

Meena Kandasamy's *When I hit you: Or, A Portrait of The Writer as A Young Wife* (2017) and Meg Wolitzer's *The Female Persuasion* (2018): A Narratological Study

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I. Abstract

This study aims to investigate the subjugation of women in the twenty-first century, examining how they continue to experience gender-based violence, whether in the East or the West. It attempts to emphasize how a novelist's narrative strategies may express their protagonist's traumatic experience as well as their healing process. Despite the evident cultural differences between India and the United States of America, sexual abuse still occurs in the modern world. Hence, writers are keen on presenting the issue in their literary works with various narrative structures reflecting their own perspectives of that kind of abuse against women. In Meena Kandasamy's *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of The Writer as A Young Wife* (2017) and Meg Wolitzer's *The Female Persuasion* (2018), both protagonists are prone to forms of gender-based violence despite their different cultural backgrounds. However, they show a resilient attitude towards the cruel experience. In this study, the researcher attempts to explore the novelists' narrative techniques and their significant influence on presenting the protagonists' struggle and healing process through applying Gerard Genette's narrative theory. Furthermore, a special focus will be directed to tracking the narrative structure and how it presents their emotional and psychological journey in seeking recovery from their trauma.

Keywords: Meena Kandasamy, Meg Wolitzer, Gerard Genette, Narrative Theory, gender-based violence

المستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف كيفية استمرار تعرض النساء في القرن الحادي والعشرين للعنف القائم على النوع الاجتماعي، سواءً في الشرق أو الغرب. وتسعى إلى إبراز كيف يمكن لاستراتيجيات السرد التي يستخدمها الروائيون أن تعبر عن التجربة المؤلمة التي عاشتها بطلة الرواية، بالإضافة إلى عملية تعافيتها. على الرغم من الاختلافات الثقافية الواضحة بين الهند والولايات المتحدة الأمريكية، لا يزال الاعتداء الجنسي يحدث في العالم الحديث. ولذلك، يحرص الكتاب على تناول هذه القضية في أعمالهم الأدبية بهياكل سردية متنوعة تعكس وجهات نظرهم الخاصة حول هذا النوع من الاعتداءات ضد المرأة. في رواية مينا كانداسامي "عندما ضربتك: أو صورة للكاتبة كزوجة شابة" (2017) ورواية ميغ ووليتزر "الإقناع الأنثوي" (2018)، تتعرض البطلتان لأشكال من العنف القائم على النوع الاجتماعي على الرغم من اختلاف خلفياتهما الثقافية. ومع ذلك، تُظهران موقفًا صامدًا تجاه هذه التجربة القاسية. في هذه الدراسة، تحاول الباحثة استكشاف تقنيات السرد الروائية وتأثيرها الكبير في تصوير معاناة الأبطال وتعافيتهم، وذلك من خلال تطبيق نظرية السرد لجيرارد جينيت. كما سيتم التركيز بشكل خاص على تتبع بنية السرد وكيفية عرضها لرحلتهم العاطفية والنفسية في سعيهم للتعافي من صدماتهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مينا كانداسامي، ميغ ووليتزر، جيرارد جينيت، نظرية السرد، العنف القائم على النوع الاجتماعي.

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II. Introduction

Though the topic of gender-based violence (GBV) against women has been repeatedly introduced in literature and tackled in Media, it is still a social phenomenon that women in the East and the West alike have to experience in the twenty-first century. Despite the feminist campaigns and movements combating violence against women, statistics and studies indicate the prevalence of the phenomenon worldwide. The United Nations stated in the 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women a definition for the term "violence against women" as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life." In light of the determined effort exerted by the World Health Organization (WHO), surveys have been made on survivors of violence against women from 2000-2018 across 161 countries. The reports revealed that 30% of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or non-partner, and up to 38% of all female murders worldwide are committed by intimate partners ("Violence against women" UN). What exacerbates the issue is that some women still feel stigmatized by the hateful experience and are not able to encounter either the perpetrator or the society. Thus, a general overview of the status of women in India and the United States is to be presented to have a broad perspective on the topic.

Cultural Differences

a. The Status of Women in India

Despite the fact that women's status in India has been subject to recent progress, it has long been a controversial and debatable issue. In order to improve education, economic, and healthcare opportunities for women, the government has established a number of policies and programs in the Indian Constitution and legal systems. According to *The Times of India*, some of the rights that women were able to legally get are:

- The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, makes it mandatory for all children, including girls, between the ages of 6 and 14 to receive education.
- The Equal Remuneration Act, of 1976, ensures that men and women receive equal pay for the same work.
- The Maternity Benefit Act, of 1961, provides women with paid maternity leave and other benefits during pregnancy and childbirth (“Status of Women in India”).

Therefore, the proportion of women in the workforce has significantly increased, and they are now holding prominent positions in a variety of industries, including business, politics, and entertainment. However, issues including gender discrimination, violence against women, and unequal pay continue to be major challenges, particularly in rural areas (“Status of Women in India”). The reason behind these problems is the patriarchal ideologies embedded in the male-dominated Indian society, which have been marginalizing the role of women.

The increase in the stress on women’s emancipation without corresponding changes in social attitudes and institutions sometimes leads to women being subjected to various types of hostile reactions and aggressive postures. Most of the disabilities and constraints on women arise from socio-cultural institutions... The traditional social structure, cultural norms, and value systems continue to place Indian women in a situation of disadvantage in terms of role-relationships, decision-making, and sharing responsibilities. (Chakrapani, Vijaya Kumar 55)

Indian women have presented remarkable examples of how successful they can be when given the opportunity. For instance, Indira Gandhi was a powerful prime minister (1966- 1977) known as the “Margaret Thatcher” of India, Anna Chandy was the first female judge in 1937, and Kalpana Chawla was the first Indian woman to go to space. Despite these examples, many women are still unable to reach their full potential because of poverty and societal injustices. The Indian Constitution, legal system, and governmental policy all uphold the idea of gender equality. Nonetheless, there is a significant disparity between these ideals and the actual situation of women in several communities across India.

b. The Status of Women in America

On the other hand, women in the United States have managed to shift their roles dramatically over the last few decades in the fields of

education, health, and political spheres. They were able to get more advanced degrees and have significant representation in colleges and universities. In educational attainment, American women have made great educational advancements, matching or even surpassing men. The Center for American Progress (CAP) published a report in 2023 stating that women now make up about half of all workers in the United States, compared to only about one-third of the workforce in 1969. A record number of women ran for public office in 2012, and a record-high percentage of women are currently sitting in Congress, demonstrating how women are stepping forward to lead the nation. According to the National Academy of Public Administration, women have made progress in politics at all governmental levels. The 124 women who were elected to the U.S. House of Representatives as a consequence of the November 2022 elections currently make up 28.6 percent of all House members, the highest percentage of women to occupy House seats ever. Additionally, the traditionally male-dominated field of higher education is beginning to provide more recognition to women. For instance, Claudine Gay, a renowned scholar of democracy and political participation, became the second woman and the first person of color to hold the office of president at Harvard University (Rubin, Guy, "Women's History Month: embracing Achievements, Encountering Push-Backs"). In light of the preceding studies, it is apparent that women in the United States have made significant strides in the fields of education, workforce, and politics. The American community has managed to recognize and value women's potential in various spheres.

