

Women's Voices and the Politics of Resistance in Contemporary English Novels

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Abstract

The representation of women, now more than ever in the process of being regulated by society, has also become a powerful arena in contemporary English-language fiction for the generation of counter-knowledge. This paper aims at analysing the roles played by the female voice as a counter-point to patriarchy, gender inequality, racialization, religious authoritarianism, heteronormativity and cultural constraint in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) and *Americanah* (2013) and also in Bernardine Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019). This work is a qualitative close reading and feminist critical analysis that introduces the discussion of Simone de Beauvoir's idea of woman as Other, Elaine Showalter's gynocritical focus on the traditions of women's writing, Judith Butler's performative theory of gender, bell hooks' intersectional critique of domination, and Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality into a comparative framework. Resistance in these novels is not simply a heroic gesture, but not a non-dilemma process either of silence to speech. It is created as a result of testimony, unspoken words, physical denial, narratives, blogging, shared memory, language play and intergenerational connections. The analysis also reveals that voice can only be politically effective in the context of audibility – that is, in a situation where someone can speak, in which language or genre, before which audience, and at which risk. The paper is concerned with the gaps in studies that detach theme from form and universalize women's resistance in dystopian, domestic, diasporic and polyphonic narratives. What it does do, however, is demonstrate how the act of narration itself is an institution that is under contestation within contemporary fiction, which is how through it marginalized women gain agency, and which is how they reveal the unequal structures which govern recognition.

Keywords: feminist literary criticism; women's voice; resistance narratives; intersectionality; body politics; narrative agency; contemporary Anglophone fiction

1. Introduction

Throughout the long and troubled history of the representation of women in English literature, from idealized characters to moral symbols, from wives and muses to the “others” who challenge, they become more and more aware of their own social positions, more and more conscious of themselves as narrating subjects. It's no mere succession of events where silence is confined to history and emancipation to the here and now. From its early nineteenth-century beginnings through the present, women writers have challenged literary and social authority, and in this new century, literature is still censored, violence is still intimate, economic dependency is still a reality, racial hierarchy is still in place, compulsory heterosexuality is still an issue, and the public's credibility is still unevenly distributed. The most apparent change has been in the narrative voice from which these pressures can be expressed. The modern novel can make

private hurt meet public ideology, personal memory meet institutional history, and ordinary language normalize unequal power.

The feminist literary criticism helped to make this shift visible, not only by challenging representation, but also by challenging the institutions that give the right to interpret texts. Women's writing was linked to material independence and intellectual freedom by Virginia Woolf, femininity was a socially constructed position of alterity by Simone de Beauvoir, attention was drawn to women's writing as a field with its own histories and conventions by Elaine Showalter, and later by feminisms of color, postcolonial, queer, and intersectional, these were diverse feminist concerns that challenged the notion that "woman" is a social identity that denotes a singular social experience [1]–[5]. These interventions seek to make them aware of the fact that voice is never singularly someone's. Speech is social in nature, requires an approved or already existing idiom, an audience, and some degree of insensitivity to retaliation. This means that a character can talk, but not be heard to say the same, or can be silent but do something important to oppose the enemy.

There are three related questions posed in this study. Firstly, how are women's speech, silence, embodiment and self-narration conceived as acts of resistance in selected contemporary Anglophone novels? Secondly, what are the differential risks and opportunities for female agency by race, class, religion, nationality, sexuality, age and migration? Third, what role do the different modes of narrative (first person retrospection, restricted focalization, embedded testimony, blogging, polyphony, temporal fragmentation, and experimental punctuation) play in the politics of the narratives they represent? These include Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah*, and Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*. The term "English novels" is here used in the sense which is broader than novels written in England, to cover novels written in English in the wider Anglophone culture. This separation is important because politics of gender in present-day English-language writing cannot be divorced from colonial histories, migration, transnational media, and racial formation.

