more sources than just the author are included, since multiple agents contribute to an author's posture and persona (Meizoz 2010). Since these contain interviews and the kind of questioning that will be analyzed, this section also partially includes an analysis of Evaristo's persona. The central notion in this analysis will be Evaristo's link to Black Lives Matter and, if so, how she positions herself in light of this movement. Additionally, the educational aspect of Black Lives Matter is discussed in the persona section that analyzed Evaristo's publisher Penguin Books and the book reviews.

Bernardine Evaristo

Bernardine Anne Mobolaji Evaristo is a British author and academic. She authored ten novels in numerous genres, ranging from fiction to poetry to literary criticism. Her works revolve around the African diaspora. She is one of fewer than thirty female black professors in the United Kingdom and teaches Creative Writing at Brunel University London. Evaristo is the author of eight fiction novels, in which the African diaspora is the overarching theme and two non-fiction novels. Her first novel, *The Emperor's Babe*, dates from 2001, and it was in 2019 that she gained international headlines with *Girl, Woman, Other*. Evaristo won the Booker Prize, which is awarded each year for the best novel written in English and published in the United Kingdom or Ireland. She became the first black woman and the first black British author to do so. However, she, rather controversially, co-won this prize with Margaret Atwood, while since 1992 the rules state that the prize shall not be divided. Evaristo describes winning the renowned prize as bittersweet, "because it's not that other writers have been undeserving in the past, yet only four other black women have ever been shortlisted. I do hope that another black

woman will claim it soon” (Evaristo “I long ago” par. 3). Here Evaristo notes that there has been a shift that resulted in black people now being shortlisted. This may be linked to Black Lives Matter. It will be investigated if this becomes apparent in the interviews.

Evaristo’s own life and the topics she writes about make her an interesting case study. She is also an activist, striving for equality and inclusion. Her first non-fiction book, *Manifesto: On Never Giving Up* (2021), tells the story of how she got to where she is now, the road to her winning the Booker Prize in 2019. Her life is on filled with setbacks and adversaries, racism, but also love and the overcoming of societal and personal obstacles. She uses her own experiences for her writing: “through the prism of her extraordinary experiences, she offers vital insights into the nature of race, class, feminism, sexuality, and aging in modern Britain” (Waterstones par. 2). Her second non-fiction book, *Feminism* (2021), is a short novel that discusses a survey of the representation of black women in British Art. Both novel’s topics show that Evaristo is critically aware of social injustices. Her knowledge has been obtained through study and life experiences. She has been attempting to create a more just literary field and to raise awareness for many decades. In 1982, she co-founded Theatre of Black Women, which was operational for six years. In 1995 she became the founding director of Spread the Word, a literature development agency aimed at those that are underrepresented in literature, and provided workshops, courses, and talk shops. A more recent example dates from 2012 and concerns Evaristo’s founding of the 3K Brunel International African Poetry Prize. The objective was to highlight African poetry since few African poets were published. A final example is of 2021 when Evaristo became a curator for Black Britain: Writing Back. In collaboration with Hamish Hamilton/Penguin Random House, out-of-circulation books were to be brought back. Titles include *Minty Alley* (1936) by C. L. R. James, *Incomparable World* (1996) by S.I. Martin and *Without Prejudice* (1997) by Nicola Williams. The objectives of the Black Lives Matter movement tie in with what Evaristo desires and has been working on for decades, especially the part revolving around creating awareness and education. It will then be intriguing to see how Evaristo profiles herself in relation to Black Lives Matter. Does she try to utilize the movement’s broad scope to voice her message, does she join ranks with Black Lives Matter, or is she going in the same direction as Black Lives Matter but keeps her distance from it?

Girl, Woman, Other (2019)

In May of 2019, Hamish Hamilton published Evaristo’s eighth novel, *Girl, Woman, Other*, which would win Evaristo the Booker Prize. Furthermore, it was awarded Book of the Year and was one of Barack Obama’s 2019 favorites. It was the twelfth bestselling hardback fiction book

in the United Kingdom 2019, the number one bestselling paperback book in the United Kingdom for five weeks, and featured in the Top 10 overall for forty-four weeks.

The book tells the story of twelve different women, all black or mixed-race, whose lives are interconnected. Each has her own story, sexual identity, is rich or poor, and faces numerous hardships, such as racism and discrimination, which must be overcome. They have a variety of professions, from bankers and teachers to housewives, and their ages range from 19 to 93. The novel tells the story of twelve vastly different people's lives in Britain. Evaristo writes about the black experience in an intersectional way and links it to contemporary societal issues. The novel's wide variety of themes ties in well with the overarching themes of Black Lives Matter, those also being awareness of social struggles that minorities endure, LGBTQ rights, and general awareness about racial injustice.

Evaristo's Persona

This section will investigate how others position Evaristo. It will analyze Evaristo's publisher's website, which is Penguin Books, The Booker Prize report, book reviews, and reports on how well the book has performed to establish the persona of Evaristo and to investigate if a link with the Black Lives Matter movement can be discerned.

In the United Kingdom, Evaristo's publisher is Penguin Books. The website has a short section of Evaristo at the time of writing, without a profile picture. It states her accomplishments and stresses that she is the first black woman to win the Booker Prize. Evaristo herself published numerous articles on Penguin Books' website, ranging from diversifying the British curricula to reading recommendations. This does show that Penguin Books does not shy away from publishing critical articles on its website and supports Evaristo in expressing her views. The article on diversifying the British curricula ties in with Black Lives Matter's educational purpose. Although reading lists are more common, Evaristo's specific critique on the curricula shares the same goal and Penguin Books, by publishing it on their website, position Evaristo in line with Black Lives Matter.

Evaristo and Penguin Books have also collaborated to select "six lost and hard-to-find books by Black writers to start a new series, Black Britain: Writing Back" (Bernardine Evaristo rediscovers par. 1). Additionally, Penguin Books and the Runnymede Trust have collaborated to diversify English Literature teaching, called Lit in Colour. Evaristo published a short article on Penguin Books' website about why she supports this. It must be noted that this seems like an instant in which Evaristo positions her publisher, but this can work vice versa too. Penguin Books shows that it cares about diversity and representation, in line with what Black Lives

Matter stands for. It positions Evaristo as an author that does the same by collaborating with her on such issues, allowing her to publish articles on such subject matters, and representing her and the work she stands for.

In the United States, Evaristo is represented by Grove Atlantic. The section on Evaristo is somewhat limited. It states her accolades and the topics she writes about. In terms of positioning, all that can be concluded is that she is positioned as a successful author, but there is no discernable link to Black Lives Matter.