Throughout this paper, the researcher will examine the experience of sexual abuse in the Indian and American contexts. It shall also illustrate how the protagonists of the novels under study manage to recover from their trauma with a focus on the narrative techniques used as an apparatus to illustrate their traumatic experience and healing journey.

III. Rationale

The reason why these two novels are chosen is because of their impact and significance. Meena Kandasamy's *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of The Writer as A Young Wife* and Meg Wolitzer's *The Female Persuasion* have received critical acclaim when they were published, because of the portrayal of the sensitive issue of gender-based violence against women in India and the United States; especially in that case when the survivors are highly educated women of the upper-middle class.

When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of The Writer as A Young Wife is a semi-autobiography where Meena Kandasamy (1984 - present) was

herself in an abusive relationship and struggled hard before she was able to put an end to her abusive marriage. Thus, she made the decision to reflect on how hard it is to end an abusive relationship. Through the protagonist in *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of The Writer as A Young Wife*, Kandasamy poses questions for the reader to think about concerning abuse, the pressure practiced on the abused by society and the embedded patriarchal ideologies as well as the challenges encountered in an attempt to end the abuse. The writer portrays these conflicts in her depiction of the protagonist who resorts to writing letters to an imaginary lover to reach salvation.

Concerning *The Female Persuasion*, Meg Wolitzer (1959 – present) has long been concerned with feminist issues, starting from addressing the persistent topic of gender-based violence suffered by women in modern times to addressing how female writers have found it difficult to receive critical praise for their literary works. Wolitzer wrote novels for adult and young readers, and short stories as well. She has been *The New York Times* bestselling author for her adult novels: *Sleepwalking* (1982), *This is My Life* (1988), *The Wife* (2003), *The Position* (2005), *The Ten-Year Nap* (2008), *The Uncoupling* (2011), and *The Interestings* (2013). Additionally, her short story *Tea at The House* (1998) was featured in 1998's *Best American Short Stories* collection. As for *The Female Persuasion*, *The New York Times* described it as: “uncannily timely, a prescient marriage of subject and moment that addresses a great question of the day: how feminism passes down, or not, from one generation to the next” (Lyll). It is her 12th adult book and *New York Times*-bestselling coming-of-age novel where she presents “power and influence, ego and loyalty, womanhood and ambition”, as stated by *Penguin Random House Speakers Bureau*. Meanwhile, Wolitzer manages to present her protagonist's inner struggle after her experience of sexual assault in *The Female Persuasion*. The main character refuses to surrender and decides to establish a new identity within the framework of feminism. Her turning point lies in meeting a second-wave icon who would help in shaping her new perspective in life empowering women through their battles against gender-based violence.

The novels under study are representations of the emotional and psychological journey experienced by the survivors of sexual abuse. The researcher will demonstrate the power of the narrative techniques used by the novelists to express the protagonists' dilemma and their means to overcome their trauma.

IV. Objectives of the Study

- The main aim of this study is to investigate the novelists' narrative techniques in presenting the dilemma of gender-based violence that the protagonists of the chosen texts experience.
- It will also trace the psychological and emotional impact of the cruel experience as well as the resilient reaction of both survivors who did not choose to be victimized.
- The investigation will emphasize how the apparent discrepancy between the American and the Indian cultures did not prevent the protagonists from being subject to the same kind of abuse.

V. Research Questions

Meena Kandasamy's *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of The Writer as A Young Wife* and Meg Wolitzer's *The Female Persuasion* offer a depiction of the social phenomenon of gender-based violence in two different cultures: the Indian and the American. However, this does not prevent the protagonists from being subject to sexual violence. Thus, the writers' narrative strategies portray the journey of the traumatic experience and how resilient the survivors are through their recovery process. Thus, in conducting this paper, the researcher shall be exploring the answers to the following questions:

1. What narrative strategies do writers employ to depict the psychological and emotional journeys of female protagonists within oppressive environments?
2. How do the writers' narrative techniques manage to convey the resilience of the survivors during their traumatic experience?
3. What can the use of narrative techniques reveal about the cultural and ideological differences in the portrayal of gender-based violence, power, and resistance across different sociocultural contexts?

VI. Significance of the Study

Although the topic of gender-based violence has been tackled in several researches, few have drawn a comparative study between two contrasting cultures and investigated whether the novelists have used different or similar narrative techniques in presenting the experienced trauma. Thus, through the analysis of the Indian novel *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of The Writer as A Young Wife* and the American one *The Female Persuasion*, the researcher will demonstrate the effect of the narrative strategies applied on addressing the protagonists' emotional and psychological reactions and attitudes towards their trauma. The researcher

will also highlight how the immense cultural differences between the protagonists had no impact on how they were exposed to the hateful experience.

VII. Theoretical Framework

In this study, the focus of the researcher will revolve around a comprehensive analysis of the narrative techniques utilized in portraying the resilience and growth of the female protagonists as they overcome their traumatic experiences. By examining Gerard Genette's theory of narrative, the researcher aims to explore the protagonists' journey not only to endure but ultimately to transcend their traumas.

Narratology

Narratology or the theory of narrative, which has been inspired by structuralists, was defined as the field that:

... studies the nature of, form, and functioning of narrative ... and tries to characterize NARRATIVE COMPETENCE. More particularly, it examines what all and only narratives have in common ... as well as what enables them to be different from one another, and it attempts to account for the ability to produce and understand them. (Prince 66)

Narratologists have been through ongoing attempts to identify the basic structural units driving narratives as a whole. They opted for a general set of rules that can analyze texts' narrative operations. Genette (1930 – 2018) was a French literary theorist and critic who outlined the concept of narratology and was associated with the structuralist movement. Genette introduced his own typology which is clarified and exemplified by specific examples. He organized his book *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* under five main headings: order, duration, frequency, mood and voice. Genette presents a systematic theory of narrative analyzing the writings of the French author, Marcel Proust; in particular *Remembrance of Things Past*. The first three categories: order, duration, and frequency, deal with the analysis of the time in a text. When it comes to "order", Genette identifies it as the relation between the temporal order of events in the story and the order in which they are presented in the text (Genette 11). Thus, he categorized this relation as follows:

- a. Chronological Order: in which the events are presented in the sequence they occur in time. From the beginning till the end, the narrative follows a linear progression without any noticeable deviations.

b. Anachrony: which means any deviation from chronological order.

According to Genette, anachrony has the following types:

- Prolepsis (flashforward): The narrator predicts events that will happen after the main story ends.
- Analepsis (flashback): The narrator tells events from the past and insert them into the narrative.

