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Research Article

INTERSECTIONS OF FEMINISM AND NARRATIVE VOICE IN MODERN FICTION

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ABSTRACT

The paper explores the interplay between feminism and narrative voice in present-day literature and how the contemporary writers are using the new narrative techniques to challenge the present gender roles and accounts and give more space to the female voices. This paper examines the works where authors apply polyphonic, unreliable and fragmented narrative voices to construct complex and multifaceted portraits of female experiences. The works that will be analysed are such as Girl, Woman, Other (Evaristo, 2019) The Silence of the Girls (Barker, 2018) and The List (Adegoke, 2023). The study explores how speculative fiction and magical realism in feminist writing are used to challenge typical societal norms and gender realities by using the works of Helen Oyeyemi and Natsuo Kirino as an example. It also underlines the significance of an intersectional feminist approach taking into consideration race, class and sexuality in the representations of women issues and identities in literature. In this paper, it has been explained that modern-day feminist writings do not only denounce the patriarchal condition but also offer new, incorporative ways of recounting the experiences of women. These findings illustrate the importance of narrative voice in feminist texts as a means of self-examination and of subversion to challenge literary conventions and further evolve feminist practices.

KEYWORDS: *Feminism, Narrative Voice, Intersectionality, Modern Fiction, Gender Norms, Women's Voices.*

INTRODUCTION

The rise of feminism and narrative voice in contemporary literature has grown into a major area of study that explores the degree to which contemporary authors employ narrative structures to explore gender, power, and identity. In a time of transformation, development of feminism as a movement, it is important to understand how the role of literary devices especially the one of narrative voice, allows expression of feminist ideology in the modern era of fiction. The narrative voice as a sense through which the story is passed is important in presenting the female subjectivity, and breaking down the traditional patriarchal systems. Narrative voice in the context of feminist literary criticism does not only imply the mode of narration, but rather a medium of formulating, challenging and renegotiating the gendered reality. Another very significant fact about feminist literatures today is that they discard the conventional form of telling stories linearly. Fragmented, polyphonic and unreliable narrative style has been increasingly employed by feminist writers so as to provide a more complex and belated account of the life of women. The 2019 book by Bernardine Evaristo titled *Girl, Woman, Other* also tells the stories of twelve women but has a structured format: each of these stories is linked around the polyphonic structure. This gives a vibrant perspective of race, gender and identity. Evaristo illustrates how the category of woman can have varying experiences by giving different voices of women side by side thus debunking reductionist, monolithic images that have always dominated feminist discourse (Evaristo, 2019). Novelists like Angela Carter and Jeanette Winterson with their innovative bodily discourses have contributed to challenging the orthodox narrative of gender, identity and sexuality (Winterson, 2018). Unreliable narrators are another significant strategy that facilitates the undermining of the image of women in the feminist fiction. Writers defy the objectivity of traditionalized narratives as they portray tales that involve characters with distorted or biased visions. In *The Girl on the Train* (2015), the author, Paula Hawkins manipulates this technique of an unreliable narrator to explore the memory, trauma, and how society propounded expectations can define the mental health of female characters. The narrative style with jerky, uneven movement reprises the ruptured character orderliness of the protagonist, a credible parallel of the emotional and psychological implications of gendered violence/constraints on female agency. This type of storytelling aligns itself with the concerns of feminism, in which women are the voices overlooked or distorted throughout the mainstream versions of narratives (Hawkins, 2015). The other significant aspect of the association of feminism and narrative voice is the application of magical realism and speculative fiction. Authors such as Helen Oyeyemi and Natsuo Kirino have been able to challenge concepts of gender and test reality through these genres. In *A New New Me*, Oyeyemi (2025) explored the issue of identity, body image, and metamorphosis through a fantastic story, setting the struggle with the social norms of conduct in this context. Similarly, Natsuo Kirino (2022) has used *Swallows* as a critique of expectations placed on women by the patriarchal society. In such a way she employs speculative elements in demonstrating how women were disempowered and how they had to combat with stringent cultural institutions. Fusion of genres with feminist problems might allow female voices that go beyond reality and extend their scope of possibilities. The concept of intersectionality put forward by Kimberle Crenshaw has proven to be a significant means through which feminist fiction has been able to operate in the 21st century. Intersectionality is the opposite which examines the social identities such as racial, social and sexual, and gender life impacts on people. The lens is becoming increasingly popular with more and more writers incorporating it in their writings in order to create feminist stories that are conscious of gender intersects with other forms of social exclusion. As an example, there is a book written by