The study makes an argument that the novels chosen move resistance away from an open model of resistance and towards the range of vocal, embodied, relational and formal models of resistance. Offred's "private" narration secures a "private" subject; Kambili's stammering voice documents the struggles of acquiring agency in a domestic and religious context; Ifemelu's blog is a public analysis of the racialized experience, yet it simultaneously foregrounds the impossibility of singular mobility; and Evaristo's multiple voices put a questioned, intergenerational group in place of a single feminist voice. Voice gains political salience throughout the whole of the corpus on contestation of categories with which women are made intelligible. This inquiry is therefore significant in its attempt to relate thematic resistance to narrative authority and because of the consideration of empowerment without negating contradiction, privilege, and vulnerability.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Feminist criticism, authorship, and voice

The criticism by first feminists brought light to the naturalization of masculine authority in the literary canon and in the norms of interpretation. Gilbert and Gubar demonstrated the way that

women writers in the nineteenth century manoeuvred restrictive constructions of the feminine in male-authored texts, and Showalter's gynocriticism refocused the gaze away from one of women in male texts toward that of women as producers of literary traditions [6, 3]. Feminist narratology later showed that the form of the narrative is socially marked in the sense that the authority of the narrator, his/her right to generalizing, and his/her relation to the private and public discourse are determined by conventions related to gender [7]. The studies continue to be a reference point as they draw the distinction between the presence of a female speaker and the cultural authority of the speaker. The postcolonial and black feminist scholars challenged general narratives of oppression towards women. Mohanty challenges the western feminist discourse, which creates a monolithic "Third World woman," while hooks and Collins are concerned with the institutional power, race and class of women [8], [4], [9]. The interconnections of race and gender also help to explain why an intersectional analysis of harms is missing from single-axis theories [5]. This kind of work alters literary practice: It would be impossible for a critic not to treat Offred's reproductive subjection, Kambili's religiously coded domestic abuse, Ifemelu's racialization in the United States, and the experiences of the Black British queer women as all equal examples of a single patriarchy.

2.2 Scholarship on the selected novels

The novel has already become a point of reference for feminist dystopia and a reflection on the themes of reproductive control, language, historical memory and complicity, and has attracted criticism. The consistent focus on gender, power, and unstable narration in Atwood, and Baccolini's research on critical dystopia, in turn, makes it easier to understand how fragmented memory and an open ending can hold the oppositional potential without providing liberation [10, 11]. Atwood scholarship has also considered the "Historical Notes," which Academic men speak, who record Offred, but also repeat the practices of appropriation and trivialization that Offred does not. The common themes in the study of *Purple Hibiscus* are silence, domestic violence, religious fundamentalism, colonial inheritance and the coming of age structure. For Hewett the novel's Bildungsroman is a process through which Kambili develops into a voice, and for Cooper Adichie's fiction is located in material, spiritual, and postcolonial tensions [12], [13]. The same scholarship can productively be connected to the idea of speech as growth; however, attention to strategically absent speech, gestures, laughter, domestic space, and ethically questionable practices that provide means of survival is also called for in the novel. The resistance isn't the same as the resistance that is held by a single character: Kambili doesn't have it all by herself, it's shared between Kambili, Jaja, Beatrice, Auntie Ifeoma, Amaka, and even the sensory world of Nsukka. Americanah criticism highlights issues of migration, race, hair, love, nationality, and digital public sphere. Hallemeier claims that the novel challenges "the demand that African writing conform to the standards of the metropolitan Other" [14] and Guarracino demonstrates how blogging produces a unique interface between personal experience, personal commentary, and commercial authorship [15]. These readings help to make Ifemelu a critical witness to the culture of race in America. But her mobility and audience also undercut celebratory narratives of empowerment: the novel speaks to class privilege, migrant vulnerability, and the disconnect between sharp language and structural change. The scholarship around *Girl*, *Woman*, *Other* has been predominantly concerned with the presence of Black Britishness, polyphony, queer and trans identity and the intergenerational difference as well as Evaristo's "fusion fiction." The form of the novel, Abram suggests, supports a Black feminist politics of "speaking out" that is grounded in the insistence on plurality as an organizing

principle [16]. Even though the novel's twelve main lives don't fall into the category of tokenism, they do not do away with political disagreement, either, nor does their network of lives. The formal inclusiveness, then, is to be understood as a feminist debate that is performed rather than a fairly comprehensive list of identities.