The second element in time analysis is “duration” which Genette identifies as the increase or decrease of the speed in the text in comparison with the story (Gholami 39) Meaning, the narrator may adjust the pace of the narration (speed up or slow down) with respect to the events being recounted. For that purpose, Genette introduces four narrative movements:

- a. Ellipsis: creating gaps in the timeline by omitting some events from the narrative.
- b. Pause: The narrative is interrupted to focus on a particular event or moment, which disrupts the chronological flow.
- c. Scene: having the same time for the story and the narrative.
- d. Summary: part of the story is summarized in the narrative.

The last concept discussed by Genette concerning time analysis is the perspective of “Frequency”. It is identified as the relationship between how often an event happens in the narrative and how frequently it is repeated in the text. Genette distinguishes between three categories:

- a. Singulative: what happened once in the story is narrated once in the text or what happened several times in the story is told several times in the text.
- b. repetitive: what happened once in the story is repeated several times in the text.
- c. iterative: what happened several times in the story is told once in the text.

In chapter four, Genette discusses the narrative mood by analyzing the distance between the narrator and the story. “Narrative ‘representation,’ or more exactly, narrative information, has its degrees: the narrative can furnish the reader with more or fewer details, and in a more or less direct way, and can thus seem ... to keep at a greater or lesser distance from what it tells” (Genette 162). Genette used a visual metaphor to help understand the two main elements closely related to the narrative mood. Genette stated that two elements directly affect how one perceives an image when looking at it: the distance (whether near or far) separating the person from the picture and the angle of vision from which

one looks at the picture. The viewer's vision is more accurate the closer he is to the image; the wider the view, the less obstruction there is to his point of view. Genette introduced a new term, replacing "perspective" which is "focalization". It refers to the viewpoint adopted by the narrator and presented to the reader, "focus of narration" (Genette 189). According to Genette, focalization can be divided into three types:

- a. Nonfocalized narrative (Zero focalization): is the narrative with an omniscient narrator where the narrator can tell facts, gestures, and thoughts about the protagonists.
- b. Internal focalization: is when the narrator tells from a specific character's perspective. Thus, the reader views the narrative from that character's inner thoughts and feelings.
- c. External focalization: is when the narrator knows nothing about a character's consciousness. Thus, the reader has access only to the outside views.

Voice was the final chapter in Genette's book, where he distinguishes between two significant concepts: homodiegetic and heterodiegetic. The two terms replace the traditional first-person and third-person narration, respectively. A subjective viewpoint and interpretation of the events is presented by a homodiegetic narrator, in contrast to a heterodiegetic one. "We will therefore distinguish here two types of narrative: one with the narrator absent from the story he tells ..., the other with the narrator present as a character in the story he tells ... I call the first type, for obvious reasons, *heterodiegetic*, and the second type *homodiegetic*" (Genette 244 - 245). Genette's study of voice provides scholars with a profound understanding of the narrative, in addition to comprehending the author's narrative strategies that affect the interpretation of their narrative. Therefore, examining the literary works under study through Genette's narrative theory shall clarify the novelists' writing techniques in presenting the protagonists' traumatic experiences and their healing journey.

VIII. Literature Review

Viola Nur Alfianita, in her dissertation, titled "Domestic Violence in Charles Frazier's *Nightwoods*" (2021) explores the effects of domestic violence against women and children as well as their attempts to deal with it in Frazier's novel *Nightwoods*. The researcher applied the theory of domestic violence by Zastrow (2010). The study also investigates the trauma of the female character after being raped and the trauma of the children after witnessing their mother's murder. The researcher concludes that the traumatic female character dealt with her trauma by living in a

safer environment and using a razor to protect herself though, while the traumatic children suffered trust issues and the memories of violence keep haunting them.

J. Sangeetha, S. Mohan, and Ahdi Hassan have conducted a study in the World Journal of English Language titled “Reading of Intertextuality in the Notions of Domestic Violence in Select Texts with Reference to Meena Kandasany’s *When I Hit You*”. The researchers attempt to present a theoretical exposition of intertextuality focusing on the social problem of domestic violence. The methodology of the study is based on comparing a number of texts with a particular focus on Meena Kandasamy's autobiographical narrative, *When I Hit You*. It reveals the intertextualistic phenomenon of domestic violence in the form of physical, psychological, economic, and sexual assault.

Nasr M. A. Abdulrazziq and Ayman E. M. Geedallah (University of Tobruk) in their research paper “Narratological Analysis of Temporality in Novel” investigate Charles Dickens’ narrative technique in his masterpiece *Great Expectations*. It was published in the International of Community Service and Engagement (2021). In their analysis, the researchers focus on the elements of order and duration to reach semi-statistical deduction for the chronological techniques of anachronism. The study provide a comprehensive idea about the temporal system of the novel.

Fouz Ahmad Mahany Abdullah (Assiut University) conducted another research entitled “A Narratological Study and Analysis of the Concept of Time in John Dos Passos’s U.S.A.”. The researcher investigates John Dos Passos’s trilogy through the concept of Genette’s time with its subdivisions: order, duration, and frequency. The researcher's main objective is to enrich the reader’s understanding of *U.S.A.* by using Gerard Genette’s narrative theory as an analytical tool.

Moch. Fahrur Rizal Zakaria in his thesis “Narrative and Characterization Techniques in Angie Thomas Novel *The Hate U Give*” (2020) analyses the narrative techniques in the novel applying Gerard Genette’s narrative theory. In his investigation, the researcher includes five elements: narrative order, narrative duration, frequency, narrative mode, and voice. Additionally, the researcher analyses the novel’s main character.

Nisreen T. Yousef’s study entitled “Narrative Time in Suzanne Collins’ *The Hunger Games: A Genettian Perspective*” employs Gerard Genette’s narrative theory to examine the novel’s temporal narrative strategies. Hence, the researcher used the theory’s elements of time:

order, duration, and frequency. According to the researcher, analyzing the temporal narrative techniques clarified not only the structure of the novel but also its thematic and communicative perspectives.

Rawan Marwan Abdullah, in her thesis "Modern Narrative Strategies in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*," utilizes Genette's narrative theory; in particular, the three elements of narrative technique, named text, focalization, and narration. In her analysis, the researcher differentiated between the two narrative concepts: story-time and text-time, in addition to the narrative devices of focalization and narrative levels. Analyzing Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* within the framework of Genette's narrative theory helped the reader appreciate the novelist's writing techniques.

In spite of all the extended research previously done on the topic, there is still a research gap that the researcher is trying to fill. Through the analysis of the Indian novel *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of The Writer as A Young Wife* and the American one *The Female Persuasion*, the researcher attempts to provide an insight into the narrative techniques used by the authors and their role in presenting the traumatic experience as well as the protagonists' healing process. To that aim, Gerard Genette's narrative theory is to be the theoretical framework of the study.

IX Discussion

Narratological Study

In the analysis, the researcher applies Gerard Genette's systematic theory of narrative, which was introduced in his book *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, to investigate the two novels: Kandasamy's *When I hit you: Or, A Portrait of The Writer as A Young Wife* and Wolitzer's *The Female Persuasion*. Using Genette's approach in analyzing the literary works under study helps identify the novelists' writing techniques to showcase the protagonists' experiences of gender-based violence and their responses throughout the experience. It also offers insights into the complex relationship between language and the phenomenon of gender-based violence against women in Indian and American societies.