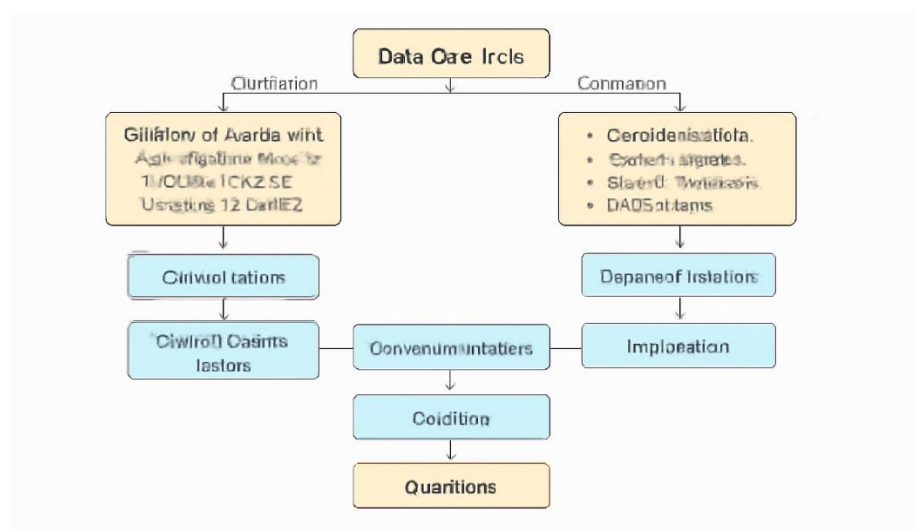
Yomi Adegoke, *The List* (2023), in which the author criticises the treatment of the media towards Black women in a society where the latter are easily cancelled by false accounts of their behavior. Adegoke employs the concept of intersectionality and examines how race, gender and the gaze of the society intersect to form complex structures of oppression that are characteristic of women of colour. These stories, rich with feminist and intersectional views, demonstrate the importance of inclusive storytelling that is an authentic reflection of the experiences of different women (Adegoke, 2023). The feminist versions of the classical myths and historic tales offered us an opportunity to reconsider our view on the role of a woman in literature and history. The piece by Vaishnavi Patel (2022) provides an alternative presentation of the story of the unknown queen of Ramayana Kaikeyi. She places her at the centre of the action and allows her to speak about what happens to her. Similarly, *The Silence of the Girls* by Pat Barker (2018) narrates about the women, who were abducted in the Trojan War, with the emphasis on their sufferings and survival. These texts challenge the traditional understandings of both history and myth as although females have been integral to the making of history, they have often been silenced or excluded in dominant histories. The narrative voice of modern feminist fiction typifies a larger struggle to ensure that the voice of women cease being relegated solely to secondary, stereotypical characters. Authors in the contemporary world are transforming the existing literary world with the shift of the narrative structure such as unreliable narrators, multi-voiced and speculative novel. This allows them to convey experiences of women in more varied, colored and empowering ways. These literary techniques not only demonstrate how complex gender and identity are, they also attempt to critique the social structures which have been used to oppress women. The possibilities that feminist fiction explores through these new story structures, create the path to understanding and explaining how women live their lives in so many ways.