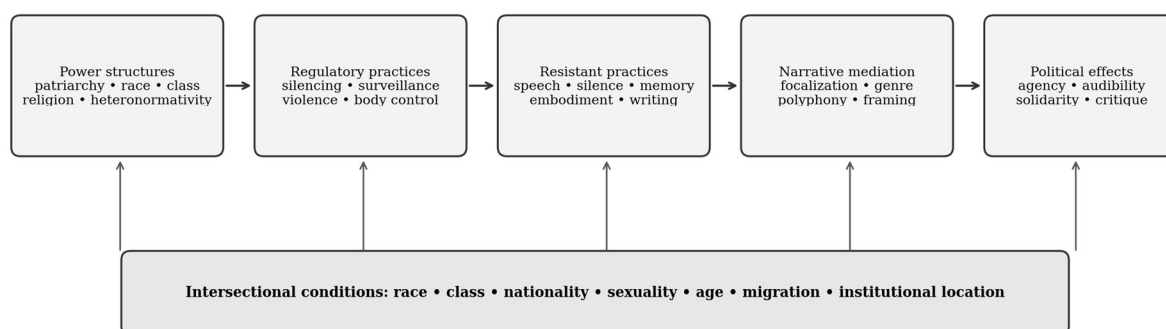
2.3 Research gap

The existing studies tend to have single-author, single-text interpretations, and there are three gaps. First, the stories of women's resistance often represent voice as speech and ignore issues of mediation, silence, and genre, and of the architecture of narratives. Second, comparative studies can lump together women's experiences of patriarchy without paying due attention to racial, religious, national, sexual and class-specific structures. Third, empowerment is often portrayed as a final objective, instead of acknowledging compromise, unequal access to platforms and the potential for women to become perpetrators of domination. In this paper I will turn to the comparative model which has voice (speech, silence, embodiment, production in a text, and formal distribution of narrative authority). It is a reading that challenges resistance to be located, relational, and incomplete.

3. Theoretical Framework

Woman is historically situated as the inessential Other to a supposedly universal masculine subject [2] – this is the first analytic axis of the study, provided by Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*. This formula highlights regimes that demean women as functions, as wife, as daughter, as mother, as reproductive, as racialized body and as cultural sign. It is not a universalizing value but diagnostic, and the category Other has to be qualified by the social relations by which it is produced. This is complemented by Showalter's gynocriticism, which focuses on women's literature, literary traditions, and forms they inherited [3]. When applied to this, it is a question of what the novels tell us about oppression and how they articulate female authority by means of diaries, remembered stories, blogs, communal narratives, and the hybrid form. Building on this concern, Lanser's feminist narratology considers the social practice of narrating as an authority that is accessed differently by the speaker [7]. These interventions combine to uncover form as a component of political significance. There is a third axis, that of Butler's theory of performativity. Gender is not a fixed attribute that is performed through behaviour but is a result of norms, sanctions, citations, etc. [17] In the novels, the uniforms, domestic norms, beauty norms, religious rituals, heterosexual scripts and expectations of professionalism generate gender intelligibility. But, repetition is never ideal, and parody, refusal, improvisation, recontextualization can reveal the contingency of the norm. This schema comes in handy when dealing with body politics and characters that don't fit into the expected gender/sexuality binary. Lastly, hooks resist the analysis from turning patriarchy into a singular or monochromatic system: feminism is an anti-sexist oppression, yet at the same time, a race and class based structure of positions in oppression. Crenshaw highlights the epistemic power of lived experience and the need to consider race and gender together, which is something Collins's black feminist thought has long cared for, and the structural invisibility that results from separating these two factors [9], [5]. The term intersectionality is here deployed as a method rather than a list of identities: the question is, how do institutions create vulnerabilities and how is language of voice distributed? Together, these theories make possible a discursive, embodied, relational, and structurally-conditioned theory of resistance.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework for analysing women's resistant voice



Source: Developed by the author from Beauvoir [2], Showalter [3], Butler [17], hooks [4], Collins [9], Crenshaw [5], and Lanser [7].