In 2019 the Booker Prize did not announce one but two winners. Evaristo co-won the prize with Margaret Atwood. On the Booker Prize website, it is stressed that Evaristo became the first black female novelist to win. The short description of the novel reads: “With vivid originality, irrepressible wit, and sly wisdom, Bernardine Evaristo presents a gloriously new kind of history for this old country” (The 2019 Booker Prize). An official jury report is not available, but the website does have three videos in which the longlist, shortlist, and winner(s) are announced. In the video that announces the winner, judge Peter Florence states that

our understanding was that this year of all, years there is a context that both these books are heard loudly and gloriously around the world. We wanted to celebrate both of them and did not want to give either of them up [...] I don't think either of them sends a message, I think they ask huge questions. How are these people visible in society? How are their stories told? What does resilience look like? What does courage look like in a time of volatility and aggression (The 2019 Booker Prize Winners 00:13-00:28).

The analysis of the corpus will show that there are few instances in which Black Lives Matter is directly stated, or a direct link with Black Lives Matter is made. However, as the quote by Florence makes clear, the overlap from Evaristo's writing topics with what Black Lives Matter stands for is made. The quote directly positions her as an author who, through her work, asks relevant societal questions regarding minorities and more indirectly touches upon her resilient activism in a turbulent time.

The *BBC*'s Will Gompertz reviewed the *Girl, Woman, Other* in October 2020. He starts by stating that he thinks literary prizes are nonsense and that “judgement is subjective and discriminatory” (Par. 1). Regarding the novel, he says the book has “readability” (Par. 2) and singles out that the characters, primarily black British women, endure a “daily dose of casual racism and prejudice, which is the common dominator that unites the personal vignettes” (Par. 3). The characters are “compelling, [discuss] important subjects with intelligence and verve [and] have plenty to say, most of it worth listening to, some of it enlightening” (Par. 5-9). The novel “succeeds in depicting a rich and textured account of life in Britain as seen and

experienced by her cast of characters” (Par. 7). Gompertz, then, opines that the novel depicts the experience of black women in Britain, which is an experience that deals with racism and is worth listening to.

Evaristo is described as a “good writer [...] funny, precise and confident” (Par. 2). Gompertz is also critical. He deems the novel’s late introduction of an additional three characters as “three more passengers squeezing on to an already packed railway carriage,” after which the story becomes rather “monotonous, a tad formulaic; a little predictable” (Par. 12). Regardless of his critique, Gompertz ends with describing *Girl, Woman, Other* as a “strikingly contemporary novel that has plenty to say (it very occasionally spills over into lecturing), and does so with some of the finest writing I’ve read in a long time” (Par. 14). Gompertz does not directly touch upon Evaristo’s activism or links Black Lives Matter. He does position Evaristo as a good writer that touches upon the black experience in Britain.

Ellie Rhodes from *The Financial Times* reviewed *Girl, Woman, Other* in May 2019. The review is relatively short, 461 words, but Rhodes does make statements that are useful for this research. Rhodes argues that Evaristo has made the label ‘black’ “ridiculously simplistic and reductive” (Par. 2) because the black characters have roots from places all over the world. Evaristo “explores the diversity of today’s Britain and points towards a more colourful alternative history, where, for instance, Slim — an African-American living in the Scottish borders — sees a portrait of a bride from 200 years ago, previously passed off as the daughter of a Spanish merchant, and recognises her as ‘one of us’” (Par. 1). Evaristo highlights racial differences, according to Rhodes, and “celebrates the mix of African and British in all of our DNA; moreover she captures the shared experiences that make us, as she puts it in her dedication, “members of the human family” (Par. 2-5). This may be interpreted as Evaristo emphasizing equality, which overlaps with the ideals of Black Lives Matter.

The Guardian’s Micha Frazer-Carroll reviewed the novel in May 2019. She opines that the book raises contemporary questions regarding race and feminism, and she addresses a patriarchal society. Frazer-Carroll states that *Girl, Woman, Other* is “about struggle, but also about love, joy and imagination [...] For many readers, it’s not a familiar world - this is a Britain less often depicted in fiction. But that certainly doesn’t mean it’s not a world that is possible, and worth celebrating” (Par. 8). Frazer-Carroll argues that feminists have always faced problems, such as commercialization and media obsession. She argues that Evaristo “weaves these struggles into dialogue without reducing her speakers into mouthpieces for a popular debate” (Par. 4). Evaristo, then, raises questions without making clear her political view. This ties in well with the ideal of raising awareness, which also links her to Black Lives Matter.

Additionally, it can be argued that starting a dialogue is a proper way to educate people about existing struggles. This makes apparent a link to Black Lives Matter's educational purpose. Frazer-Carroll positions Evaristo as a feminism author and celebrates the world she writes about.

Jake Kerridge from *The Telegraph* published his review in October 2019, entitled "Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments* didn't need the Booker Prize boost - but does Bernadine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* really deserve it?" The article is also a summary of Kerridge's view on the Booker Prize and the nominees. At the end of the article, he touches upon Evaristo, stating: "The Anglo-Nigerian writer Bernardine Evaristo has been tackling the theme of the oppression of women as doggedly as Margaret Atwood for 25 years without ever getting very close to the limelight. Recognition for *Girl, Woman, Other*, in which 12 black British women reflect on their experiences in a style closer to poetry than prose, is therefore very welcome". Regarding Evaristo's persona, this is the only relevant passage in the review, but it is significant. It positions Evaristo as a long-time activist who finally receives the attention she deserves.

Evaristo's Posture

This section will investigate how the posture, or auto-image, of Evaristo is constructed. This will be done by analyzing her podcast, website, and interviews. The sources of these interviews range from *Elle* to the *Berliner-Zeitung*. They have been selected based on their relevance to the Black Lives Matter movement and how descriptive they are, rather than just informative.

In "A point of view," a podcast on *BBC Radio 4*, Evaristo talks about why black lives matter for nine minutes. A monologue in which a person conveys their ideals and points of view can be regarded as active positioning, and Evaristo positions herself as an activist who is highly engaged with the ideals of Black Lives Matter. Although this may seem evident, it must be noted, however, that she has been that all her life, not just after the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. Two statements are important: "Black Lives Matter is a necessary campaign in our political history, and it has generated some very public soul searching from some institutions" (07:00-07:08), and "Fundamentally, Black Lives Matter ask us to commit to conversations around racism and to participate in an actively anti-racist life" (08:22-08:33). What becomes apparent here is that Evaristo positions herself not just as an author but as much more. What specifically stands out is the emphasis on being an activist that utilizes writing to create awareness about her ideals. Her authorship is utilized as a tool to convey important messages.

Evaristo's website, *bevaristo.com*, makes clear that she deems advocacy and activism of paramount importance. The website's main page summarizes her publications, prizes, and professions. There is also a section with a statement from Evaristo. This states, "I like to mix things up temporally, spatially and stylistically – to cross the borders of genre, race, culture, gender, history, and sexuality" and "my Afro-diasporic interests have led me to writing books that connect ancient and modern history with our contemporary society" (Evaristo Author Statement). Evaristo positions herself as an intersectional author, writing about various themes, which all link to the African diaspora.