Applying Genette's narrative theory to both novels involves identifying and analyzing the five main aspects of a narrative as stated by Genette: order, duration, frequency, mood, and voice.

1 Narratological Study of Kandasamy's *When I hit you: Or, A Portrait of The Writer as A Young Wife* (2017)

1.1 Order

Genette identifies the order as the relationship between the sequence of events in the story and the order in which they are presented in the discourse (Genette 11). The narrative order includes two categories: chronological order where the events are presented in the sequence they occur in time. In this case, the narrative follows a linear progression without noticeable deviations from the beginning to the end. The second is anachrony, in which an inconsistency occurs between the order of events in the story and the discourse. According to Genette, anachrony has two types: prolepsis (flashforward) and analepsis (flashback). (Genette 40)

In Kandasamy's novel, the protagonist tells her own story as a wife in an abusive marriage that occurred five years before the act of narration. The following example shows a shift back to earlier times through the memories of the protagonist's mother and her response to the daughter's experience by repeating and altering the abusive story over time. Kandasamy started the first page of Chapter I as follows:

Five years have passed, and with each year, her story has mutated and transformed, most of the particulars forgotten, the sequence of events, the date of the month, the day of the week, the time of the year, the etcetera and the so on, until only the most absurd details remain. (Kandasamy 7)

Temporal displacement and the transition from the present to the past are highlighted in the previous example. The flashback technique has a definite impact on the protagonist as it highlights her constant pain and struggle to process her abusive experience, which helps reshape her identity through reliving her past events. In addition, flashbacks help the protagonist reflect and analyze her experiences to better understand her feelings and journey of resilience. It is also noticed that the protagonist's self-awareness and development can be tracked through the shift in narration from present to past. Another significant impact is on the reader who is having an emotional connection with the protagonist by witnessing her painful experience and thus empathizing with her. The reader is also allowed to track her psychological journey and the origins of her resilience.

In the novel, the narrative order is anachronic as there is a lack of consistency between the story time and the storytelling time; they are not parallel or preceding. The predominant form of anachrony is analepsis

where the chronological flow of the storyline is interrupted to recall previous events that happened earlier than the current point in the narrative.

1.2 Duration

The second aspect in Genette's narrative theory is duration, and the novelist here is mainly using pause as a type of duration, where the protagonist stops the advancement of the plot to provide a descriptive account. This interlude of description illuminates the emotions and perceptions and allows the reader insight into the way she perceives her world and her interaction during the experience.

Primrose Villa, with its little walled garden, its two side entrances, has the quaint air of kept secrets. It is the sort of setting that demands drama. The white and magenta bougainvillea creepers in their lush September bloom. Papaya plants, along the east wall, with their spiralling, umbrella leaves and frail trunks. A coconut tree in its advanced years, its leaves designed to frame the solitary moon at night and play an air-piano in the rain. (Kandasamy 13)

The protagonist in the previous example halts the narrative and gives a detailed description of the garden. The meticulous description provides a sense of melancholy and mystery as if the setting is anticipating a dramatic revelation. It also raises curiosity about hidden secrets, which heightens the impression of suspense and hidden truths disguised in the superficial suggested serenity. The protagonist proceeds with a detailed description and gets involved with her emotions: "It makes a perfect film set. And in some ways, that is how I think of it: it is easier to imagine this life in which I'm trapped as a film; it is easier when I imagine myself as a character." (Kandasamy 13) The protagonist's perception of herself is clarified in the given example where she is detaching herself from reality and imagines her life as a film as a sort of coping mechanism. It is apparent from the protagonist's word choice "... frail ... solitary ... trapped ..." that she is aware of her vulnerability, fragility, and despair, and chooses isolation and distancing herself by being a different character to protect herself against agony.

1.3 Frequency

The last concept discussed by Genette concerning time analysis is the perspective of "Frequency". It deals with the relationship between the number of times an event happens in the narrative and how frequently it is repeated in the text. Genette identifies three main categories of frequency: singulative, repetitive, and iterative. (Genette 113 -117)

The protagonist emphasizes her role as "a perfect wife" throughout several chapters with minor differences or additional details in each

occurrence, yet highlighting the constant pressure imposed by her husband to conform to his expectations. In Chapter I, she emphasizes one aspect of being a perfect wife, which is the physical appearance that has to be non-catchy in any way: "It is only one of the expectations I must consider in my role as a perfect wife. The most important, of course, as an actress, is how I look." (Kandasamy 14)

The protagonist adds:

"The effect of adhering to my husband's wishes gives me the appearance of a woman who has given up. But, I know that attired in this manner, I am all set to play the part of the good housewife. Nothing loud, nothing eye-catching, nothing beautiful. I should look like a woman whom no one wants to look at or, more accurately, whom no one even sees." (Kandasamy 14)

The description of her modest and unremarkable attire, which has to be designed to avoid drawing attention, reveals how her individuality and true identity have been erased within the constraints of her husband's control.

In a different instance, the protagonist further elaborates on her role as an obedient wife forced to conceal her true feelings in order to emphasize the oppression imposed on her due to that relationship:

And cut! I am the wife playing the role of an actress playing out the role of a dutiful wife watching my husband pretend to be the hero of the everyday. I play the role with flair.

The longer I stretch the act of the happily married couple, the more I dodge his anger. It's not a test of talent alone. My life depends upon it." (Kandasamy 17)

The excerpt illustrates the protagonist's survival strategies; she clarifies that her existence depends on hiding her true emotions; consequently, removing her identity, as revealing her true self could potentially endanger her life.

Throughout Chapter V, the narrative reveals the protagonist's growing self-awareness by recounting the same perspective of the "perfect wife," stressing the depth of her inner struggle. In the following occurrence, she underscores her dual life as a wife and a writer: "I play wife, but the minute my husband walks out, I'm screaming yes yes yes yes yes yes in my head, and I obsess about what I need to be writing." (Kandasamy 51) The protagonist adds to the image of the wife experiencing societal oppression, the inner conflict to satisfy her personal desires. It also draws attention to the protagonist's struggle between resilience and compliance, suggesting an underlying potential for rebellion.

The final chapter (Chapter XIV) marks the protagonist's transformation and full realization of the concept of "a perfect wife". She says: "I am the woman who was a battered wife. I am the same wife who ran away." (Kandasamy 146) The excerpt presents a turning point in the journey of the protagonist's inner tension and self-recognition. She reflects on her past status and her perception of a "dutiful wife" who experienced an abusive marriage to comply with the societal expectations versus her current empowered identity.

The previous occurrences highlight the repetitive narrative in the novel, exploring the concept of a "perfect wife" and how the protagonist's several recounts of the concept display her character development throughout the narrative. The novelist employs repetitive narrative as a type of frequency applied in the novel, where the protagonist recounts the same idea repeatedly.