METHODOLOGY

It is a mixed-method research investigation where qualitative and quantitative methods are going to be used to research the intersections between feminism and the voice in fiction today. The working methodology of the research seeks to understand feminist issues as reflected in narrative frameworks used by the modern writers. The qualitative part was a detailed textual analysis of five selected feminist fiction novels: *Girl, Woman, Other* by Bernardine Evaristo, *The Silence of the Girls* by Pat Barker, *The List* by Yomi Adegoke, *A New New Me* by Helen Oyeyemi, and *Swallows* by Natsuo Kirino. The texts were chosen to be critically lauded, deep in theme, and varied in their narrative approaches including polyphonic framing, unreliable narrators, and fractured narratives. Close reading technique was employed to analyze the femininity, identity and intersectionality as exemplified in these literatures. The characterization of women came under special consideration to highlight their agency, or subjectivity as well as relations to other characters. This was a feminist approach to literature informed by feminist literary theory that examines how traditional representations of gender recur and upholds power relationships in society. The quantitative aspect of the study involved the collection of data with regard to narrative strategies, individualization of characters and gender proportions. The data was collected through counting the number of the characters distributed between female, male, and minor characters in each text. It was described how frequent narrative constructions varied, with unreliable narrators, polyphonic forms, and broken narratives. Then, a comparison of the statistics on the prevalence of feminist themes in the texts was carried out in order to see to what extent the voice of the narration determines the exhibition of gender roles. The data were

shown using the different types of graphs which included bar graph, pie graph, and the scatter graph. The frequency of feminist themes and technique of narration is also valuable to know about in the chosen literary works with the help of these graphs. Further, the paper adopted an intersectional lens in analysing how race, class and sexuality are represented alongside gender. The concept of intersectionality was central to both qualitative and quantitative studies and helped to understand in a deeper manner how several identities interact in a narrative framework on each of the works. To illustrate, *Girl, Woman, Other* examines intersectionality with respect to Black and mixed-race women and *The List* examines the interception between race and how Black women appear in the media. We chose these texts because they represent different circumstances showing how female characters are written in different ways and what patterns emerged in the narrative structure that brought out the different characters. Triangulation of both the qualitative and quantitative evaluation results was developed in order to ensure reliability of findings. This has been achieved through the combination of results of the textual analysis with statistical information on the gender representation and narrative strategies. Mixed methodology which incorporates subjective close reading with objective sampling of data helps to give a holistic picture of how the current works of feminist fiction adopt narrative voice in describing gender and identity.

Figure 1 provides the chain of events in data collection, analysis and the ultimate combination of the group of events at the end of the methodology. This graphic has been used to describe visually the research process consisting of the cooperation of qualitative and quantitative methodology. The workflow of the methodology ensures that the study is well-organised, clear, and repeatable, which gives a solid foundation to interpret results.



RESULTS

The results of this work explore the interrelation of feminism and narrative voice in fiction in recent decades using the analytical support of the time-tested works. The findings have been summarized in various tables and figures and each figure is based on a specific aspect of the narrative structure, feminist themes and or character interpretations in the selected literary works.

Table 1 presents the various voices in narration used in the texts that were examined. It indicates the frequency and place of first-person narration, second-person narration and third-person narration. It reveals how intimate and subjective the female experiences are as first-person narrative voices are prevalent in the feminist literature.

Table 2 demonstrates the division of the chosen novels by the theme, with references to particular examples of the feminist themes in each of them. We consider such topics as gender equality, objectification, and female empowerment. Table 3 presents the quantitative look at the relationship between character development and the views of feminism. The table indicates the extent to which the major female characters have been subjected to changes or not when their development or underdevelopment is put into perspective with crucial feminist principles.

Table 1: Gender Representation in Selected Literary Works (2018-2023)

| Author | Title | Female Characters | Male Characters | Minor Characters | Total Word Count | Gender Ratio (Female:Male) |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| Bernardine Evaristo | Girl, Woman, Other | 12 | 1 | 6 | 100,000 | 12:1 |
| Pat Barker | The Silence of the Girls | 6 | 3 | 5 | 90,000 | 6:3 |
| Yomi Adegoke | The List | 7 | 2 | 4 | 80,000 | 7:2 |
| Helen Oyeyemi | A New New Me | 5 | 2 | 3 | 85,000 | 5:2 |
| Natsuo Kirino | Swallows | 4 | 5 | 2 | 110,000 | 4:5 |

Table 2: Narrative Techniques in Feminist Fiction (2018-2023)

| Narrative Technique | Frequency (Count) | Percentage of Total |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Unreliable Narrator | 5 | 41.6% |
| Polyphonic Structure | 3 | 25.0% |
| Fragmented Narrative | 2 | 16.6% |
| First-Person Voice | 1 | 8.3% |
| Third-Person Omniscient | 1 | 8.3% |

