Bernardine Evaristo
Girl, Woman, Other (2019)

Part II

'K.I. unter der Lupe'

16:00 - 18:00 Uhr, 1. Februar; [U5/01.17 - Seminarraum](), An der Universität 5.

Johannes Langer und **Bettina Finzel** vom Lehrstuhl für Kognitive Systeme führen ihr Publikum in dieser Vorlesung in die Grundlagen der Künstlichen Intelligenz ein. Dabei gehen sie insbesondere auf die Konzepte hinter modernen KI-Werkzeugen ein, wie etwa ChatGPT, geben aber auch einen kurzen Einblick in das breite Spektrum an Methoden, das die Forschung zu KI bereits hervorgebracht hat.

Discussion questions (Part 1)

1. "Entweder man lebt, oder man ist konsequent" ("You either live your life, or you're consistent") – Erich Kästner (1899–1974). What do you think Kästner means by this, and in ways do the intertwining stories of Amma, Yazz, and Dominique reflect this maxim?

2. How do the intertwining stories of Carole, Bummi, and LaTisha illustrate the intersectionality – the intersecting and mutually reinforcing inequalities and forms of discrimination – at work within British society? Consider & discuss each character in turn.

3. Which of your expectations, presuppositions, stereotypes, and even prejudices did you find challenged in the course of the novel – and how are they challenged?

Discussion questions (Part 2)

1. How effectively does Evaristo handle the theme of the performativity of gender & sex identity in the case of Megan/Morgan -- and how convincing does she show the attitudes of different generations? Is 'performativity' characteristic of identity constructions throughout the novel? If so, how? And how does the novel's form and style reflect the provisionality and temporality of identity constructions?

2. Were there particular characters you found more sympathetic, relatable, or recognizable? and others less so? Whom, and why? Is Evaristo too 'understanding' and 'sympathetic' towards problematic individuals and positions?

3. "Evaristo's finest quality as an author is her avoidance of overt moral judgment: her novel shows that we are unable fully to understand anyone unless we have walked around in their shoes – and the paradox is that that is impossible." Discuss.

'Womanism'

- A theory *and* movement oriented towards the history & everyday experiences of Black women. Coined by Alice Walker in her short story, 'Coming Apart', in 1979, the term has developed to encompass myriad *different* perspectives on the social, cultural, and political issues with which Black women find themselves confronted.

- It underlines the notion that mainstream feminism is a movement led by white (mainly middle-class) women, inherently prioritizing the interests & goals of white women at the expense of those of women of colour.

- Womanism holds to a stance of anti-racism: it advocates both the empowerment of women and the celebration of Black cultural values. From a Womanist perspective, a woman's Blackness is *not* a component of her feminism; but rather, her Black identity is the lens through which she interprets her feminist and/or womanist identity.

- 'Womanism' has closely linked to the (later) development of 'intersectionality'.

Critical Race Theory: emergence

- Emerged in the US in the 1970s, in response to the stalling of the civil rights movement between c. 1954 and 1968.

- Inspired by the intellectual & political activism of the radical "Black Power", Chicano, and feminist movements – as well as Dr Martin Luther King Jr.'s movement of nonviolent resistance.

- Spearheaded, *inter alia*, by the progressive legal scholars and activists, Derrick Bell and Richard Delgado. From the civil rights movement, CRT took its insistence on **practical applications;** from 'second-wave feminism', its insights into the relationships between socially constructed gender roles and society's entrenched **power imbalances.**

Critical Race Theory: core tenets

- **Racism = ordinary and everyday:** it can never be *fully* eradicated because it is very difficult – if not arguably impossible – *fully* to acknowledge.

- **'Race' = a social construct, not a biological reality,** despite repeated attempts to attach 'inherent' or 'essential' characteristics to particular races. Around 85-90% of genetic diversity occurs within 'races' rather than 'between' them.

- **Western societies operate on a 'differential racialization'**, with different racial groups serving different ideological and economic purposes at different times.

- **'Intersectionality'** (c. 1989 →)…

Intersectionality

- A principle first **explicitly** elaborated by the UCLA legal scholar, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (1959-), in an article of 1989, on the basis of work by predecessors, such as the black feminist writer and civil rights activist Audre Lorde (1934-1992).

- Intersectionality represents a multifacted re-examination of categories of ethnicity, class, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, physical & mental ability/disability, etc.

- It examines the ways in which the **many different** combinations of these facets interact with one another in various contexts and shape **specific forms** of disadvantage.

Intersectionality

- Do the various forms of social disadvantage operate distinctly from one another? Or do they sharpen, magnify, and *alter* one another's effects?

- **Imagine**, Crenshaw proposes,

"the various axes of power – of race, ethnicity, gender, or class – as constituting thoroughfares, that structure our political, social, and economic terrain. It is through these avenues that disempowering dynamics travel. Racialized women are often positioned in the space where **racism** or **xenophobia**, **class** and **gender** meet. They are consequently subject to injury by the heavy flow of traffic traveling along all these roads."

-- Crenshaw (2000), repr. in Grzanka (2019).

'Habitus'

- Habitus is '[t]he cultural framework wherein and whereby the habitual aspects of everyday social thought and action operate. People's perceptions, thoughts, tastes and so forth are shaped by their habitus.' –- (Longhurst and others, 2008).

- Habitus is a 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu): our mastery of the unspoken 'rules' of our social and cultural group or circle.