In contrast, singulative frequency is employed over the same concept from the husband's perspective in Chapter XII:

We've proved them all wrong, no? We're inseparable. No force can come between us. Those who said that you're not marriage-material and only fit for onenight stands will have to eat their own words. You are my lovely wife. My perfect wife. I didn't believe we'd end this way. Just look at us now. We're perfect. (Kandasamy 126)

The excerpt represents the only occurrence in which the reader is introduced directly to the husband's thoughts about their marriage, narrated once. The husband's statements seem ironic when compared to the protagonist's actual experience, which depicts how the husband is emotionally detached from their relationship, unaware of the wife's struggles. His pride apparently prevents him from recognizing the true nature and failings of their marriage and the significant issues they are suffering from.

1.4 Mood

According to Gérard Genette's narrative theory, mood, as the fourth narrative aspect, is the representation of narrative information that is provided to the reader in terms of distance and perspective from which events are presented. Genette replaced "perspective" with the term "focalization". It refers to the viewpoint adopted by the narrator and presented to the reader "focus of narration" (Genette 189). He made the connection between mood and focalization, which is essential to comprehending how narrative viewpoints influence the narrative. By influencing how characters and events are interpreted, focalization has a

direct impact on mood. It can be divided into three types: nonfocalized narrative (Zero focalization), internal focalization, and external focalization.

Given that the narrator is the protagonist herself, the narrative employs internal focalization as it is presented through the protagonist's perspective. Hence, the reader is introduced to the character's internal struggles and conflicts, which creates an emotional connection between the reader and the protagonist. The reader witnesses the main character's experiences, emotions, and her interpretation and understanding of events as well. Consequently, as the narrative mood showcases the protagonist's perceptions, it creates an emotional engagement on the reader's part and presents a subjective angle of the story.

In Chapter V, the protagonist narrates about her abusive marriage:

Trying to recollect the first time I was hit by my husband, there's only hot glass tears and the enduring fear of how often it has come to pass. The reconstruction of the events does not help. It always begins with a silly accusation, my denial, an argument, and along the road, the verbal clash cascades into a torrent of blows.

I do not have anyone I can talk to about what is going on behind these closed doors. (Kandasamy 44)

The previous excerpt illustrates internal focalization by exposing the reader to the wife's physical and psychological sufferings. That allows the reader direct access to the protagonist's thoughts and inner conflict, which presents her subjective perception of the abusive relationship she is experiencing. Hence, the narrative mood of the novel helps provide a subjective view of the story.

1.5 Voice

Genette defines voice as the position and status of the Narrator; it is the relationship between the narrator and the narrative, specifically, the position of the narrator concerning the events that are being told. It is an answer to the question: Who narrates the story? From which level of narration, or from what distance? Genette categorizes the concept of voice in:

a. Narrative Levels: Extradiegetic vs. Intradiegetic

- Extradiegetic narrator: is when the narrator exists outside the fictional world (for example, an external observer describing the story).
- Intradiegetic narrator: is when the narrator is within the world of the story and may tell an additional embedded narrative.

b. The Narrator Type (Based on the Narrator Involvement):
Homodiegetic vs. Heterodiegetic

- Homodiegetic narrator: A narrator who is a character in the story (e.g., first-person narrator).
- Autodiegetic narrator: A homodiegetic narrator that is also the main character or protagonist.
- Heterodiegetic narrator: A narrator that is not a character in the story.

Accordingly, the voice in Kadndasamy's novel is intradiegetic and homodiegetic, meaning that the narrator is present as a character in the story. To be more precise, the narrative has an autodiegetic voice (a subtype of homodiegetic narration) as the narrator is not only a character but also the protagonist of the story, where a subjective viewpoint and interpretation of the events is presented. The first-person narration provides an intimate as well as subjective view of the protagonist's journey. Through the autodiegetic voice, the protagonist is self-reflective and is able to offer various aspects of her mental and emotional state. Thus, the reader closely experiences the protagonist's inner struggles, thoughts, and development through the autodiegetic narrative voice.

2 Narratological Study of Meg Wolitzer's *The Female Persuasion* (2018)

2.1 Order

Meg Wolitzer's *The Female Persuasion* tells the story of the protagonist Greer Kadetsky and her relationship with Faith Frank, the feminist activist. The novelist started Chapter One in Part One: The Strong Ones by tracking the first encounter between the two main characters, which goes back to 2006. According to Genette's narrative theory, when the order of the story events does not comply with the narrative discourse, it is an anachronical narrative, which includes both analepsis (flashback) and prolepsis (foreshadowing). Wolitzer initiates her novel with these lines which stated the narrative order, "Greer Kadetsky met Faith Frank in October of 2006 at Ryland College, where Faith had come to deliver the Edmund and Wilhelmina Ryland Memorial Lecture ..." (Wolitzer 3) The novel's opening with an analepsis suggests that the novelist is leading the reader to the significance of the evolving relationship between Greer Kadetsky and Faith Frank and the crucial role that Faith will play in Greer's growing personality and feminist identity. It may also raise questions in the reader's mind concerning Faith's interest in Greer, despite her low-key presence. It, additionally, reveals

some character aspects about Greer, the protagonist: “Greer, a freshman then at this undistinguished school in southern Connecticut, was selectively and furiously shy. ” (Wolitzer 3), “She’d always been a tireless student and a constant reader, but she found it impossible to speak in the wild and free ways that other people did.” (Wolitzer 3). Such attributes shall intrigue the reader’s curiosity to explore the main character’s development. The flashback also unveils potential themes from the protagonist’s shy and unconfident personality, like self-discovery, empowerment, identity, and transformation, which align with the feminist perspective of the novel. Greer is introduced as an insecure, passive college student lacking self-confidence who seeks external validation; “She had even said she admired her. And now Faith was giving her permission. But permission to do what? The answer wasn’t at all obvious.” (Wolitzer 46) Then the novelist clarifies that the “permission” she had from Faith, symbolized in the contact card, had been the motivation and the drive to prove herself as she reflected twelve years later after becoming a famous activist and writes the first chapter of her book:

In itself, that card was a kind of abstract prize, a reminder not to stay hot-faced and tiny-voiced. Faith, who a little while earlier had stood and held Greer’s hands, was offering her nothing but permission and kindness and advice and an expensive-looking business card. She hadn’t come out and said, “Be in touch, Greer,” but it felt like more than anyone had ever given her except for Cory. (Wolitzer 46)

Wolitzer proceeds to display the impact Faith had not only on Greer but also on other women who were eager for mentorship and belonging to be able to find their voice:

Faith became aware, fairly early on, of her skill at bringing out certain qualities in other women. They wanted to be in her midst, and they wanted more from themselves. She realized that girls and young women actually loved her in ways that were similar to how Lincoln did. They could seem a little lost, or perhaps in need of inspiration. Perhaps the most important thing she gave them, she realized, was permission. (304)

Throughout the given excerpts, it has become obvious that Wolitzer’s choice of anachronic narrative order using analepsis managed to portray the protagonist’s growth from a timid, immature college student to a woman discovering the power of feminism and self-awareness. She got rid of the passive role she used to have and

became more involved in empowering other women after working in Faith's feminist organization.