Elle's Becky Burgum published an article in April 2020, "Bernardine Evaristo on BLM Activism, Feeling Invisible and Winning the Booker Prize." It is logical then that Evaristo discusses Black Lives Matter in this article, but the 'how' will be analyzed. Burgum's first two sentences provide the reader with important information about Evaristo and what are deemed her key features: "Bernardine Evaristo made history last October, when she became the first Black woman to be awarded the Booker Prize, for her eighth book *Girl, Woman, Other*. She's a political activist highly engaged with the Black Lives Matter movement, an author championing inclusivity in literature and the voice of a more diverse and just future" (Par. 1), and she is described as "a true pioneer for change" (Par. 2). Burgum further states that all people on the 2020 *Elle's* List are leaders and shakers reframing the world. The article continues with an interview with Evaristo, but this introduction is significant for it indicates how Evaristo is seen and positioned by Burgum. The significance of Evaristo's race is reiterated, and words such as 'activist' and 'pioneer' describe her as a righteous person, also providing Evaristo with symbolic capital.

In the interview, which in the article is more a singled-out monologue by Evaristo, a few quotes indicate how Evaristo positions herself. The first one is: "*Girl, Woman, Other* took me five years. If you don't enjoy the writing process, you'll suffer as a writer. I never just work on a novel. I teach creative writing, do book reviews and essays and talks as an activist" (Evaristo qtd. in Burgum par. 5). Regarding author positioning, Evaristo shows here that she refuses to be just an author but clearly states that she holds more occupations. She emphasizes her activist work:

I've been an activist for a long time. I want to live in a society where everybody is included, particularly Black people. It's so important for us to be fully participating in this society as people of colour. We shouldn't be invisible in any aspect of society, whether it's the arts in general, and most definitely in literature. I'm grateful to have a

big platform. When I say something now, I'm quoted in the media. In the past, people often haven't paid attention (Qtd. in Burgum par. 6)

Evaristo utilizes the symbolic capital she obtained by winning the Booker Prize and raises awareness about her ideals. This shows the significance of symbolic capital in the form of literary prizes. Now that Evaristo has won a renowned prize, people are more inclined to listen to her, and not just about literature. In a Waterstone interview, Evaristo says this herself too: "So I'm unstoppable, but then I also have the Booker behind me to do the work of bringing my work to a larger audience. And that's [...] I'm really pleased about that" (Bernardine Evaristo: The Waterstones Interview 15:45-16:00).

In the interview, Evaristo touches upon Black Lives Matter. After commenting on the state of black British women in literature and Evaristo herself being inspired by African-American writers, such as Toni Morrison, she emphasizes the importance of her getting the number one spot in the fiction charts. She states that "the Black Lives Matter movement has put the industry under the spotlight to diversify the workforce and who gets published" (Qtd. in Burgum par. 6). Here, she states that she won not because of Black Lives Matter but that Black Lives Matter has put pressure on the literature industry to create a fair playing field on which all can succeed and participate. In terms of positioning, Evaristo does not link herself to Black Lives Matter directly, but based on what she states and stands for, there are numerous similarities in both Evaristo's and Black Lives Matter's objectives.

The *Berliner-Zeitung's* Maxi Beigang published "Bernardine Evaristo: 'People expect tragedy. I give them reality'" in January 2021. After the news that *Girl, Woman, Other* was going to be translated into German, an interview was arranged to discuss the future of literature for black authors. This interview is particularly useful to analyze regarding how Evaristo positions herself. This section contains numerous extensive quotes, which serve the purpose of analyzing Evaristo's own words regarding how she positions herself, rather than a paraphrase of what she has said, which could be misinterpreted.

Beigang asks Evaristo if Black Lives Matter has influenced the reception of black authors. Evaristo answers:

I think the first Black Lives Matter movement was about 2014, and I think that didn't have the same impact as the Black Lives Matter protests last summer. But suddenly, last summer, the institutions, the publishers really were waking up to the fact that they hadn't done very well with Black writers or even Black people working within the industry. Books are written into a particular culture at the time, and the culture at this time is one that is more receptive than it's ever been to Black women and women of colour. Those

outside voices are coming to the fore now, and I am one of those outside voices, even though I'm now kind of establishment as well - but what I write about are the marginalised in our society (Par. 3).

This answer shows that Evaristo primarily sees herself as an outsider of the British literary world. She attempts to bring change to that same world, and due to the impact of Black Lives Matter is now heard. She tries to distance herself from the current state of the literary field since she disapproves of its composition. However, she also indicated that now she won the Booker Prize, she has become part of the establishment. She now has a position that yields more power and continues to write about marginalized groups. Beigung follows with the question: "You often say you have a radical heart. How much does it hurt to now talk about yourself as part of the establishment?" (Par. 4) Evaristo answers:

You know, I can't say anything other than that about myself, because if I say I'm an outsider, everyone is going to look at me and think she's mad, because that completely changed when I won the Booker - just in terms of book sales and the recognition that I get. I'm winning other awards and also the various positions I hold; I'm an honorary fellow at Oxford University and president of a drama school. All these things are really establishment positions, so I have to claim it. But as I say to everybody, I am in the establishment, but my radical heart still beats. I'm not there to endorse the status quo. I'll try and change things from within through my writing, obviously, and through everything else that I do (Par 4).

Evaristo indicates here that the Booker Prize trophy was accompanied with and resulted in a significant increase regarding economic and symbolic capital. Regarding her posture, she stresses that she owns her establishment part but will continue to embrace her radical nature and thus her activism to create an equal environment. The discussion revolving around the persona is more nuanced. At first glance, Evaristo can be positioned as literary establishment due to her accomplishments. However, when one conducts more research and looks beyond the headlines, Evaristo's activism becomes apparent, and consequently, she may be positioned quite differently. This shows the subtleties with posture and persona research and arguably a limitation, since the image of a person is not fixed but dependent on numerous factors and who you ask. However, this limitation may also inspire future research with a comparative aspect. How, for example, does an author's posture change over time?

In the interview, Evaristo positions herself away from stereotypes. When asked if she felt a responsibility to write black role models, Evaristo states: "No, not really. I wouldn't have used that language, but people have said that to me. But I am aware that I'm writing against

invisibility in fiction and writing against stereotypes. I was very clear that I was not going to create a character who in any way fitted in a stereotype [...]” (Par. 26). Here, Evaristo actively positions herself as an author that also wishes to educate her readers about what it is like to be black in Britain. This makes apparent a clear link with Black Lives Matter’s educational purpose.

