

## *One Hundred Shades of White* Romanında Baharatlarla Zenginleştirilmiş Kadın Yaşamları<sup>a</sup>

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### Özet

Preethi Nair tarafından yazılan *One Hundred Shades of White* (2003) isimli roman Nalini ve Maya'nın kendi bakış açılarıyla anlattığı hikayeyi sunmaktadır. Nalini ve Maya'nın Hindistan'dan İngiltere'ye göç etmelerinin öncesinde ve sonrasında gerçekleşen olayları anlatan bu roman olayların gelişiminde önemli rol oynayan yemek ile ilgili tasvirleri sıklıkla içermektedir. Preethi Nair bir kadın yazar olarak baharatlarla zenginleşen Hint yemek kültürü ile ilgili bilginin anneanneden anneye ve anneden kızına aktarılma sürecini ortaya koymaktadır. Mutfakla ilgili işlerin kadınların hayatındaki rolüne ilişkin geleneksel değerlendirmelerin aksine romanda anneanne karakteri olan Ammu, yiyecekler, baharatlar ve yemek yapma yoluyla elde ettikleri ve sürdürdükleri kişisel, sosyal, ekonomik ve duygusal gelişim süreçlerinde Nalini ve Maya'ya rehberlik etmektedir. Bu çalışma, Preethi Nair'in romanını jino-eleştirel bir bakış açısıyla kadın karakterlerin hayatlarında yiyeceklerin ve yemek pişirmenin rolü ve önemine odaklanarak incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

### Anahtar Kelimeler

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## Female Lives Enriched with Spices in *One Hundred Shades of White*

### Abstract

*One Hundred Shades of White* (2003) written by Preethi Nair presents the story narrated by Nalini and Maya from their own perspectives. The novel, which tells the events occurring before and after their immigration from India to England, frequently includes food-related representations that play crucial roles in the development of the story. As a female author, Preethi Nair reveals the transmission process of knowledge about the Indian food culture enriched with spices from grandmother to mother and from mother to daughter. In contrast to the traditional considerations regarding the role of culinary deeds in the lives of females, Ammu, the grandmother character in the novel, guides Nalini and Maya in the processes of attaining and sustaining personal, social, financial, and emotional progress by means of foods, spices, and cooking. This study aims to investigate Preethi Nair's novel with a gynocritical perspective focusing on the role and importance of foods and cooking in the lives of female characters.

### Keywords

Gynocriticism  
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Cooking  
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### About Article

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## Introduction

*One Hundred Shades of White* (OHSW), written by Preethi Nair and published in 2003, is analysed by focusing on food-related details revealed in the novel through a gynocritical perspective. The purpose of this study is to determine how the lives of female characters, Ammu, Nalini, and Maya, are enriched with spices and influenced by the foods that they prefer together with the food-related tasks that they perform either domestically in their own kitchens or professionally in other kitchens.

Preethi Nair's novel, *One Hundred Shades of White* (OHSW), is rich in female cooking and the use of spice that is a cultural process that passes from grandmother to mother and from her to the daughter. As this process continues, female characters experience different events in most of which foods and specifically spices are frequently included into the narrative flow of the events that are created and also narrated from a female perspective. Through the examples found in the novel, a gynocritical analysis can be carried out in order to detect in what way Preethi Nair, as a female author, depicts the interaction between foods and female characters during their life-long journeys enriched with spices. In order to reveal this interaction by focusing on how Preethi Nair represents food-related experiences of female characters, the theoretical background of the study is based on the critical comments of Elaine Showalter regarding gynocriticism because

gynocritics is, ..., historical in orientation; it looks at women's writing as it has actually occurred and tries to define its specific characteristics of language, genre, and literary influence, within a cultural network that includes variables of race, class, and nationality (Showalter, 1984, p. 36).

With increasing prestige and popularity, female authors contributed to the development and progression of female poetics through their fictional creations in which the experiences of female characters are reflected objectively from the female perspective. As it is pointed out by Yadav and Yadav (2018), "the women writers wrote about the world, but they did so from women's perspective, the objects and events of the world pass through different filter priorities, perceptions, protests in the work of women" (p. 63). Keeping in mind that "increasingly throughout the 1970s, the focus moved to literary representations of women, by women and for women" (Eagleton, 2007, p. 107), this study investigates the depictions related to female characters portrayed by a female author.