Heuristically, the framework can be summarized as follows: $R_v = f(A, M, C, I)$, with R_v representing the resistant force of voice, A representing the audience's access to voice, M representing the form of the voice (narrative, medial, etc.), C representing the material cost of speaking, and I representing the intersecting social location(s) of the speaker. This is not a number equation or measurement scale. A suggestive reminder that speech is not resistance, it is political, it needs circulation, form, risk and positionality.

4. Methodology

A qualitative text analysis based on feminist and intersectional criticism is used in the study. The four novels were chosen deliberately as embodying a range of modes—dystopian, domestic, diasporic, and polyphonic—Anglophone settings and socio-political concerns related to voice, bodily management, and social recognition. It is not only the character's speech that is analysed in this unit, but any pattern in the text that structures the self-representation of the female voice, for example, the technique of 'focalization' or 'silence', naming, 'storytelling', 'body imagery', 'spatial contrast', 'embedded genres', 'punctuation', 'temporal order' and the 'framing of testimony'.

Analysis was done using five interpretive categories that emerged from the research questions: (1) resistance to patriarchy norms and institutions; (2) resistance to identity, agency and self-expression; (3) resistance to body politics and gender control; (4) intersectional and marginalized experience; and (5) resistance techniques as narrative approach. Excerpts and recurring themes were read in each of the novels and then compared between the novels. The method is hermeneutic and not statistical; it is about patterns of explanation rather than about specificity of text and history. It is not suggested that the four novels are representative of all contemporary writing, or of all women. It also clarifies the difference between author, narrator, and character, and does not assume that the statements in fictional texts necessarily represent authorial opinions. Close reading is the primary evidentiary procedure, with the use of secondary scholarship for testing and situating interpretations.

Table 1. Selected corpus and analytical rationale

Novel	Context and mode	Primary site of control	Principal mode of resistance
The Handmaid's Tale (1985)	North American feminist dystopia	Theocratic state, reproductive law, surveillance	Counter-memory, illicit narration, bodily and linguistic refusal
Purple Hibiscus (2003)	Postcolonial Nigerian domestic Bildungsroman	Patriarchal family, religious absolutism, intimate violence	Emergent speech, alternative domestic space, relational agency
Americanah (2013)	Nigerian-US transnational and diasporic novel	Racialization, migration regimes, beauty and workplace codes	Blogging, irony, natural-hair politics, return and self-authorship
Girl, Woman, Other (2019)	Black British polyphonic "fusion fiction"	Racism, class hierarchy, heteronormativity, cultural exclusion	Polyphony, performance, self-definition, intergenerational connection

5. Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Women's resistance against patriarchal structures

The Handmaid's Tale portrays a state mechanism of patriarchy, a combination of theology, law, surveillance, and reproductive control. Gilead's erasure of women's economic independence, their literacy, their occupational identity and their familial autonomy, is their classification by function of reproduction and household. The novel claims for the politics of preservation, but Offred's rebellion seems limited in comparison to spectacular rebellion. The regime's vocabulary is not the complete record of reality because of her private memory of her own name, her mother, her own daughter, her friendship with Moira, her past life [18]. The illegal story is thus an anti-archive. Narrating from inside, the imposed role of "Handmaid" is contrasted with a narrating self that has other affiliations. Her compromises aren't failures of resistance, but rather the means by which totalizing systems compel political engagement in morally difficult modes. Purple Hibiscus is about the miniaturization of the patriarchal state in the house of Eugene Achike. His power is rooted in his wealth, fatherhood, colonial Catholicism, and public respectability. The children's bodies are governed by the timetables, religious judgment turns affection into discipline and behind philanthropy there is violence. Kambili's first faltered sentences and their intent to please her father reveal the self-policing of domination as grammar. Resistance starts with a home, Auntie Ifeoma's Nsukka house, home to argument, laughter, scarcity, faith, and affection. The difference of houses generates an other social imagination. Jaja's decision to not take communion is clear defiant behaviour, Kambili's stumbling speech, attachment to Father Amadi, and protection of Papa-Nnukwu's painting are all more subtle signals that distance moral truth from paternal command [19]. The novel's refusal to romanticize a decision made in the absence of safe institutional remedies is an escape from lethal abuse, and a sign of constrained agency as well in the case of Beatrice's poisoning of Eugene. Americanah moves resistance from the transnational racial and gender systems. Ifemelu's blog is witty, analytical, and purposely outside the realm of accepted academic discourse, challenging American racial etiquette [20]. She reveals racializations that liberal politeness has hidden; she turns personal experiences into public critique; she is not about to be asked to say thank you when immigrants are asking for criticism. She also challenges the notion that migration to the West is the only comprehensible way to progress when she returns to Nigeria. However, there is no smooth liberation story in her story. She is limited in various ways by economic insecurity, depression, immigration, expectations of the workplace, and romanticism. As her material