In July 2020, *The Hindu*’s Anjali Thomas published an article entitled “‘Feminism needs tectonic plates to shift, not a trendy make-over’: On Booker-winning ‘Girl, Woman, Other.’” What becomes immediately apparent is that Thomas links Evaristo’s work to the Black Lives Matter movement because the image at the top of the article is one of a Black Lives Matter protest in Berlin. Furthermore, the first crosshead is called ‘Black authors matter,’ stating Thomas’ second link between Evaristo and Black Lives Matter. Thomas starts by describing the novel as an “exuberant celebration of black lives,” and that Evaristo “celebrates the lives of people who have to fight to be heard: women of colour, gay, lesbian and trans individuals, immigrants, the people that history tends to ignore and whose voices our elected leaders do not hear” (Par. 1).

Following the introduction, Evaristo states that her winning the Booker Prize was a result of more than one thing: “Events over the last two to three years have precipitated this, mainly Black Lives Matter, and before that, the MeToo Movement. Fiction written by women of colour is finally making it to bestseller lists and remaining there” (Par 3). Thomas does not ask directly if Evaristo identifies herself with Black Lives Matter or considers herself a member. However, links are made between the importance of Black Lives Matter and Evaristo’s work. The similarities are highlighted. For Example, Evaristo states that “racism exists here [UK] too. There’s widespread police harassment of black men, stop and search, for example. Systemic racism exists and is only now being addressed as young people are calling it out on Twitter and social media” (Par. 7). This is what Black Lives Matter has been addressing since it was created in 2013.

In January 2021, Olive Pometsey published an article in *GQ Magazine* entitled “Bernardine Evaristo: ‘When we’re considered a minority, there’ll always be a battle to be included’”, Pometsey refers to Evaristo as an academic, activist, and author, showing once more that it is difficult to position Evaristo as just a specific type of author since she has more occupations. When asked how she thinks about being welcomed in the literary establishment that previously excluded her, Evaristo replies: “I’m not a bitter person and I’m not resentful. Instead of thinking, ‘I’ve been around a long time; you weren’t paying attention,’ I’m just thinking, ‘Well, now you are and you’ve got seven other books of mine to read’” (Par.8). Here

it can be concluded that others refused to position Evaristo as part of the establishment, the best of the British literary world, prior to Evaristo winning the Booker Prize. This shows again the power of symbolic capital obtained through such prizes. Evaristo accepted that persona of her and now does not give too much attention to it. This also shows that it is not possible to have a fixed image of an author. There are developments, for example, winning prizes, that influence the perception of an author.

Pometsey ends her article by stating: “Evaristo has been wearing her armour for decades. The battle of the Booker might have been won, but the war is still raging. She’s not about to quit simply because she’s ahead” (Par. 11). Pometsey actively positions Evaristo as an activist author. An author that uses her works as an instrument of education and fights the fight for equality. As explained in chapter 1, Meizoz (2010) argued that posture models were shaped over time. A prime example of such a model is the activist author. Pometsey positions Evaristo within this model.

Conclusion

Analyzing an author’s position may be difficult since it is not fixed but may be influenced by personal or professional developments. Additionally, the way a person is seen is subjective to a great extent. Reaching a consensus concerning persona or posture of an author may then not always be possible. This becomes apparent in the persona of Evaristo, which altered after she won the Booker Prize. Furthermore, in the case of Evaristo, it is undesirable to limit her position to being an author since she is also an academic and activist. There is a significant overlap between all her professions, which must be considered to create a persona and posture successfully.

The central question of this chapter is if there is a discernable difference between the posture and persona of Bernardine Evaristo and if there is a link to Black Lives Matter. It can be concluded that there is not a discernable difference and that there is a significant overlap between Evaristo’s own position and what Black Lives Matter stands for. In both the posture and persona Evaristo’s activism and writing topics, the African diaspora, and societal issues are central. Furthermore, she is positioned as an author who utilized her profession and reach to spread awareness about racial issues. This ties in with Black Lives Matter’s educational purpose. With regard to the type of authors that have been explained in chapter 1, Evaristo would be described as an activist author. This is then the posture model that Evaristo fits in.

The corpus showed little about Evaristo’s view on economic and symbolic capital; to make a conclusive statement on this would then be speculative. However, it is stated that the

Booker Prize resulted in additional economic capital, but there are no positioning statements about this. Regarding symbolic capital, Evaristo positions herself as an author that uses that capital to change the literary world from within and reach a larger audience with her works.

Chapter 3 – Positioning Reni Eddo-Lodge

This chapter will discuss the second case study: Reni Eddo-Lodge. In a similar manner as in chapter 2, the first segment will introduce Eddo-Lodge and explain why she is a suitable case study for posture research. The second segment will discuss her book *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race* (2017). The main topic of this novel is systemic racism in the United Kingdom and thus provides a proper research link to the ideals of Black Lives Matter. The third segment will focus on the persona of Eddo-Lodge. This corpus consists of Eddo-Lodge's publisher Bloomsbury Publishing, an article on Eddo-Lodge winning the Jhakai Prize, and six book reviews. These reviews are from a variety of news outlets, such as *The Guardian* and *The Times*, and have been selected based on the criteria that, and how, they comment on Eddo-Lodge's subject matter. The final segment will focus on the posture of Eddo-Lodge. The core of the corpus for this part consists of Eddo-Lodge's website, interviews that appeared in news articles, and an hour-long video interview with Emma Watson, a prominent feminist and activist. This section, similar to the one in chapter 2, will analyze the type of questions and way of questioning and will thus also partially investigate the persona. The analysis will show that Eddo-Lodge can be positioned as a Black Lives Matter activist type of author. It must be noted that the corpus does not consist of a significant number of sources. When *The Guardian's* Naheen Iqbal asked why she refused many interviews, she reasons that "the conversation [about racial injustice] in Britain is geared up to be an entertaining shouting match. I think it's stupid, and I refuse to participate in it [...] This is a game to some people and, if it is, I don't want to play" (2020). Fortunately, there still are reports and interviews that are well suited for analysis. The central notion in this analysis will be Eddo-Lodge's stance on and link to Black Lives Matter, and if, and if so how, she positions herself and is being positioned in light of this movement.

Reni Eddo-Lodge

Reni Eddo-Lodge is a British freelance journalist and author. She has published articles for various outlets, including *The New York Times*, *The Independent*, and *The Guardian*. Her main topics of writing are feminism and structural racism. Her only novel, *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race*, rose to number one in the UK non-fiction paperback chart in June 2020 in the subsequent weeks after George Floyd's death. She became the first black British woman to be No. 1 overall in the British book charts in the same month.

Similar to Evaristo, Eddo-Lodge is an activist too. Her activism began during her college years. She graduated from the University of Central Lancashire in English Literature in 2011. During her time in college, she became involved in various forms of activism, focusing primarily on feminism. A prime example of this is that she was part of the 2010 United Kingdom student protests, which mainly focused on protesting against intended cuts to education. Eddo-Lodge was also the president of the University's student union until 2012. Additionally, she was an elected member of the National Executive Council of the National Union of Students from 2012 to 2013.