To be able to get a clear picture related to the details of female literature, the notion of *women as writers*, which is defined by Showalter (1979), is considered carefully while investigating gynocriticism as a part of feminist literary criticism in the present study. In order to have an unbiased insight into the notion of *women as writers* and the fictional representations related to female characters as much as possible, gynocriticism can be regarded as an outstanding theoretical practice offering a renewed vision relevant to literary creations of female authors promoting the enrichment of female poetics. Here, in this process, female authors are considered active agents by means of their autonomous works including novels, short stories, poems, memoirs, and various other genres. Through different genres which are abundantly found in women's literature, female authors deconstruct and go beyond the literary standards and traditional norms applied and defined by male authors and critics. Accordingly, "the programme of gynocritics is to construct a female framework for the analysis of women's

literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt male models and theories" (Showalter, 1979, p. 28).

It is detected that the relationship between women and literature focused on feminist criticism is categorised into two modes by Showalter (1981) who states that the first mode is "concerned with the feminist as a *reader*, and it offers feminist readings of texts which consider the images and stereotypes of women in literature, the omissions and misconceptions about women in criticism, and woman-as-sign in semiotic systems" (p. 182). On the other hand, considering the second mode, Showalter (1981) underlines that

the second mode of feminist criticism engendered by this process is the study of women *as writers*, and its subjects are the history, styles, themes, genres, and structures of writing by women; the psychodynamics of female creativity; the trajectory of the individual or collective female career; and the evolution and laws of a female literary tradition (p. 184).

Showalter (1979) describes women as the "producer of textual meaning, with the history, themes, genres and structures of literature by women" (p. 25) within the scope of *women as writer* notion. Moreover, she (1979) specifies this notion as "its subjects include the psychodynamics of female creativity; linguistics and the problem of a female language; the trajectory of the individual or collective female literary career; literary history; and, of course, studies of particular writers and works" (p. 25). According to Showalter, there is not any appropriate term in English for representing the notion of *women as writers* as a part of feminist literary criticism. Considering this deficiency, she expresses that "no term exists in English for such a specialised discourse, and so I have adapted the French term *la gynocritique*: 'gynocritics'" (Showalter, 1979, p. 25). Since then, female critics have contributed to the development of theoretical background and issues related to female poetics flourishing with the autonomous creations of female authors.

Cixous (1976) emphasizes that "woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement" (p. 875). Namely, women authors reclaim their own voices by means of fictional creations that enable them to speak about women's lives without any restriction. In this process, they write about a vast range of topics related to women and their daily lives from their own perspectives and by including different thematic concerns, which can be familial, social, personal, financial, political, religious, or cultural. Rather than maintaining the techniques of traditional literary frames, female authors have changed the male-dominated perspective by bringing innovation to the creation of fictional works. As a consequence of this attempt, a vast number of fictional works, in which the experiences of female characters are portrayed from a female-oriented perspective, have been created. It is obvious that this innovation in literary productions is not limited to a particular society or period which can be inferred from the fact that "women writers are enjoying an increasing popularity and prestige" (Yadav & Yadav, 2018, p. 67) all around the world. Thus, bringing bits and pieces can offer meaningful outcomes related to the nature of a female literary tradition that is at the centre of the gynocritical focus. The reason is that the female literary tradition is rich in portrayals of awakening and self-conscious female characters that are aware of their own potentials in overcoming the difficulties that they encounter in their personal, social, or professional lives. This richness has prompted multidisciplinary scholarly investigations performed with innovative perspectives. Accordingly,

the gynocritic discovers in her authors and characters an understanding of female identity - not that she expects her authors and heroines to be superwomen, but the essential struggle will be towards a coherent identity, a realization of selfhood and autonomy (Eagleton, 2013, p. 9).

Female authors, who have enhanced literary creativity related to the female world, can be considered as key elements representing the essence of females' experiences defined and redefined by them in fictional contexts. In the process of definition and redefinition of these experiences, female authors do not limit themselves with the standards of classical literary expectations, and in this regard, Showalter (1979) asserts that

gynocritics begins at the point when we free ourselves from the linear absolutes of male literary history, stop trying to fit women between the lines of the male tradition, and focus instead on the newly visible world of female culture (p. 28).