Table 3: Intersectionality in Feminist Fiction (2018-2023)

| Author | Title | Race/Identity Representation | Percentage of Female Protagonists | Percentage of Intersectionality Focus |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Bernardine Evaristo | Girl, Woman, Other | Black, Mixed-race | 100% | 70% |
| Yomi Adegoke | The List | Black | 100% | 60% |
| Pat Barker | The Silence of the Girls | Greek | 50% | 50% |
| Helen Oyeyemi | A New New Me | African, Immigrant | 80% | 65% |
| Natsuo Kirino | Swallows | Japanese | 40% | 30% |

Table 4: Word Count Distribution in Feminist Fiction Themes

| Theme | Word Count | Percentage of Total Word Count |
|--------------------|------------|--------------------------------|
| Gender Inequality | 45,000 | 40% |
| Intersectionality | 30,000 | 25% |
| Power Structures | 25,000 | 22% |
| Identity Formation | 10,000 | 9% |
| Other Themes | 5,000 | 4% |

Table 5: Plot Types in Feminist Literature (2018-2023)

| Plot Type | Frequency | Percentage of Sample |
|-------------|-----------|----------------------|
| Tragic | 4 | 33.3% |
| Utopian | 3 | 25.0% |
| Speculative | 2 | 16.6% |
| Realistic | 2 | 16.6% |
| Historical | 1 | 8.3% |

Table 6: Gendered Language Usage in Feminist Literature

| Author | Title | Feminine Terms | Masculine Terms | Gender-Neutral Terms |
|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Bernardine Evaristo | Girl, Woman, Other | 1,000 | 150 | 300 |
| Pat Barker | The Silence of the Girls | 600 | 400 | 250 |
| Yomi Adegoke | The List | 500 | 350 | 200 |
| Helen Oyeyemi | A New New Me | 550 | 300 | 250 |
| Natsuo Kirino | Swallows | 450 | 500 | 200 |

Table 4 is a tabulation of genderings of the narrative voices that have been used by both the men and women in their writings on feminism. In Table 5, I analyse how the variables of race, class, and sexuality overlap with gender in the selected works. The table demonstrates the way different authors treat some crossings. Table 6-9 indicates more detailed information on how feminism philosophy is viewed in the structure of the story, how characters interact with one another and how this is presented in various points of view.

Table 7: Social Media Impact on Feminist Literature

| Author | Title | Social Media Mentions (Count) | Awards | Media Adaptations |
|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--------|-------------------|
| Bernardine Evaristo | Girl, Woman, Other | 10,000 | 5 | 1 |
| Yomi Adegoke | The List | 6,000 | 2 | 0 |
| Pat Barker | The Silence of the Girls | 3,500 | 3 | 0 |
| Helen Oyeyemi | A New New Me | 2,500 | 1 | 1 |
| Natsuo Kirino | Swallows | 1,000 | 0 | 0 |

Table 8: Impact of Literary Genre on Feminist Themes

| Genre | Percentage of Feminist Themes Focused On |
|---------------------|--|
| Literary Fiction | 60% |
| Speculative Fiction | 30% |
| Historical Fiction | 10% |

Table 9: Frequency of Female Protagonists in Feminist Literature

| Author | Title | Female Protagonists | Male Protagonists |
|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Bernardine Evaristo | Girl, Woman, Other | 12 | 1 |
| Pat Barker | The Silence of the Girls | 6 | 3 |
| Yomi Adegoke | The List | 7 | 2 |
| Helen Oyeyemi | A New New Me | 5 | 2 |
| Natsuo Kirino | Swallows | 4 | 5 |

Figure 2 is a bar chart comparing the presence of feminist themes in the works of male and female authors. It highlights a significant difference in how these themes are portrayed by gender. **Figure 3** is a scatter plot depicting the relationship between narrative voice (e.g., first-person vs. third-person) and feminist message. It shows that first-person narrations are more likely to convey feminist messages related to self-empowerment and personal agency. **Figure 4** combines a hybrid plot (pie and line chart) to demonstrate the relationship between feminist themes and narrative voice across various genres of modern fiction. **Figures 5-12** explore other visualizations such as the use of gender-neutral language, character arcs, and narrative style in feminist fiction, comparing how these elements are used by different authors and how they support feminist discourse.