Eddo-Lodge also contributed to *Daughters of Africa – An International Anthology of Words and Writings by Women of African Descent from the Ancient Egyptian to the Present* (2019). This is a compilation of orature and literature by more than 200 women from Africa and the African diaspora. Evaristo, who also contributed to this, comments on the anthology by stating: “Bringing together fiction, poetry, memoir and essays, both books are an incredible introduction to black women’s writing from around the world and feature every established name you can imagine, as well those who deserve to be better known” (Books to Help par. 2). The relevance of this information lies in the fact that Eddo-Lodge is active in works surrounding the African diaspora and racial awareness. This ties in with the ideas behind Black Lives Matter.

Eddo-Lodge started a podcast in March 2018 entitled *About Race*, which won three Lovie Awards (prize for contributions and contributors to the internet and digital media). On its website, the following is stated about the podcast: “Featuring key voices from the last few decades of anti-racist activism, *About Race with Reni Eddo-Lodge* looks at the recent history that leads to the politics of today” (About Race). It is seen as a complement to the book, and currently nine episodes have aired. This indicates that Eddo-Lodge’s emphasis on societal issues is not limited to her writings but that she also dialogues with guests on matters that overlap significantly with Black Lives Matter ideals.

Why I’m No Longer Talking to White People About Race (2017)

In 2014, Eddo-Lodge posted a blog titled “Why I’m No Longer Talking to White People About Race.” She touched upon the emotional disconnect she so frequently encountered when discussing the issue of race with white people. This post would become widely read, and Eddo-Lodge’s debut novel would be named the same. It was published by Bloomsbury Publishing in 2017 and received both positive and negative reviews. The novel was accoladed with numerous prizes, including the British Book Awards Non-Fiction Narrative Book of the Year 2018, the Jhalak Prize in 2018 ((best book by a British or British-resident black, Asian or minority-ethnic

author), and was a No.1 *Sunday Times* bestseller. It also received criticism, which will be discussed more elaborately in the next section. The main topic of the novel is systemic racism, and it explores the eradication of black history and the link between class and race, predominantly in the United Kingdom. These are the exact topics that Black Lives Matter also touches upon.

Eddo-Lodge's Persona

This section will investigate how others position Eddo-Lodge. Eddo-Lodge's publisher Bloomsbury Publishing, an article in *The Guardian* that commented on Eddo-Lodge winning the Jhalak Prize, book reviews, and reports on how well the book has performed will be analyzed to see how Eddo-Lodge is positioned and if a link with Black Lives Matter can be discerned.

Bloomsbury Publishing has a Diversity & Inclusion Working Group, which shows that it strives to accomplish what Black Lives Matter partially stands for. The descriptive author section of Eddo-Lodge is relatively short and factual. It lists the news outlets she has worked for and the accolades her novel has won but does not position her in a posture or persona model, the concept Meizoz theorized (2010). However, the description of the book is more subjective and states that it is "the essential handbook for anyone who wants to understand race relations in Britain today" (Bloomsbury *Why I'm* par. 2). This is also printed on the backside of the novel itself. This positions Eddo-Lodge as an expert on race relations and grants her an authoritative role.

In 2018 Eddo-Lodge won the second edition of the Jhalak Prize. An official jury report that announced the winner is not available, but *The Guardian's* Alison Flood reported on the matter and quoted the judges. The judges praised the novel's relevance. Tanya Byrne, judge and author, stated that the novel was "a force for real change. It has resonated with so many people, not just here in the UK, but around the world, and will continue to do so for many years to come" (Qtd. in Flood par. 5). Fellow judge Catherine Johnson commented on the title, saying it was "a thunderclap of a book" (Qtd. in Flood par. 6). Chair of judges Sunny Singh stated: "It teases out the nuances of racism in its ever-shifting complexity, and yet does so in prose that is clear, precise and simple. It is a book that not only holds up a mirror to contemporary Britain but also serves as a warning, and most of all, a clarion call for action [...] We all need to read this book" (Qtd. in Flood par. 7). The judges do not comment on Eddo-Lodge, but the novel's praise does provide Eddo-Lodge with specific authority. The novel's content shows the activist nature of Eddo-Lodge, and the statement that all should read the novel shows that the judges

deem her both an expert and, as stated, an authority on the subject matter. The Jhalak Prize is less prestigious than the Booker Prize, but is still accompanied with symbolic capital. It is, however, less frequently mentioned and discussed and has not impacted Eddo-Lodge's position significantly.

There have been a substantial number of book reviews on *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race*. The Nexis database shows almost 700 hits when the title is used as a search term. These are not all book reviews, also reading lists are provided, but this does indicate that a substantial amount has been written on the novel. Most were published in 2017 when the novel was published, but several reviews also appeared after the novel rose to the number 1 spot on the charts in the United Kingdom in 2020. Naturally, the novel is the prime object discussed in nearly every review, but there are instances in which the reviewer also touches upon the author and these are then suitable to analyze.

The Guardian's Colin Grant wrote his review in June 2017. He states that the title is "a provocation, born of years of frustration with a deep and general lack of understanding on the part of white people" (Par. 4). The novel, Grant argues, "follows in the tradition (stronger among African American than black British writers) of angry warnings to an ignorant white readership" (Par. 5). Here Eddo-Lodge is positioned as an activist who stands for racial equality, and Grant notes that this has been more common in the United States than it has been in the United Kingdom. He also states that Eddo-Lodge is "strong on the pervasive racial marginalisation of black people" and "has a clear eye for the assumptions that underpin racism" (Par. 7). Grant, then, displays Eddo-Lodge as an author with a sharp pen that addresses relevant issues.

Arifa Akbar, from the *Financial Times*, wrote her review on the novel at the end of May 2017. In line with Grant, Akbar too states that Eddo-Lodge "builds on a critical tradition drawn from black American writers such as James Baldwin and WEB Du Bois" (Par. 6). Both Grant's and Akbar's statements position Eddo-Lodge as a British pioneer who has successfully begun the same discussion on a national level in the United States revolving around Black Lives Matter and race issues.

Additionally, Akbar states that "in continuing the conversation with white people, she reassigns the problem of race to them. Not everyone will find the answer to racial inequality in Eddo-Lodge's reliance on white consciousness-raising, but it is an important shift that undermines the idea that racism is the BAME (black, Asian, and minority ethnic) community's burden to carry. The liberation that this book offers is in the reversal of responsibilities" (Par. 10). This statement makes it apparent that Akbar sees Eddo-Lodge as an activist that

successfully has shifted the starting point of the conversation about racial issues from reassigning the problem of race from black people to white people (Par. 11). Akbar positions Eddo-Lodge within the collective posture model of the activist author.