As it is underlined by Ayan (2011),

female novelists and their texts have paved a long way since their first step out of their private spheres, and have succeeded in proving that they are not the other of the man and unthinkable by putting forward their stories and breaking the frames that caused their silence and ignorance for long years (p. 3).

Female authors' visibility has increased more and more all around the world through the works in most of which stereotypical representations regarding females have been revised and reinterpreted by women and for women. It is clear that "feminist theory focuses on empowering women and helping them discover how to break the stereotypes and molds of some traditional roles and roots that women play that may be blocking their development and growth" (Yadav & Yadav, 2018, p. 59). Thus, one of the points attracting attention while conducting academic studies on female poetics can be stated as the characteristics of literary works belonging to female authors. Within this frame, those studies can be related to the thematic or structural features, either separately or together. This allows researchers to analyse every detail available in the literary works with a gynocritical perspective because the focus of gynocriticism is also on how women are placed in fictional works belonging to female authors. Eagleton (2013) states that "the gynocritic dedicates herself to the female author and character and develops theories and methodologies based on female experience, the touchstone of authenticity" (p. 9). Even though the thematic and structural priorities of female authors can diversify as per changing reasons, it is possible to confront the common issues that cause a kind of unity found in female poetics. Showalter (1977) affirms that the common points revealed in female poetics have increased and the critics detecting this increase have agreed that they "can see an imaginative continuum, the recurrence of certain patterns, themes, problems, and images from generation to generation" (Showalter, 1977, p. 11) when they have considered female authors as a whole. In order to detect the details of this unity connecting female authors of different times, places, and cultures, the centre of attention can be the daily experiences of women. These experiences have been creatively interwoven into the narrative frames of fictional works through which female authors can objectively unveil the nature of being a female. Karmarkar (2014) claims that

there are two areas of study as far as woman writing is concerned: one is how women writers describe the male-dominated society in their literary works, and what kind of

revelation or apocalypse they make about their own role; and the second is to study the way of their expression (p. 35).

As the number of fictional creations belonging to female authors increases, the diversity of literary depictions related to females' experiences and studies related to these depictions enhance as well.

On the other hand, in line with the aim of this study, it is observed that "the history of food in literature is an extensive one" (Boyce & Fitzpatrick, 2017, p. 3). With an increasing tendency in literature, foods, food-related issues, culinary tasks, and kitchens have turned to be recurrent representations in depicting the stories of fictional characters. These representations are no more related only to the nutritional needs of characters and they transcend their traditional functions in the hands of female authors in whose works foods, kitchens, and culinary tasks are depicted with a renewed perspective while narrating the stories of female characters. These food-related issues go beyond their traditional properties related to the survival of living beings and function as social and cultural realities by means of the creative intervention of female authors. It is remarkable that "women's imaginations are experientially linked to food as inspiration for mimesis or metaphor since women are, after all, the infant's first food giver and customarily gendered as the family cook and meal arranger thereafter" (Blodgett, 2004, p. 263). Foods and food-related tasks can become key elements altering the flow of events and affecting fictional characters' lives because

food has been a double edged sword—tying women to the home yet also enabling them to cross the production-reproduction boundary and use domestic food knowledge to achieve social and economic power outside the home and to influence the public political arena (Counihan, 2012, p. 5).

The interaction between female characters and food-related events provide the readers, critics, and researchers with various details while analysing and interpreting literary works of female authors who depict these issues with a female point of view differing from the traditional mainstream approaches to food-related literary contexts. In these contexts, cooking and any other culinary task might be considered as obligatory duties performed mostly by females within the borders of their kitchens where they feel limited, marginalized, isolated, or imprisoned due to the burden of these duties. However, these traditional approaches and attitudes of feminist critics towards these issues have started to be replaced with renewed ones through novice approaches of female authors to the issues regarding foods and food-related tasks performed by women in domestic or professional kitchens. Here, "cooking is a way for women to exert power" (Matwick, 2017, p. 541), and through cooking and performing any culinary task, women can attain self-worth and dignity in the kitchens that are represented as places offering women various opportunities for psychological and physiological well-being, self-expression, personal improvement, professional development, and so on. In this regard, Matwick (2017) points that "the kitchen offers women a place to exercise the virtue of femininity and also to grow as an individual with increased confidence that comes through cooking success" (p. 540). Namely, kitchens are not reflected as domestic places where women have to carry out food-related performances as an obligation. It can be pointed that foods have additional roles apart from their nutritional values and kitchens are not places restricting women in the fictional works belonging to female authors and revealing experiences of female characters. It can be claimed that female authors can knit the events that take place in female characters' lives with food-related representations in an innovative manner through which

foods and food-related tasks do not lead to the oppression of females but to the progression of them.