situation gets better, so does her voice become more public, which is the body that speaks, and which is proof, that expression is not just about courage, it is also about resources. Girl, Woman, Other spreads resistance among the women and gender-diverse characters, who have no single ideology. Amma's experimental theatre queers exclusionary cultural institutions, Dominique escapes coercive control and reimagines political community, Carole challenges a culture of racism and class mobility, Morgan fights against a gender assignment which cannot hold them together, and Hattie asserts property, memory and mixed-race family history [21]. The novel's politics are partly that it refuses an exemplary heroine. It defines Feminism as a battle of generation, sexuality, respectability, privilege and language. Resistance is collective, not because everyone agrees, but because several lives become visible to each other.

5.2 Identity, agency, and self-expression

Naming and self description are key conflicts throughout the corpus. Offred's patronymic Gilead is his possession and an attempt to expunge her history, while Offred's remembered private name, never fully recorded by the reader, guards an interior space that the state can never fully claim. Her agency is weak and lies in the history-making of remembering. Kambili, on the other hand, needs to find out that talking doesn't require punishment. Throughout her progression from silence and stutter to asking a question, laughter, desire, and interpretation, her development is heard. Agency here is relational, that is, it arises when Auntie Ifeoma, Amaka, Jaja, and Father Amadi make it possible to speak to another kind of Kambili. The self-expression of Ifemelu is directly written. Blogging allows her to create a persona with which she could reveal the absurdities and injuries of racial classification. The blog also acts as a dramatization of a problem of voice within digital capitalism, which is the visibility, income and cultural prestige of a 'counter-discourse' becoming a 'brand'. Immediately after leaving one blog and subsequently blogging from Nigeria, Ifemelu seems to be trying to regain control of where she speaks, and whom she speaks to. Evaristo's move further from monophony toward individual authorship, or polyphony. No one is the final judge of what is feminist; subsequent views make reinterpretations of past judgments, identity is a social account that is contestable. In the novel, this is instead of self-expression as one's own truth, for self-expression is met with misreading, which is met with speaking again. Instead of self-expression as one's own truth, there is a dialogue of speaking, misreading, and speaking again.

5.3 Body politics and gender control

The female body is a huge field where ideology becomes habit. Fertility and social value, clothing as a code of caste, the Ceremony as an institution of sexual violence, and women disciplining women through public punishment determine the social values in *The Handmaid's Tale*. The values in *The Handmaid's Tale* are determined by fertility, clothing as a code of caste, the Ceremony as an institution of sexual violence, and women disciplining women through public punishment. Previous works of Butler make sense of how gender is enacted through repeated norms of costume, gesture, ritual and regulated space in Gilead [17]. But, in the body are also memories and desires beyond the scope of official use. The sensuality and vulnerability that Offred has cultivated bring back some ambiguity to what the state has defined as being destined to do. *Purple Hibiscus* is about physical control and private lives. Miscarriage, hospitalization, and bruises demonstrate the consequences of a public notion of the devout and successful family. Beatrice's figurines represent an unstable domestic harmony repeatedly broken by violence, whereas Kambili's body picks up footsteps, schedules and tones as warnings. In

Nsukka, food, sport, hair, music & laughter rearrange embodiment in the Service of Pleasure & Participation not fear. The novel does not seek only a political resistance, rather, a recovery of ordinary bodily life. Consenting to write with the text of hair in *Americanah*, it becomes an intersectional text. *Americanah* is the writing with the text of hair. Chemical straightening and professional grooming rules reveal that the “natural” body in the work place is already racially-regulated. For some, Ifemelu's natural hairstyle is a liberating act; for others, it is not. This is because it can be possible and meaningful in certain professional, class, and diasporic contexts. The intimate body work is in the context of migration economies and unequal citizenship in the salon scenes. Like *Girl, Woman, Other*, a single female body is rejected. The things that happen to women seem to occur in various lives: menstruation, ageing, disability, sexual desire, pregnancy, assault, race, and gender transition. This multiplicity challenges the male-centered objectification of women, as well as the feminist idealization of cisgender embodiment as the sole basis for a woman's identity.