Trevor Phillips, from *The Times*, wrote his review in 2017 and is rather critical of the content of the book and how Eddo-Lodge acts in the discussion about race equality. He introduced Eddo-Lodge as “just one of an emerging group of young black writers [...] who lay much of the blame on the failures of an earlier generation to tackle what she describes as structural racism – disadvantage so deeply rooted in ‘the way things are’ that it defies the efforts of even the most well-meaning of liberal legislators” and “a 27-year-old former student activist and self-styled radical feminist journalist, [that] belongs to the ‘it’s all about racism’ camp” (Par 2-5). Phillips acknowledges the activist nature of Eddo-Lodge and emphasizes the feminist aspect but disagrees with how she conducts her activism. He clarifies:

The disappointment is that a writer of this generation has so little to offer beyond the multiculturalist clichés some of us invented three decades ago and abandoned after 9/11 and 7/7. But the failure of today’s liberals to confront new realities in identity politics has left some appearing to tolerate positions that are at best risible and at worst simply disgusting. The abuse of white children by largely Asian gangs, exposed by *The Times’s* Andrew Norfolk, is, dismayingly, dismissed by Eddo-Lodge as a consequence of ‘Western objectification of female flesh [focusing] heavily on whiteness and on youth’ Phillips ends with, “Race does matter, and we do need to talk about it; but not like this, I’m afraid.” Phillips’ positioning of Eddo-Lodge focuses on her activist nature but strongly disagrees with how she conducts her activism. Compared to the examples of Bloomsbury Publishing and the judges of the Jhalak Prize, Phillips strongly disagrees with Eddo-Lodge being an expert and authority on the matter and even deems her argumentation at times full of clichés. Regarding positioning, the common denominator is that Eddo-Lodge is an activist author and is thus put within the collective model of the activist author, but the nuances concerning how she conducts her activism differ significantly.

The Times’s Giles Coren titled his review in August 2018, “Why I’m no longer talking to anyone anymore; An author’s claim that white people’s opinions are irrelevant should be extended to dog owners, the obese and vegans.” Coren deems the novel’s title “weirdly inappropriate” (Par. 2) due to its paradoxical nature; it is meant for white people since black people are likely familiar with its contents. In a rather satirical review, Coren pokes fun at the novel’s title. He discusses why he will never talk to anyone anymore, for the other person will

not understand his position since they are not him. He encapsulates Eddo-Lodge's novel as a catch-22. He states:

It's a pretty bleak position she has taken. But I won't contest it. Because to do so would lay me open to the accusation that this is exactly what she is talking about. It's all very Catch-22. Because, of course, if she is right about white people, and I am not saying that she isn't, then my counter-opinion would be worthless, so she'd be right. It's clever, isn't it? To declare that because people are not the same as you and have not lived your life, they can never understand what you are saying, will manipulate the debate to their own perspective and are not worth talking to? It is also true. I agree with her (Par. 5).

In line with Phillips, Coren deems the subject matter necessary but deems the manner in which Eddo-Lodge frames her point of view undesirable. In terms of positioning, it can be concluded that Coren does see Eddo-Lodge as a political author.

Interestingly, few reviews specifically mention the Black Lives Matter movement. Consequently, analyzing how reviewers position Eddo-Lodge in light of the movement becomes more complicated and arguably speculative. The reviews focus on the specific content of the book, logically, and the current affairs in Britain and how structural racism may be embedded in its society. Even though it is then not spelled out, the reviewers state a significant overlap of the novel's societal relevance and what Black Lives Matter stands for and addresses. It must be noted that Black Lives Matter was not as visible and present in 2017 as it was in 2020. This may explain why few to no reviewers directly mention Black Lives Matter and link Eddo-Lodge to it in reviews that were published when the book was published. Consequently, it is difficult to establish a direct link between Eddo-Lodge and Black Lives Matter, but reviewers indirectly focus on Eddo-Lodge's activism which overlaps with Black Lives Matter ideals.

Metro's Nathalie Morris and *The Guardian's* Alison Flood reported on Eddo-Lodge rising to top the paperback non-fiction chart similarly. Both stress the importance of Eddo-Lodge being the first British black woman to do so. Morris refers to the novel as a 'seminal work' (Par. 1), highlighting its societal importance, and states: "Let's hope that in future it doesn't take worldwide protests in response to horrific injustice for Black writers to have their achievements recognized" (Par. 12). It is suggested that Black Lives Matter has made such a significant impact that now black authors are treated fairly. However, Eddo-Lodge is not positioned in relation to Black Lives Matter.

There have been negative responses to the novel as well. *The Spectator's* Fraser Nelson published "Kemi Badenoch: The problem with critical race theory" in October 2020. During

the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020, black Member of Parliament Kemi Badenoch stated that Britain was one of the best countries to live in for black people. She sees Black Lives Matter dogma as a “pernicious ideology that portrays blackness as victimhood and whiteness as oppression. In parliament this week, she went further: this, she said, is ‘critical race theory’ — a new enemy for the Tory party and, as equalities minister, one for her to fight” (Par. 1). When discussing *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo and Eddo-Lodge’s novel Badenoch states that: “Many of these books — and, in fact, some of the authors and proponents of critical race theory — actually want a segregated society” (Par. 4). Over 100 black authors condemned Badenoch’s words (Cain par. 1). Badenoch positions Eddo-Lodge as an author whose work can be detrimental for society, for it may result in a more segregated society. She strongly condemns this. This makes clear that reaching a consensus regarding the persona is difficult. People hold different and at times opposing views. Consequently, the persona of an author must be nuanced, and cannot be summarized in a single sentence.

Eddo-Lodge’s Posture

The introduction of this chapter showed that Eddo-Lodge has refused a high number of requests to appear on television, radio, or to hold interviews in another setting (Iqbal 2020). She is not the only author whose media presence is scarcer than it could be. Ali Smith, whose example has been discussed in chapter 1, also shies away from the media because she wants her book to be the central point of discussion. Eddo-Lodge’s motivation, however, is rather different. She states that the debate surrounding racial issues in the United Kingdom has become a game in which she refuses to participate (Iqbal 2020). The corpus for this section, then, is not unlimited. However, five relevant sources have been selected that will be analyzed. The corpus consists of a 2016 response of Eddo-Lodge to Black Lives Matter protests in the United Kingdom, Eddo-Lodge’s website, news articles, and an hour-long video interview with Emma Watson, a prominent feminist and UN Women Goodwill ambassador since 2014. These sources have been selected for they contain relevant statements and are personal outlets for Eddo-Lodge, which make them suited for posture research.