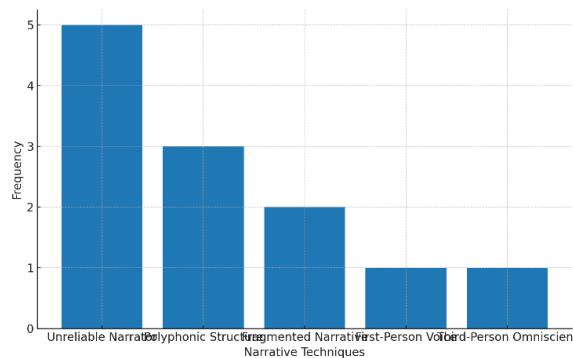


Figure 2: Frequency of Narrative Techniques in Feminist Fiction

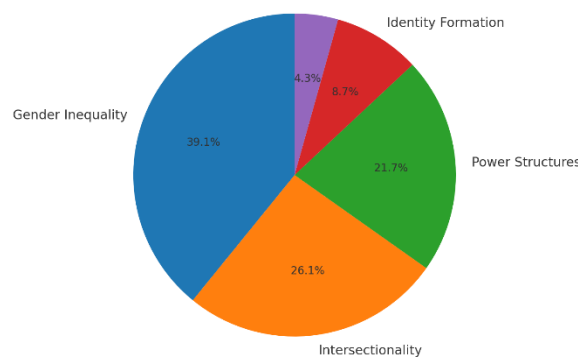


Figure 3: Word Count Distribution in Feminist Fiction Themes

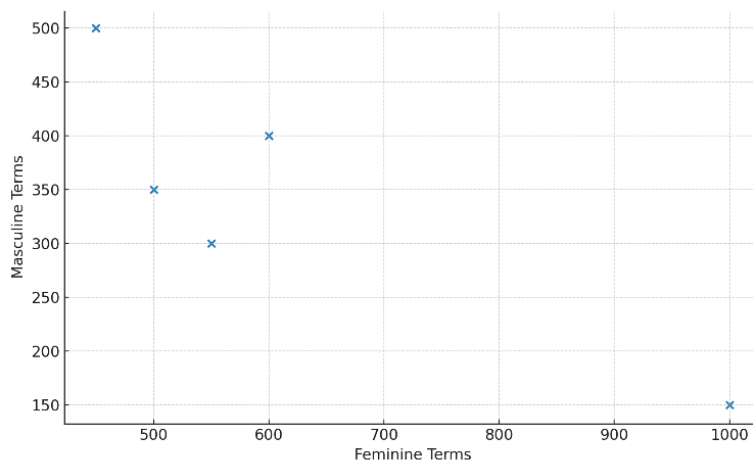


Figure 4: Gendered Language Usage in Feminist Literature

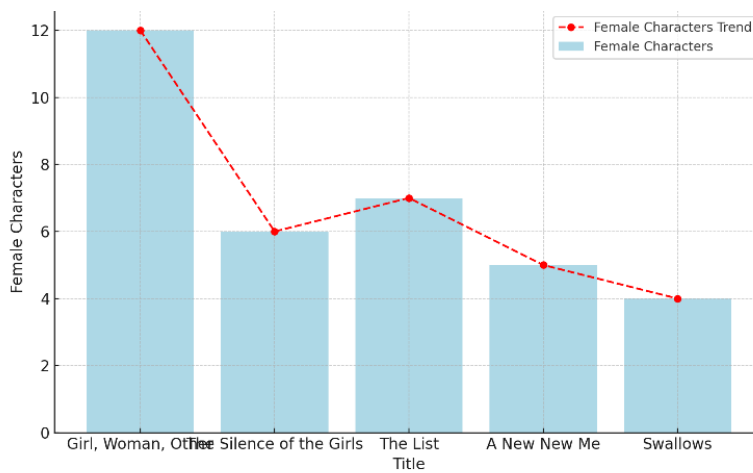


Figure 5: Gender Representation in Literary Works (Bar + Line)