2.2 Duration

Genette defines duration as the relationship between the time of the story (story time) and the amount of text or space of discourse given to narrate it (narrative time). To clarify, duration examines how narrative time contracts, expands, or coincides with the events being recounted. (Genette 87 -88)

In *The Female Persuasion*, it has been noticed that Wolitzer employs pauses and scenes as types of narrative duration.

A pause is where description interrupts the flow of the story events. It happens when the protagonist, along with her journey of self-discovery, reflects on feminism and self-worth. The reader witnesses Greer's reflective moments away from the immediate actions of the story. Pauses allow the reader to track the stages experienced by the protagonist in her self-awareness journey and her transformation from an introverted, insecure young lady to an assertive, famous feminist leader. Initially, she has been introduced as a bookish, timid, idealistic freshman student: "She'd always been a tireless student and a constant reader, but she found it impossible to speak in the wild and free ways that other people did. For most of her life it hadn't mattered, but now it did." (Wolitzer 3) The novelist asserts the protagonist's personal features as a shy college student, highlighting her inner conflict between her desire to be seen and her self-image of being unworthy.

Throughout Greer's professional career, she struggles with morality and ethical choices that changed her ideal perspectives towards feminism and life in general. Greer began to recognize the compromises required for success after she started working with her mentor and role model, Faith Frank, the prominent feminist activist at her feminist organization. It is only then when Greer knows that Emmett Shrader, the venture capitalist, offered to fund the organization, and Faith welcomes the offer despite his history of being involved in morally problematic ventures. Greer then recognizes that feminist institutions may favor branding over their actual activities of empowering women and advocating for their rights. The ethical ideals that Greer used to hold are now more realistic after she experiences how success sometimes requires making concessions.

She saw that a great deal had been published about Emmett

Shrader; some of it focused on morally problematic companies he'd been involved with, and some of it focused on his philanthropy. Because Greer knew nothing about venture capital—"VC," people sometimes called it—or what the business dealings of a billionaire might be like, she couldn't make too much sense of it except to understand that he had a mixed record, which didn't seem unusual. But Faith liked Shrader and had described him as "an old friend," and that was obviously significant. (Wolitzer 134)

It is evident that Greer's admiration and respect for Faith affect her views toward activism and feminism. However, another significant development in Greer's character, which is revealed through the pauses in the novel, is when she encounters the funding fraud incident.

Greer closed her eyes; it was all she could think to do. She thought of Faith, and Emmett, and a bank account filling with money, and a news story, and all of them on trial for fraud. The mind could go wild on just a moment's notice. Greer felt pressure in her chest, and a medical term swam up to her: unstable angina. I'm only twenty-six, Greer thought, though right now that age didn't even sound particularly young. (Wolitzer 338)

In the previous excerpt, the narrator pauses the events to reveal how Greer is once again disillusioned by her idealistic view of Faith and feminist activism. She comes to realize that activism is not always as honest and transparent as she once believed.

Finally, the narrator informs the reader that Greer, at the end of her self-discovery journey, manages to find her voice and her place in the world of feminism and leadership. The protagonist writes a book where she empowers women and urges them to speak out.

Greer, age thirty-one now, had been giving talks around the country on her Outside Voices tour. She visited women's prisons and corporations and colleges and libraries, and she went to public schools where little girls crammed into gyms, and she told them, "Use your outside voices!" (438)

The book had encouraged women to stay strong and loud. And certainly staying strong and loud was urgent. (438)

By the end of the novel, the reader meets the final version of the protagonist after her journey of self-recognition and evolving from the idealistic character she used to be as a freshman to a more grounded and

realistic individual through the pauses that interrupted the story events.

According to Genette's narrative theory, a scene is one type of the narrative duration and is identified as the presentation of events in real time, mostly in long and detailed dialogue. It usually enables the character to present themselves to the reader directly. (Genette 88) Wolitzer has employed Scenes in *The Female Persuasion* to further highlight the relationship between Greer and Faith and its development from a mentor-student relationship to a more mature, realistic one. Greer's perception of Faith started as extreme admiration and awe to eventual disillusionment. The first encounter between them was introduced as follows:

Faith looked at Greer in the mirror and said, "Oh, hello. You were asking me a question in there, right? And then the evening was suddenly cut off. I'm sorry about that."

"That's so nice of you," Greer said. "It's just that . . . when you told me to speak up in there, it was hard for me? Listen to that. My voice just goes *up*. I don't really know how to be," she admitted, and then she stopped talking.

Faith considered her. "Tell me your name." "Greer Kadetsky."

"All right, Greer. No one said there was one way to be. There isn't."

"But it would be nice to be able to say what I think, what I believe, without feeling like I'm about to have a stroke."

"Well, that is certainly true."

"I had a teacher who used to tell the boys to use their inside voices. I'm thinking, maybe I should use my outside voice."

"Maybe. But don't be hard on yourself; don't beat yourself up. Just try to accomplish what you can, and what you care about, while being yourself."

"I cared about this thing that happened here," Greer said. "This entitled guy who said things and grabbed us. We testified, but it went nowhere. I feel like I don't belong at this school," she added. "It's the wrong place for me. I knew it would be wrong." (Wolitzer 40, 41)

That long dialogue between the two ladies, which was apparently put by Wolitzer purposefully, reveals the immediate trust that Greer gives to Faith and views her as a mentor and role model.

Another long dialogue by Frank unveils her perception of Feminism and, more importantly, showcases her significant impact on Greer's feminist ideologies.

At the podium Faith said, “Whenever I give a talk at colleges I meet young women who say, ‘I’m *not* a feminist, but . . .’ By which they mean, ‘I don’t call myself a feminist, but I want equal pay, and I want to have equal relationships with men, and of course I want to have an equal right to sexual pleasure. I want to have a fair and good life. I don’t want to be held back because I’m a woman.’”

“And I always want to reply,” said Faith, “‘What do you think feminism is, other than that? How do you think you’re going to get those things if you deny the political movement that is all about obtaining that life that you want?’” She stopped for a moment, and they all thought about this, some of them surely thinking about themselves. They watched her take a slow and deliberate drink of water, which was somehow, Greer realized, highly interesting.

“To me,” Faith continued, “there are two aspects to feminism. The first is individualism, which is that *I* get to shape my own life. That I don’t have to fit into a stereotype, doing what my mother tells me, conforming to someone else’s idea of what a woman is. But there’s a second aspect too, and here I want to use the old-fashioned word ‘sisterhood,’ which may make you groan a little and head for the exits in a stampede, but I’ll just have to take that chance.” There was laughter; they were all listening, they were all with her now, and they wanted her to know it. “Sisterhood,” she said, “is about being together with other women in a cause that allows all women to make the individual choices they want. Because as long as women are separate from one another, organized around competition—like in a children’s game where only one person gets to be the princess—then it will be the rare woman who is not in the end narrowed and limited by our society’s idea of what a woman should be.