5.4 Intersectionality and marginalized experiences

An intersectional reading, on the other hand, transforms the way one thinks about “women versus patriarchy” to a historically specific set of power configurations. Offred's oppression is severe, but the novel also illustrates the existence of different female roles: Wives, Marthas, Aunts, Econowives, and Handmaids are given varying privileges and involve themselves in each other's oversight. The regime survives not only with male strength, but it has a hierarchy in which some women have limited authority. The “Historical Notes” add another fault line of inequality: academic expertise transforms a woman's testimony of surviving into an object of disembodied reading that shows that patriarchy can return in institutions that think they are post-oppressive. *Purple Hibiscus* sees the problem of gender violence as being rooted in the colonial religious hierarchy, class privilege and the political instability in Nigeria. It might be said that the rejection of Papa-Nnukwu as “heathen” by Eugene is a symptom of the increased domination of the family due to colonial Christianity, and that his public liberalism is coexisting with private tyranny. Although Auntie Ifeoma is a self-made intellectual, her economic situation and professional marginalisation restrict her options. In *Americanah* intersectionality is made even more obvious: Ifemelu is “Black” because she moved to the United States, and gendered racialization is the basis for job prospects, beauty, intimacy, and speech. The novel provides insight as well as error in her observations, and her viewpoint as an African immigrant is different from the African American histories. This is an important aspect in its critical force to reject automatic innocence. The most substantial feature of *Girl, Woman, Other* is the great amount of attention paid to the internal differences among the marginalized categories it presents. Black British women are in different class positions, they are in different generations, lesbian politics can be a liberating but exclusionary experience, educational success can be accompanied by assimilation and alienation from family, and nonbinary identities can conflict with inherited feminist language. Crenshaw's model shows how to uncover the overlapping structures, and hooks cautions against feminism run by already privileged women [5] [4]. Evaristo's novel, by providing marginal characters with symbolic inclusion, contradiction and historical depth, is a manifestation of this warning.

5.5 Narrative techniques as tools of resistance

The most telling comparison is that there's a politics to the shape of a story. Offred's account is a first person, non-linear, self-correcting, and self-inventive narration. This uncertainty cannot undermine its authority, and it challenges Gilead's one official truth. Her speech to an "imagined listener" fosters a sense of community within a context that is set to exclude women. The latter cultural re-framing maintains the story while revealing the way by which institutions can take over the voices of subalterns. The reader then steps in between the objectifying distance of the scholars and his/her own listening. In *Purple Hibiscus* silence is made formally audible through the limited first person focalization of Kambili. What she can't say comes through pauses, sensations in her body, objects and careful attention. The novel opens with an allusion to *Things Fall Apart*, which is a masculinized postcolonial canon, and is being rewritten from within the domestic sphere. It has a temporal organization, starting with Jaja's refusal and then with a return to the events which made it possible to refuse. The hibiscus becomes a formal and symbolic bridge between the cultivation and freedom of experimentation. *Americanah* not only presents blog posts in a narrative form but also includes a third person narrative centered upon Ifemelu. The general blending of elements is a break from the conventions of the immigrant love story, as demonstrated in the form of essayistic social criticism. The blog's direct address establishes a reading market for claims which polite conversation would eliminate; irony generates a critical distance from the racial scripts. The juxtaposition of the lived moments with the retrospective narration also highlights the capacities for explanation: experience is never completely reducible to a thesis, and a persuasive public voice can mask private vulnerability. The true polyphony of *Evaristo* is revealed in long flowing passages, little use of conventional punctuation, multiple perspectives, and linking character developments. The shape diminishes the sovereignty of the full stop and of the single protagonist, enabling voices to speak over one another without lapsing into sameness. The novel's form engages with a Black feminist politics of presence and speaking out as Abram points out. The convergences are the ones that close, which offer recognition across family and historical separation, but do not provide an ultimate synthesis of ideas. Form as resistance implies sharing of authority and a propel to keep disagreement alive.