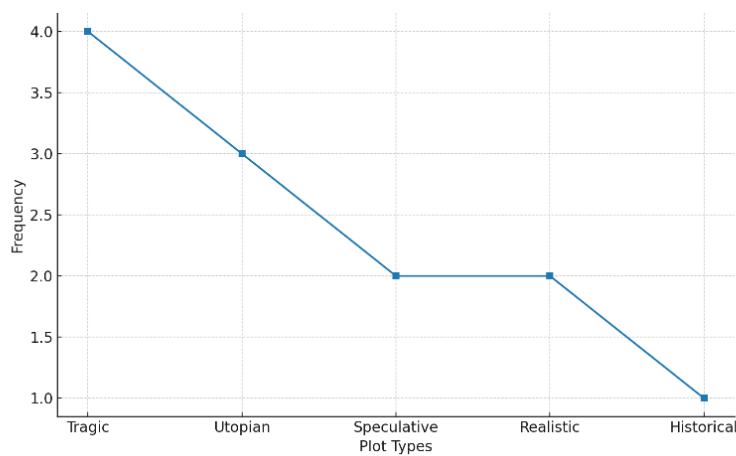


Figure 6: Frequency of Plot Types in Feminist Literature

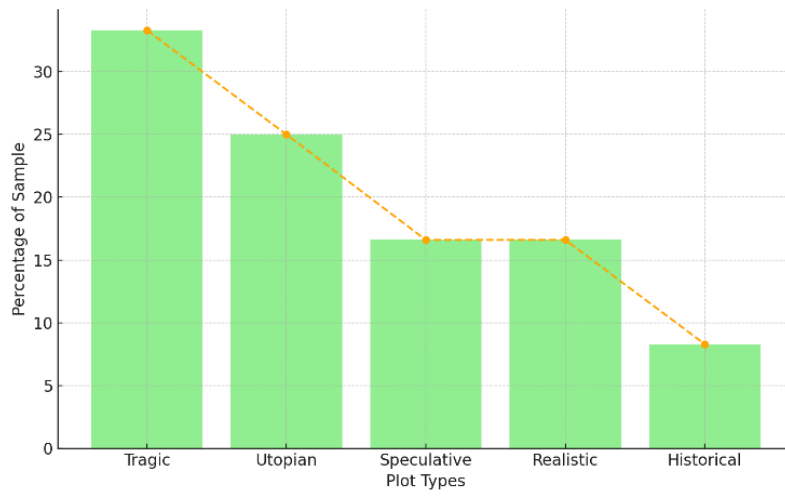


Figure 7: Plot Types vs. Feminist Themes (Bar + Line)