- These principles are mediated symbolically in action and are learned through experience. **But the power of the dominant classes ensures that their cultural habitus is preferred over others.**
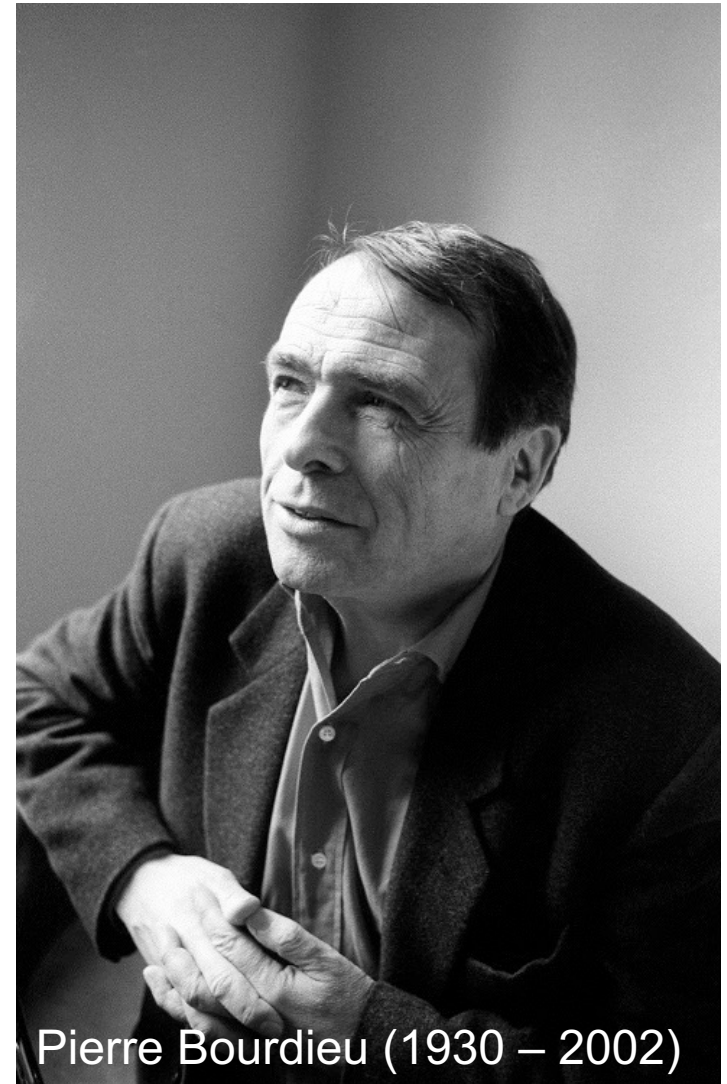
Pierre Bourdieu (1930 – 2002)

Source: https://www.goodreads.com/ photo/author/45739.Pierre_Bourdieu

Oxford and Cambridge: A very British mythology

- 'Oxbridge' graduates have traditionally enjoyed a dominance over both political and public life in the United Kingdom (politics, media, the law, academia): 'Oxbridge' still has a particular sense of tradition and prestige attached to it.

- Oxford, founded in c. 1096, has 38 colleges, Cambridge, in c. 1209, has 31: each college has its own history and character.

- Only 1.5% of all offers from the two universities to UK A-level students went to black British candidates in 2015.

- Nearly **one in three** Oxford colleges failed to admit a single black British A-level student in 2015. An estimated **80%** of students accepted at Oxford and Cambridge between 2010 and 2015 had parents with high-ranking professional and managerial jobs. Data suggests that in the course of c. 2010-17, Oxbridge in fact became *less* rather than *more* ethnically and socially diverse.

(Sources: https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/oct/19/oxford-accused-of-social-apartheid-as-colleges-admit-no-black-students; https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/oct/19/oxbridge-becoming-less-diverse-as-richest-gain-80-of-offers.)

Oxford and Cambridge: A very British mythology

The Radcliffe Camera, University of Oxford. Source:
http://www.cotswolds.info/images/oxford/oxford-city/radcliffe_camera_oxford_university.jpg

King's College Chapel, University of Cambridge. Source:
https://www.thesun.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/nintchdbpict000300422160.jpg?strip=all&w=960

Oxford and Cambridge: A very British mythology

'The Bridge of Sighs', St. John's College, Cambridge
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bridge_of_Sighs,_St_John%27s_College,_Cambridge,_UK_-_Diliff.jpg

References

Richard Adams and Helena Bengtsson, 'Oxford accused of 'social apartheid' as colleges admit no black students', *The Guardian*, 19 October 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/oct/19/oxford-accused-of-social-apartheid-as-colleges-admit-no-black-students

Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990).

Brian Longhurst et al., *Introducing Cultural Studies*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2008).

John Oakland, *British Civilization: An Introduction*, 7th edn (London: Routledge, 2011).

Panikos Panayi, *An Immigration History of Britain: Multicultural Racism since 1800* (Harlow: Longman, 2010).

Layli Phillips, *The Womanist Reader* (New York & Abingdon: Routledge, 2006).

Ato Quayson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature* (Cambridge: CUP, 2012).

Sally Weale et al. 'Oxbridge becoming less diverse as richest gain 80% of offers', *The Guardian*, 19 October 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/oct/19/oxbridge-becoming-less-diverse-as-richest-gain-80-of-offers

Adia Harvey Wingfield, 'About Those 79 Cents', *The Atlantic*, 17 October 2016, https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/10/79-cents/504386/