5.6 Comparative synthesis and scholarly contribution

The comparative results are presented in Table 2, but the novels are not reduced to similar instances. It makes it evident that a certain regime of control is accompanied by a specific vocal practice and narrative form.

Table 2. Comparative matrix of voice, form, and resistance

Text	Voice configuration	Formal strategy	Political implication
The Handmaid's Tale	Secret, retrospective and self-correcting testimony	Fragmentation plus the ironic "Historical Notes" frame	Preserves counter-history while exposing institutional appropriation of testimony
Purple Hibiscus	Movement from inhibited speech toward relational expression	Restricted focalization, temporal return, symbolic domestic spaces	Makes silence perceptible and locates agency in enabling communities
Americanah	Mobile first-person-like public persona within third-person narration	Embedded blog posts, irony and transnational comparison	Converts lived racialization into critique but reveals unequal access to platforms
Girl, Woman, Other	Distributed and ideologically	Polyphony, sparse punctuation	Rejects the representative heroine

Text	Voice configuration	Formal strategy	Political implication
	divergent voices	and interconnected life narratives	and sustains disagreement within feminist collectivity

The novels, together, show four propositions. To begin with, silence is ambiguous: it can be a symptom of terror, it can be a strategy of survival, a protected interiority, or a formal way of registering what can't be safely spoken. Second, voice is below the level of service. Second, voice is the infrastructure. Whose speech travels depends on education, money, mobility, digital access, supportive relationships, and institutional recognition. Third, embodiment is not a private affair or a feminine fact; bodies are regulated by law, religion, labour, beauty, race, sexuality and through a narrative description. Fourth, literary resistance is not just in terms of plot, it is also in the way literary time is allocated, the way testimony is framed and the way genres are mixed or broken. Comparative model takes a feminist approach to literary studies by separating articulation from audibility. A critique can be stated by a woman, but only has a political effect when it is heard and/or can be circulated, validated, and acted upon by others. Offred creates a listener, Kambili learns how to have an enabling community, Ifemelu builds an audience and monetizes it, Evaristo creates a narrative commons made up of multiple voices. Every setup can yield varying options and dangers. The novels are not just designed to “give women a voice” either, which can suggest that voice is a gift that is imparted from the outside. They re-enact representations of address, contesting the institution of which speech is deemed valid as knowledge.

6. Conclusion

Anglophone novels of the present day express women's voices as political practices that are more than verbal protest. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, narration is a preservative of memory in the face of reproductive totalitarianism, and a way of revealing the ongoing susceptibility of women's testimony for institutional appropriation. *Purple Hibiscus* describes the difficult coming to speech in a family where violence is justified, and argues for the importance of other relationships and places to gain agency. In *Americanah*, migration, hair, romance, and blogging make for an analysis of the racialized gender and public authorship that makes a platform possible, while questioning the privileges it affords. In *Girl, Woman, Other*, feminist narration is pluralized, with contradictory Black British, queer, working-class, professional, young and ageing subjects sustained in their authority. The study finds that the politics of voice in feminist writers is a thematic and formal politics that questions power structures. These are acts of resistance for speaking, withholding, remembering, naming, writing, laughing, inhabiting the body, and entering into community. But they don't buy into a false either-or choice of silence or free expression. Material dependence, institutional power and unequal audiences limit resistance, as do intra-feminist conflicts. This paper combines the insights of Beauvoir, Showalter, Butler, hooks, and intersectionality to reveal that voice can no longer be considered merely individual expression, but a socially situated agency of narration. Its main scholarly contribution is its focus on audibility; whether women speak or how genres, communities, and institutions enable or foreclose recognition is a theme the novels ask. Fiction thus opens up spaces for women and gender-diverse empowerment and is aware of the unfinished and contested nature of liberation.

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