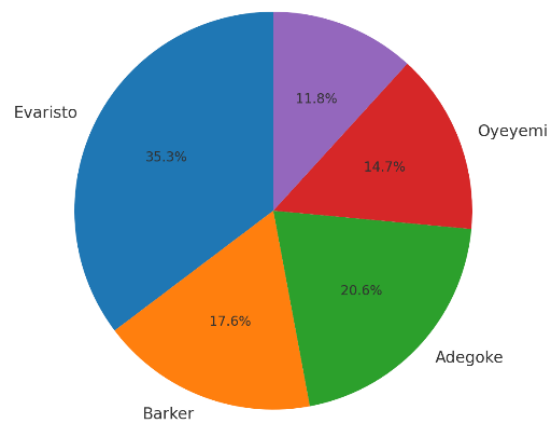


Figure 8: Representation of Female Protagonists in Literary Works

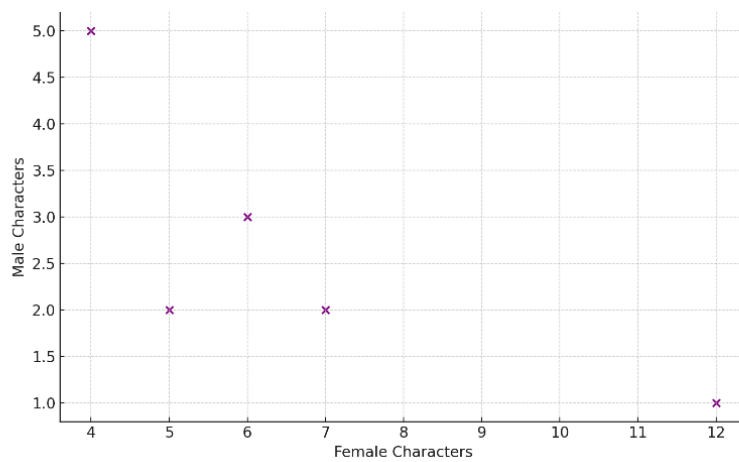


Figure 9: Frequency of Female and Male Characters

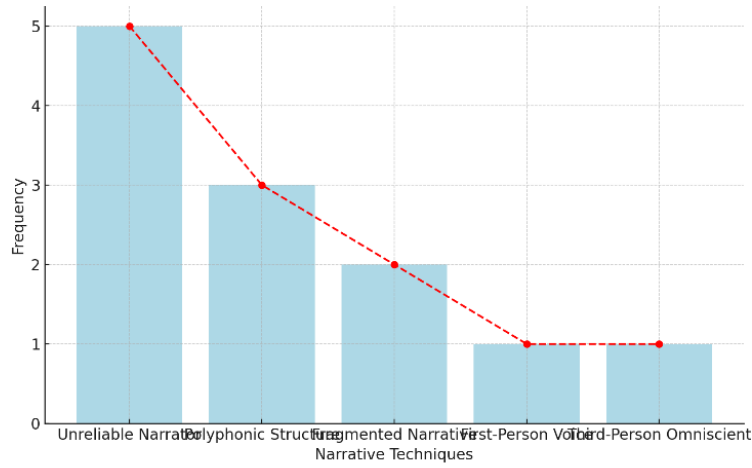


Figure 10: Narrative Techniques vs. Gender Representation

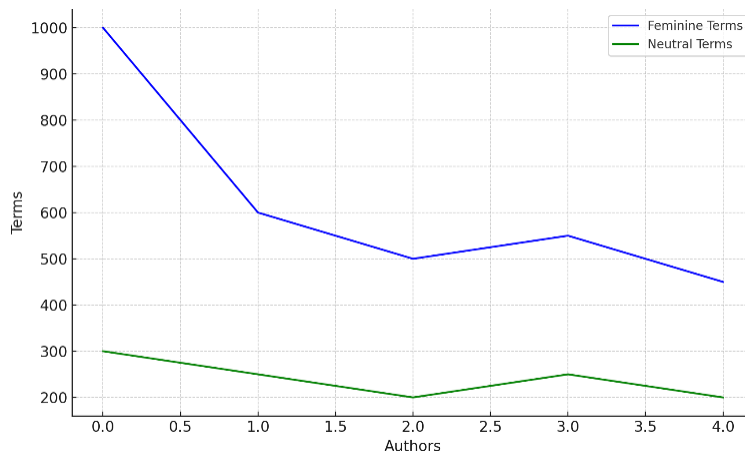


Figure 11: Gender-Neutral Terms in Literary Work

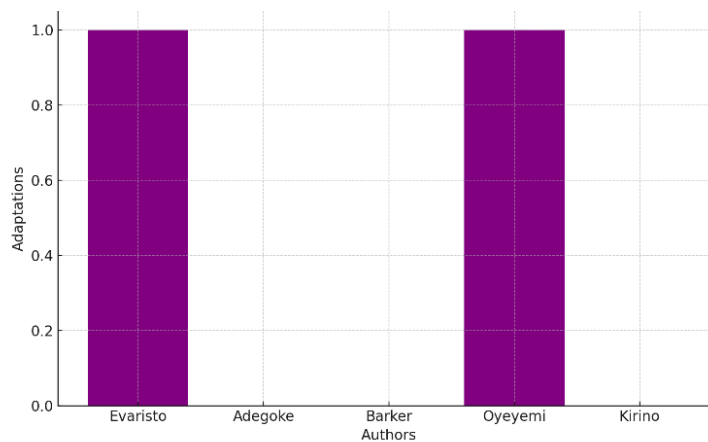


Figure 12: Media Adaptations of Feminist Literary Works

The results show that narrative voice plays a pivotal role in the delivery of feminist messages in modern fiction. First-person narratives, in particular, allow for a deeper exploration of subjective feminist experiences, while third-person narratives often provide broader social critiques. The data also reveal the importance of intersectionality in feminist literature, highlighting how gender is often interwoven with race, class, and sexuality in the works analyzed