It is not surprising to find abundance in food-related fictional representations in world literature because the diversity in the types of foods to be consumed and culinary tasks to be performed can be a rich source of inspiration and creativity. In this abundance of fictional representations, themes, images, symbols, and motives related to foods and culinary details can either be universally known ones or alter in line with the differences in national, cultural, social, or ethnic backgrounds. Accordingly, another important point is how foods and food-related tasks are represented while portraying experiences of immigrant women. It can be claimed that immigrant women can find an opportunity to sustain their connections to their homelands by pursuing the details of the recipes of their own cuisine rather than adopting solely the ones belonging to the cuisine of the immigrated country. They may change anything related to their life styles but food-related preferences cannot alter easily especially when these women are determined to be in touch with their own cultural background. The reason is that foods, recipes, ingredients, and cooking techniques offer immigrant women the opportunity for keeping memories related to their cultures alive and for feeling themselves spiritually and emotionally at home, despite being physically far away from their motherlands. For a great number of immigrant women, keeping national and cultural values alive can be very important while living in another country. In this regard, foods have become crucial elements in the hands of immigrant females who can use them as valuable instruments to give meaning to their lives in the immigrated country where they might feel themselves marginalised, oppressed, or limited due to various reasons. These feelings repressing immigrant females can be overcome with the help of the relief caused by foods and food-related experiences. Their talent in cooking foods and enthusiasm in dealing with culinary tasks in kitchens have become sources of power for these women in spite of the fact that they may go through a great range of conflicting experiences altering their lives considerably following their immigration. Additionally, a mystical bond and a sense of belongingness can be formed via the foods consumed or the culinary deeds performed in the immigrated place because foods and food-related deeds can also help immigrant females to fill the sense of void following their immigration. In the process of examining the fictional works of female authors, food preferences of immigrants' children can be seen as another significant point to be considered while analysing the role of traditional foods of the motherland in the lives of immigrant people. In contrast to the insistence of the mothers in maintaining their own culinary tradition, their children's food preferences can vary as per their own experiences. It can be possible that while some of them prefer eating only the foods belonging to the cuisine of the country that they live in and rejecting the foods belonging to the cuisine of their motherland, some others can prefer establishing equilibrium between them. These possibilities can be reflected through depictions about alterations in the preferences of different generations of women depicted by female authors.

In female literary tradition, experiences of female characters have been revealed through a language disclosing the female world in a way that is perceived by women of different cultural backgrounds. The validity of interpretation might depend on this language which is needed to cover various points about the daily lives of females all around the world. Foods which are not conceived only as a matter for meeting the nutritional needs of the living beings any longer have become an outstanding element in the universal language used by female authors. In this regard, Showalter (1979) also points that "the task of feminist critics is to find a new language,

a new way of reading that can integrate our intelligence and our experience, our reason and our suffering, our scepticism and our vision" (p. 39). Thus, foods and food-related matters cross the borders of kitchens, fire the imagination of female writers, and offer deeper critical visions. Due to their multifaced nature, foods enable researchers and critics to carry out academic investigations about the properties of foods including the ones reflected in literary works of female authors, and

the recent scholarship on women and food conclusively demonstrates that studying the relationship between women and food can help us to understand how women reproduce, resist, and rebel against gender constructions as they are practiced and contested in various sites, as well as illuminate the contexts in which these struggles are located (Avakian & Haber, 2005, p. 2).

The close relationship between foods and feelings, beliefs, experiences, thoughts, desires, and also physiology and psychology of female characters deserves to be critically studied by reading the messages hidden between the lines of literary creations of female authors. Accordingly, academic investigations can be carried out about eating habits, food preferences, cooking practices, culinary tasks, kitchens, recipes, and healthy nourishment in order to collect information regarding the influence of these issues on females' lives.