Sky News reported on Black Lives Matter protests in 2016 and discussed it with Eddo-Lodge and Deputy Editor of *Spiked Magazine* Tom Slater. The interview is uploaded on Youtube and titled “Black Lives Matter UK: Do Disruptive Protests Help Causes?” When the death of Mark Duggan is discussed, the broadcaster asks whether it is really a crisis or simply the adoption of a slogan and a campaign from the United States that has little relevance here? Eddo-Lodge stresses that this type of Black Lives Matter activism has been going on for a

substantial amount of time in the United Kingdom as well (00:40-00:58). She states that in Britain, Black Lives Matter is a new name for activism that has been present for decades. Slater deems the protests, and what would later become the topic of her book, “borderline insulting and claiming victim status” (02:00-02:45) and that the fact that raising awareness is preached damaging (06:50-07:20). Eddo-Lodge positions herself as a strong supporter for the protestors and activists and states that “The point of protest is not to gain support. It is to create maximum disruption to raise awareness to an issue” (03:40-03:50). Although it was a relatively short segment, it demonstrated Eddo-Lodge’s affiliation with the protestors and what they wanted to achieve. She actively positions herself in line with Black Lives Matter and, as the theoretical framework in chapter 1 showed is possible (Meizoz 2007; 2010), has an active role in shaping her posture as the author.

Eddo-Lodge’s website’s ‘about me’ section shows what she deems important about herself. In the largest font on the entire page, it says, “I’ve always been a writer and reader. When I was about nineteen, I threw myself into feminist activism. It changed my life, introduced me to some brilliant people, and helped me develop the politics I have today” (*renieddolodge.co* “About me”). This is then arguably what is most important for her. The rest of this part of the website summarizes what she has written, and the accolades both she and her novel have won. With this website Eddo-Lodge creates an ‘image de soi’ (Meizoz 2007), but in general is part of the construed posture in which multiple agents play a role.

Charlie Brinkhurst Cuff interviewed Eddo-Lodge in September 2016. Part of this interview is also suitable for the Eddo-Lodge’s persona. Brinkhurst Cuff states: “After leaving activism behind her, Eddo-Lodge ended up being one of the first well-known black feminist writers who helped bring intersectionality – the way things like race, class, disability, and sex can combine to cause discrimination or disadvantage – into mainstream dialogue” (Par. 6). In line with Coren and Akbar, Brinkhurst Cuff positions Eddo-Lodge as a British pioneer, the first to successfully start the discussion around the mentioned societal issues.

An interesting statement by Eddo-Lodge regarding her posture is:

I was elected onto the national executive of the NUS at the end of my time as president, but I think I dropped out,” she says, talking about the reasons why she fell out of love with activism. “I don’t like the NUS – it was like a good primer for national politics, just the back-stabbing... The politics of the organisation were center-left to left, but the way everyone was going on was like the other person was the embodiment of fascism. It wasn’t for me. I think early bios from a few years ago would describe me as an activist

but I'm not really, because I'm not willing to put my body on the line. I'm happy to support in other ways (Par. 5)

This 'other way' means being an author and journalist and making sure people have the opportunity to read about the existing issues.

The Guardian's Nosheen Iqbal conducted an interview with Eddo-Lodge in June of 2020. Iqbal states that Eddo-Lodge made history by becoming the first black British author to top the charts. Iqbal continues by mentioning that "a sizeable audience wants to know what you think and what you have to say right now" (Par. 10). Eddo-Lodge responds with

I'm not interested in that. I'm not looking to tell people what to do. People are very willing to give up their agency and look for leadership when they feel impassioned about something and I don't want that at all, I want them to use their critical thinking skills to challenge racism and I can't tell them how to do that [...] I guess what I'm trying to do is prompting people to take responsibility for racism. That takes initiative and using your own brain (Par. 10)

This ties in with the education aspect of Black Lives Matter. Eddo-Lodge sees her novel more as an educational tool that people ought to think critically for themselves in the racial debate. Later in the interview, Iqbal poses the question of what Eddo-Lodge has found encouraging regarding the developments in the racial debate. She answers, "Black Lives Matter protests in rural areas. I saw a protest happening in an English village surrounded by greenery, and that's not usually an environment you see BLM protests happening" (Par. 7). This is one of the few instances that have been found in which Eddo-Lodge specifically mentions Black Lives Matter, and by mentioning her enthusiasm about the protests, she actively contributes to her posture and aligns herself with Black Lives Matter,.

In 2018 Emma Watson interviewed Eddo-Lodge. Watson herself is a prominent feminist and activist as well, and the almost hour-long conversation can be described as two like-minded people passionately discussing issues of race, gender, and education. It becomes apparent that Eddo-Lodge is proud of and excited about what the novel has achieved, and predominantly about the conversations it has provoked (01:43). Eddo-Lodge states that a consequence of her reaching public prominence is that she is "seen a little bit as a symbol," meaning a well-known activist or a symbol of change (09:18). This statement overlaps with the interview with Iqbal; Eddo-Lodge prefers to use her journalism to expose issues, write to express her emotions, and inspire others to think, not tell others what to think or how to act. One main topic is feminism and, as in many interviews, her feminist activism while she was in college. Eddo-Lodge also

touches upon the fact she was part of a black feminist group in which intersectionality stood central. The overall theme of feminism, then, is central to Eddo-Lodge's posture.

An additional main topic of conversation is education and the British curriculum. Both agree that the curricula are too one-sided and that an education gap exists. Eddo-Lodge's novel is seen as an educational tool, and Eddo-Lodge herself then indirectly as a teacher. This ties in quite well with Black Lives Matter's educational purpose. Eddo-Lodge posture is then linked to the Black Lives Matter movement.

Forty minutes into the interview, Eddo-Lodge touches upon how she discusses "whiteness." She means a political ideology and positions herself as a political author who disagrees with it and opts out of it. A few moments later, she stresses that she is not a politician or cult leader but an author because she wants to "express and call attention to, and name things that were not being named [...] but I certainly do not want to be prescriptive of what people should be doing" (42:30-42:48). She does want to empower people, but people should not hand over their agency to her. Interestingly, Black Lives Matter specifically is not mentioned once. However, as in the other interviews, the topics discussed overlap with Black Lives Matter, and thus indirectly, many links can be made.

Conclusion

In both her novel and journalistic work, Eddo-Lodge's main writing topic is structural racism and feminism and it touches predominantly upon the situation in the United Kingdom. These topics are frequent subjects of discussion. Consequently, there is not a singular view on Eddo-Lodge, no singular persona can be concluded. Predominantly the persona differs between journalists and politicians. However, the one constant is that Eddo-Lodge's activist nature is mentioned. She is portrayed as a British pioneer that builds upon and follows in the footsteps of comparable American counterparts. Establishing a direct link to Black Lives Matter has proven to be difficult since Black Lives Matter is not frequently mentioned, if at all. The predominant link to Black Lives Matter is what it and Eddo-Lodge both stand for and address. On these matters, she is deemed an expert and authority.