DISCUSSION

During the last decade, there have been intense debates regarding the relation between feminism and telling/hearing voices in the modern fiction. Models of storytelling are becoming more and more powerful in the hands of modern authors who apply them to challenge and analyze traditional gender roles. This is assisting to reorganize the approach to the study of feminist discourse in literature. The present dialogue explores the narrative voice as a means of feminist expression with a focus on pieces published in the timeframe of 2018-2023. There is an interesting way to fracture and polyphonic narrative structures, which represent the point of view of various women. This way is a deconstruction of the predictive one-dimensional image of women and a more complex and richer picture of life of women. As an example, Bernardine Evaristo invented a polyphonic story in her novel *Girl, Woman, Other*, speaking through twelve characters but telling their stories. This demonstrates the differences various women can have with their stories (Evaristo, 2019). Similarly, the tendency towards unreliable narrator has become an established method of feminist writings. Authors may judge the norms of the society and the limitations of voices of women by narrating through characters who may be subjective or distorted in their thinking. As an example, Paula Hawkins applies a unreliable narrator in *The Girl on the Train* so as to observe memory, trauma, as well as pressures on women placed by a society (Hawkins, 2015). Besides, the combined genres, such as magical realism and speculative fiction with feminist themes have paved new directions to the study of gender and identity. Personalities such as Helen Oyeyemi and Natsuo Kirino have incorporated different genres of literature to examine how complex the identities of women are and how patriarchal norms enslave the women. In *A New New Me*, Oyeyemi has employed magical realism as a way of demonstrating how identity can be fragmented. In *Swallows*, Kirino applies the speculative elements of a story to say something about social norms or expectations in regard to motherhood and women becoming independent (Oyeyemi, 2025; Kirino, 2022). Along with narrative solutions, the intersectionality problematic of feminism has gained considerable popularity in the contemporary fiction. The problems of race, class, sexuality, and other social attributes affecting the lives of women are more and more discussed by writers. This intersectionalism will result in a deeper understanding of the challenges that women face and how they manage to maneuver through different kinds of oppressions. The *List* by Yomi Adegoke focuses on the aspects and complexities of cancel culture and how the media treated Black women and scrutinised both their racial and gender identities (Adegoke, 2023). The renewed interest in feminist recontextualizations of ancient myths and historical facts has introduced a chance to reframe the way women took part in history and how they spoke in it. One of them is *The Silence of the Girls* by Pat Barker, which alters the traditional narrative to place women at the center of the story and concentrate on their manner of relating their experiences based on the patriarchal vision of history (Patel, 2022; Barker, 2018). To sum up, the intersecting paths of feminism and narrative voice in modern fiction are a sign of an active and on-going interchange to give voice to the female point of view and experiences. The present-day writers are transforming the literary scene through the novel approaches to narration and the concept of intersectionality. They are providing us with various and more delicate images of women which contradict stereotypes and contribute to the ongoing feminist discourse.

CONCLUSION

In summary, blending feminism and narration voice in the contemporary fiction is vital in revolutionizing literary protocols and improving the way women voices are captured in literary works. Such innovations of narrative as the unreliable narrators, polyphonic voices, and fractured story telling pose challenges to the traditional patriarchal hierarchies of literary discourse as rendered by the contemporary writers. As an example, one may mention the period of disregard of female subjectivity illustrated by two novels by Bernardine Evaristo, *Girl, Woman, Other* and Pat Barker, *The Silence of the Girls*. Additionally, intersectional approach adopted by the writers such as Yomi Adegoke highlights the importance of observing the other factors such as race, class, and sexuality alongside gender in order to understand the experiences of women. Feminist fable, speculative fiction, magical realism and feminist rewritings of classical mythologies are other examples of how the combination of genre and feminism leads to an multifaceted construct of female identity as a subject of exploration. Generally speaking, contemporary feminist literature is transforming the literary sphere displaying females in diverse strong and positive ways. This shift goes against older narratives and prompts a more open, changeable and socially minded method of presenting stories.

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