“I’m here to tell you,” said Faith, “that while college is the most formative experience you will ever have as an individual—a moment when you can read and explore and make friends and make mistakes—it’s also a moment when you can think about how you can play a social and political role in the great cause of women’s equality. Now, when you graduate, you probably don’t want to do what I did, which is to go off to Las Vegas to be a cocktail waitress in order to get away from my parents, Sylvia and Martin Frank. You

wouldn't like the little ruffled uniform I had to wear. Or maybe you would."

Greer immediately began clapping "like a maniac," as she would say to Cory. She wanted to clap as loud as anyone in that room. (Wolitzer 29 - 31)

The long passage asserts the impact Faith has on Greer, helping her form her own feminist beliefs.

2.3 Frequency

G rard Genette defines "frequency" as the term that expresses the relationship between how many times an event happens in the story and the number of times it is narrated. In his theory, Genette classifies frequency into three key types: singulative narration, repetitive narration, and iterative narration. (Genette 113 - 115)

In *The Female Persuasion*, Wolitzer employs mostly singulative narration, where some events in Greer's life and other characters' are narrated in detail as such events only take place once in the story world. This frequency mode mainly aims at spotting emotional and ideological turning points in plot and character development as well. However, Repetitive narration is occasionally found in the novel where key emotional or thematic moments are revisited when Greer reflects on past events, emphasizing the psychological weight and societal implications of these occurrences or creating a thematic layering to show how characters reinterpret earlier events as they grow.

Wolitzer narrates significant scenes, like Greer's first encounter with Faith Frank as it occurs once in the narrative timeline and is recounted once in the text (singulative narration), pinpointing how this encounter started to shape the protagonist's personal and ethical development.

Greer Kadetsky met Faith Frank in October of 2006 at Ryland College, where Faith had come to deliver the Edmund and Wilhelmina Ryland Memorial Lecture; and though that night the chapel was full of students, some of them boiling over with loudmouthed commentary, it seemed astonishing but true that out of everyone there, Greer was the one to interest Faith. ...But what she knew for sure, eventually, was that meeting Faith Frank was the thrilling beginning of everything. It would be a very long time before the unspeakable end. (Wolitzer 3 - 4)

This event only occurs once in the world of diegesis and is narrated in a detailed scene that is happening in real time. It is a classic example of

singulative narration because it is one of the most significant events in the novel and is narrated just once in a dramatic, detailed scene.

Later in the novel, Wolitzer presents a transformative opportunity portrayed once in full dramatic detail rather than as a habit or repeated situation. It is when Greer receives an offer to work at Faith's new foundation, Loci. Greer's feelings of surprise, excitement, and self-doubt are all captured in the narration.

“...So if you’re willing, I’d like to bring you on board.”

“Oh, Faith, thank you,” Greer said, flushing. “I’m definitely willing.”

“The job will of course be entry-level. Much of it will probably feel boring and repetitive.”

“I doubt that.”

“No, it’s true, hear me out. You’ll be one of our bookers. Eventually you’ll be much more involved with a variety of things here. It’s up to you how quickly that happens.”

Greer could barely stay seated as Faith described the specifics of the job to her. She wanted to crouch down on the floor like a weight lifter and raise the long white length of sofa into the air with Faith Frank still on it, just to show her that she could.

(Wolitzer 131 - 132)

This scene is a prime example of Wolitzer’s use of singulative narration, depicting a turning point in Greer’s professional life. It is portrayed with emotional intimacy and rich physical detail as Faith's offer is not abstracted or summarised but communicated in direct dialogue. The reader is placed within the real-time exchange, experiencing both the intimacy and the seriousness of the situation. Greer's mixed feelings of awe, ambition, and emotional dependence are revealed by her exaggerated internal reactions. Wolitzer's narrative choice here is a classic fit for the singulative narrative mode, emphasizing the singular, once-in-a-lifetime nature of the offer and emphasizing its thematic force. This scene dramatizes a life-altering opportunity in Greer’s professional and ideological journey and captures the novel’s key themes of mentorship and the temptation of power.

A subtle but significant turning point in Greer's character development and her changing perception of authority is marked by this scene in Chapter Nine, in which Greer watches Faith Frank during a private conversation: “Faith Frank, famous, glamorous feminist, is apparently as gray-haired and fragile and bony as anyone, and as mortal, and as compromised.” (Wolitzer 347) Disillusionment and realization are two emotions that are evoked in the previous lines. For most of the novel,

Greer has idolized Faith, seeing her as a kind of untouchable feminist icon, a representation of strength, legacy, and advancement. However, this instance shatters that perception and exposes Faith's humanity, her frailty, and—perhaps most importantly—her complicity in systems she had previously appeared to oppose. The use of the word "compromised" is significant, as it acknowledges that Faith may have compromised or made moral concessions that affect her previously pure reputation. This understanding moves Greer further toward adulthood; both chronologically and ideologically as she comes to realize that real-world feminism, and leadership in general, is contradictory and imperfect. This rich moment maintains a specific, single-time dialogue between Greer and Faith that leads Greer to view her mentor as a multidimensional, aging, and imperfect woman, not an idealized being. This occurrence happens once in the story and is told only once, therefore creating a clear instance of singulative narration that reflects Greer's developing conception of power and authority.

c.

Even though Wolitzer's *The Female Persuasion* mostly employs singulative narration, it occasionally uses repetitive narration; this is especially evident in psychologically impactful incidents that are thematically significant to the plot. Genette defines repetitive narration as a narrative technique in which a single event in the story is told several times in the discourse of the narrative, often from different perspectives or emotional viewpoints (Genette 115). One of the most vivid examples of this is in Greer's description of the sexual assault she is subjected to at a fraternity party by Darren Tinzler. Initially, the event is described in the real time: "She jerked back from him and said, 'What are you doing?' But he held on, giving her breast a hard and painful squeeze..." (Wolitzer 15). This incident is then recalled later in Greer's inner monologue and emotional introspection, particularly in her inner thoughts over whether or not to report it, how others might interpret her silence, and what it reveals about her developing feminist identity. One example is her discussion with Zee and her reluctance whether to report or not, She thinks that she: "...hadn't yet developed much of a political inner life; she only felt sickened and reluctant as she imagined filing a report and having to sit alone in Dean Harkavy's office in Masterson Hall with a clipboard on her lap, writing out a statement about Darren Tinzler..." (Wolitzer 18). Then, she processes the event in conversations with friends, wears a T-shirt protesting it, and even recounts the assault during a public

disciplinary hearing. These returns to narrative do not merely repeat the event for effect; they add more emotional significance and illustrate Greer's shame, confusion, anger, and later resolve. Thus, employing repetitive narration stresses the long-term psychological impact of sexual violence and the sociopolitical consequences of speaking out or remaining mute. Thus, the repeated recounting of Greer's abusive experience enhances the novel's examination of trauma and responsibility while supporting Genette's theory that a character's evolving inner state can be reflected in frequency variation.

2.4 Mood

As mentioned earlier, mood (as per Genette's Narrative theory) is one of the key aspects of narrative structure that focuses on whose point of view orients the narrative perspective. In Genette's framework, mood refers specifically to the distance and perspective from which the story is narrated; it is about how the story is perceived by the narrator and, consequently, the reader. It is closely tied to focalization, which concerns the point of view adopted by the narrator and presented to the reader "focus of narration" (Genette 189). Focalisation directly affects mood by affecting the interpretation of characters and events.