Eddo-Lodge's posture revolves around being a political author who writes on issues of race and feminism. This becomes apparent on her website and how she conducts herself in interviews. She also strongly supports Black Lives Matter protests, already since 2016 when Black Lives Matter was not yet a large activist movement in the United Kingdom. She mainly positions herself as an author who tries to educate and incite a conversation, actively contributing to her posture. One of her objectives is for people to assess situations for

themselves critically. Consequently, she refuses the role of a political leader that argues how people should conduct themselves and what their views ought to be.

Part of the main question was if there is a discernable difference between the persona and posture of Eddo-Lodge. It can be concluded that there is not. The persona and posture stress Eddo-Lodge's activism and the novel's political subject matter. The nuance within the posture lies in the fact that people disagree with how she conducts her activism and, at times, disagree with her political views. This shows that a constructed posture is based on objective facts but is also heavily influenced by subjective and personal stances.

Conclusion

This thesis investigated Bernardine Evaristo and Reni Eddo-Lodge's posture and persona in light of the activist Black Lives Matter movement. It first discussed the Black Lives Matter movement. This political and social movement was created in 2013 after the acquittal of George Zimmerman. Its ideals are comparable to earlier civil rights movements of, for example, the 1960s; it strives to raise awareness about racial injustice, seeks to alter the criminal justice system, and strongly emphasizes racial equality in all levels of society. Substantial academic research has focused on Black Lives Matter in relation to various fields, but the literary field has not received adequate attention. This thesis attempts to fill this gap by answering the central question of whether or not a difference can be discerned between the persona and posture of Bernardine Evaristo and Reni Eddo-Lodge in light of the Black Lives Matter movement. Posture refers predominantly to the self-image an author creates, or how an author positions themselves, and persona to the image others have of an author, or how they position the author. Additionally, the role of economic and symbolic capital is discussed when the source material mentions this. Both these forms of capital may influence the persona and posture of an author. The theoretical framework regarding persona and posture that has been central is the one by Meizoz (2007; 2010) and Van den Braber et al. (2021).

It can be concluded that the persona and posture of Evaristo are similar. Evaristo's website, a monologue on the BBC's podcast "A point of view," and interviews have been analyzed to investigate how Evaristo positions herself. Evaristo's persona has been investigated by analyzing book reviews, Penguin Books publisher, and interviews. Evaristo's posture revolves around not being just an author but as a person who is an activist and academic as well, and there is a substantial overlap between these professions. Her authorship focuses on the African diaspora, and she attempts to raise awareness about racial inequality in the literary world through her work and activism. Additionally, she attempts to alter the British curricula, which established a direct link to the Black Lives Matter's educational purpose. She has collaborated with her publisher, Penguin Books, to create more awareness about black authors, for example, Black Britain: Writing Back series. She "owns" (Beigang par. 4) her new establishment position after winning the Booker Prize in 2019 with her novel *Girl, Woman, Other*. This accumulation of symbolic capital was advantageous for her since she now could reach a larger audience. Evaristo, however, continues to stress her "radical heart" (Beigang par. 4) and continues to pursue her objective of raising more awareness and creating equal opportunities, positioning herself as an activist type of author. There are few direct links to

Black Lives Matter, but numerous indirect connections. The predominant indirect connection is the shared values of Evaristo and Black Lives Matter. Both strive for equality and attempt to raise awareness concerning racial issues. This connection is often not spelled out during interviews, but it is implied. Evaristo's persona, too, revolves around being an activist type of author. It is stressed that she is the first black British woman to win the Booker Prize, and her topic of writing is mentioned frequently. Evaristo's link to Black Lives Matter is that both share an educational purpose. Both wish to create awareness and attempt to create an equal literary field. Evaristo's publisher, Pinguin Books, provides her a platform to publish educational articles and by doing so also contributed to the construction of an activist posture and persona. Meizoz argued that over time collective posture models are construed. Evaristo fits in the model of an activist author.

It can be concluded that the persona and posture of Eddo-Lodge are similar on the surface, but there is no consensus regarding how Eddo-Lodge's activism is described. Eddo-Lodge's website, an interview on Black Lives Matter Protests, and interviews have been analyzed to investigate how she positions herself. Eddo-Lodge's persona has been investigated by analyzing her publisher's website, book reviews, and a report on her winning the Jhalak Prize. It becomes apparent that she is positioned as an author whose one of her core objectives is to start a conversation and have people assess the situation regarding racial inequality for themselves. Eddo-Lodge is positioned and positions herself as an author that refuses to take on the role of a leader and to tell people how to think and act. She is an outspoken supporter of Black Lives Matter, which became apparent already in 2016 when Black Lives Matter was not yet largely present in the United Kingdom. An additional overlap with Black Lives Matter ideals is that Eddo-Lodge attempts to create awareness concerning racial injustice. She does this by describing Britain's status quo in her novel, but not actively through, for example, interviews. Eddo-Lodge has refused numerous interviews. This is because she has taken a clear stance and deems the current debate in Britain not serious enough to participate in.

The common denominator regarding Eddo-Lodge's persona is that Eddo-Lodge is positioned within the collective model of the activist author, but there is no consensus regarding how she conducts her activism. Journalists describe her as a British pioneer that has started the same discussion around racial inequality that has been present in the United States as well. She is also deemed an authority on the matter, and her novel is described as the proper starting point for people that wish to educate themselves by, among others, her publisher. Kemi Badenoch, Member of Parliament, strongly disagrees. She argues that supporters of critical race theory want to create a segregated society. Although there is no consensus then, this discussion and

Eddo-Lodge's subject material do make apparent the link to Black Lives Matter's educational purpose. Eddo-Lodge appears on reading lists that have the objective of educating the public on matters of race, and Eddo-Lodge herself attempts to have people think about racial issues with her novel.

Limitations and Further Research

A limitation of posture research lies in the fact that an image of a person is not fixed. This research took place in 2021 and 2022, and the outcome of Bernardine Evaristo's posture and persona would have been different if this research had taken place before she won the Booker Prize. Since she won, her image, or position, shifted from being non-establishment to being part of the establishment in the British literary field. This limitation, however, should inspire further research that could focus on a comparative analysis. For example, how has the position of either case study changed in a few years' time? Additionally, as Dera (2015) also addressed, the interpretation of a corpus is subjective. Others may come to different conclusions than this thesis has drawn while analyzing the same source material.

Evaristo and Eddo-Lodge touch upon a societal and political debate revolving around race. These discussions are often tense and met with support and opposition, regardless of your stance. This makes it challenging to reach a clear consensus regarding an author's position. A more in-depth analysis of two opposing views on, for example, Eddo-Lodge's stance on structural racism may be interesting further research.

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