The narrative mood used in *The Female Persuasion* matches Genette's concept of internal focalization, meaning that the story is mainly told from the perspective of a specific character, Greer. The narration provides insight into her inner thoughts, feelings, and ideologies. It focuses on Greer's emotional and psychological experience rather than having an omniscient narrator who reflects on every character equally. This gives readers close access to Greer's thoughts and interpretations of events. Starting with chapter one, the narrator introduces Greer's internal struggle, positioning the reader firmly within her subjective experience: "She'd always been a tireless student and a constant reader, but she found it impossible to speak in the wild and free ways that other people did. For most of her life it hadn't mattered, but now it did." (Wolitzer 3) Here, the narrator is not just describing Greer's behavior, but her psychological and emotional state. The reader can see through the character-centered lens, which is limited to what Greer herself knows, feels, or imagines. The inner worlds of other characters are not directly displayed until Greer interprets them.

Even when the narrator steps back slightly, Greer's psychological state is frequently reflected in the narrative tone: "She had never been touched like this before... alone with herself in this new place, she tried to figure out what had happened." (Wolitzer 16) The reader may sense a

subtle third-person narrator here, but it is still integrated with Greer's perspective. As a result, there is a persistent internal focalisation in which the protagonist's viewpoint defines the boundaries of narrative knowledge.

2.5 Voice

Genette differentiates between two important concepts in the last chapter, "Voice": homodiegetic and heterodiegetic. They replace the traditional first-person and third-person narration, respectively. "We will therefore distinguish here two types of narrative: one with the narrator absent from the story he tells ..., the other with the narrator present as a character in the story he tells ... I call the first type, for obvious reasons, *heterodiegetic*, and the second type *homodiegetic*" (Genette 244 - 245). He also categorizes voice in terms of the narrative levels as extradiegetic vs. intradiegetic voice. Genette distinguishes between voice (who speaks) and focalization/mood (who sees). For example:

- A first-person narrator may choose to focus the story on either their younger or present selves; this is known as focalization.
- However, whether they narrate in the first-person or as an outside narrator, it is an issue of voice.

When investigating the narrative voice in *The Female Persuasion* within the framework set by Genette's narrative theory, it can be assumed that Wolitzer has constructed a narrative voice that meets Genette's perspective of a heterodiegetic, extradiegetic narrator; one who stands apart from the world of the narrative and is not within it as a character. The novel is narrated entirely in the third person, and the narrator is external to the events of the story; a scenario that locates the voice at the extradiegetic level. To be precise, this narrator does not conform to the traditional sense of being omniscient; rather, the story is frequently internally focalized, allowing the reader privileged access to the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of specific characters, mostly, Greer Kadetsky. To illustrate, the narrator grants the reader early remarks about Greer's character at the beginning of the novel: "She could give answers easily, but rarely opinions," and continues to explain that she called herself "a piñata of opinions" (Wolitzer 3). This illustrates how the narrator could describe external actions and, in the meantime, is able to narrate through Greer's internal state, explaining her own awareness and frustration at being unable to express herself. In addition, it is noteworthy that the voice remains prominent throughout the novel. For

instance, through the incident of the letter where Greer was supposed to recommend her friend Zee to Faith, the narrator blurs the line between narration and character thought:

When the conversation was almost over, everything had gone so well that Greer didn't want to ruin it with the clumsy intrusion of Zee's letter. So she still chose not to mention it. Soon she would bring it up, she told herself; soon. But walking back down the hall, feeling almost jaunty now—jig territory—Greer understood that she really didn't want to give Zee's letter to Faith. She didn't want to share Faith with Zee. She was still trying to figure out her place here at Loci—where she fit, where she didn't. Of course, she would certainly give the letter to Faith tomorrow, but she would do it only out of obligation.

By Friday afternoon, Greer hadn't yet found the right time to give the letter to Faith. She realized now that she wasn't going to give her the letter after all. (Wolitzzer 146)

Even though the narrator maintains a certain level of interpretive distance, displaying the ability to comment and reflect, the narrative voice is still emotionally focused on Greer's character development, tracing her evolution from shy insecure college student to a more ambitious, self-protective individual who prioritizes personal ambition and is capable of ethical compromise.

This

narrative structure fully demonstrates Genette's differentiation of voice (who speaks?) and mood (who sees?), and how the heterodiegetic narrator can portray a deeply subjective narrative within consistent internal focalization.

Conclusion

The researcher examined how Gérard Genette's narrative theory; specifically his categorization of narrative as order, duration, frequency, mood, and voice; could explore and clarify effectively the narrative strategies employed by Meena Kandasamy and Meg Wolitzer in their respective novels *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife* and *The Female Persuasion*. The analysis uncovered how each novelist; through her narrative structure, established the protagonists' inner struggles and tackled themes like gender-based violence, identity formation, power dynamics, and feminist consciousness.

In *When I Hit You: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife*, Kandasamy employed an anachronic narrative order that is dominated

by analepsis in order to underscore the effort of the protagonist in overcoming and comprehending her traumatic experience. This interrupted storyline reflected the protagonist's psychological disorientation, which is a consequence of domestic violence. Kandasamy's frequent use of pauses; descriptive interludes; gave emotional and psychological depth to the narrative, offering the reader a more profound connection to the narrator's fluctuating mental state. The narrative's repetitive frequency, especially in tracking the concept of the "perfect wife," reflected the protagonist's growing resistance while also capturing the insidious repetition of abuse and social expectations. Mood and voice were combined through internal focalization and an autodiegetic narrator, which has provided the narrative with greater subjectivity and emotional immediacy, encouraging the reader to experience the survivor's evolving awareness.

In contrast, Wolitzer's *The Female Persuasion* had a heterodiegetic, extradiegetic narrator with internal focalization through Greer Kadetsky. Although the story continued in chronological order, the novelist occasionally used analepsis to recollect past events and pauses to convey Greer's introspective reflections. In order to address the protagonist's professional turning points and moral dilemmas, Wolitzer used many singulative narrations to underscore her ideological and emotional development. However, repetitive narration was economically, but skillfully, used when narrating the sexual assault to reveal the long-term psychological impact of trauma and the challenges of voicing it. Using this narrative structure, Wolitzer traced the growing awareness and the ethical/moral issues associated with modern feminist practice.

In the end, Genette's categories of order, duration, frequency, mood, and voice are not merely structural devices; they are vital to representing the lived experience of trauma and the multi-layered process of empowerment. Kandasamy, representing the Indian context, presented trauma through overt violence and entrapment, while Wolitzer, representing the American one, presented ideological compromise and emotional disempowerment. This difference in addressing trauma suggests different approaches to feminist resistance and survival. However, what unites the two novels is their use of narrative technique to embody the resilience of their protagonists: both women regained their voice, reshaped their identity, and fought back against the systems that silenced them.

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