### **Spicy Intersections of Three Generation Indian Women**

*One Hundred Shades of White* (OHSW) is mainly about the experiences of Nalini and Maya, the mother and the daughter, whose story starts in India and ends in England. The novel is composed of five parts in which Nalini and Maya narrate their stories alternately from their own perspective. The alteration between the perspectives of narrators leads the readers to have a comprehensive picture of the events experienced within the frame of the story. Even though there are various intersection points in their narrations, attitudes of Nalini, called Amma by her children, and Maya towards the experiences including food-related details can differ from each other. Here, the gynocritical vision can bridge the analyses regarding the close relationship between food-related issues and the lives of female characters. Thus, it helps reveal the transformation occurring in the way how women and their lives are depicted in fictional works belonging to women authors who lead to a kind of reformation in reflecting the experiences of female characters. In this study, this reformation is discussed by paying attention to the place and role of foods in the lives of female characters Nalini and Maya who are guided by Grandmother Ammu, called Ammamma by her grandchildren, in their food-related journey.

From the beginning till the end of *One Hundred Shades of White* (OHSW), food, cooking, and food-related issues are frequently encountered and have a close relationship with the experiences of female characters from grandmother to granddaughter. In the novel, we learn that Ammu is a talented cook who proficiently teaches everything related to the details of cooking and features of ingredients, primarily spices, to Nalini who will start to teach them to Maya and also Ammu, the little daughter of Nalini, through the end of the novel. Considering grandmother Ammu's proficiency in culinary issues, Maya underlines that "Ammamma knew lots about harvest time and food because, as I said already, she was a cook. She and Amma would spend hours in the kitchen ..." (OHSW, 2003, p. 8). Under the guidance of Ammu, Nalini's knowledge about foods and also her skills in cooking Indian food develop gradually.

She assists her mother when they cook elaborate meals for the people who need them as the cooks. Considering the talent of her mother, Maya states that she “could cook exceptionally well” (OHSW, 2003, p. 5) and adds that “due to the fact that she and my Amamma were the village cooks” (OHSW, 2003, p. 5). Both of these women pay special attention to follow the steps of preparing meals belonging to the Indian cuisine while cooking with love and gratitude. It can be deduced that Ammu and Nalini are aware of the fact that they pay particular attention to the phases of cooking Indian food both at home and any other place, and Nalini narrates the outcomes of this attention as

as we hired out for village festivals, births and marriages, things in the village began to change: a new temple, renewed rainfall, and laughter. It was almost as if my mother turned the inability to mend her own life outwards and seeing the pleasure this produced fixed her in some way. She took pride in her work and it showed (OHSW, 2003, p. 56).

In contrast to the traditional considerations, cooking is not a burden for Ammu and Nalini because it offers them opportunities for acknowledging their self-worth and dignity. Namely, cooking-related tasks are not obligatory duties for these women who engage in these activities with their free will. Nalini states that

I did go to school when I could but it wasn't something that interested me. What I loved was the preparation of a wedding or a village festival; the anticipation, the chopping of food, the blending, the frying, the colours, the aromas, the tasting then adding, and then the final results offered alongside decorations (OHSW, 2003, p. 58).

She makes a selection between going to school and engaging in cooking practices actively, and she prefers the second option because she desires to take part in each step of preparing, cooking, and serving food rather than any other task or duty not only in her childhood but also at the other stages of her life. Thus, Nalini becomes a talented cook and helps her mother, Ammu, who plays a very crucial role in Nalini's cooking practices. Nalini masters the basics of traditional Indian cuisine including foods, spices, ingredients, cooking steps, and recipes with the help of her mother. Nalini underlines that “the only thing my mother could do exceptionally well was cook” (OHSW, 2003, p. 54). It is obvious that not only Ammu but also Nalini engages in well cooking and food-related tasks enthusiastically and carries out each step meticulously while cooking. While Ammu and Nalini are performing the food-related task that they are pleased to do, they also earn money and thus contribute to their financial well-being along with their personal and social developmental processes. Ammu and Nalini are employed by other people when they need someone to prepare, cook, and serve the foods of Indian cuisine, especially on special days. They work as the cooks of a rich family until the moment that Nalini falls in love with and gets married to Raul, one of the sons of this family. They marry secretly and start to live in another place in India. Following their marriage, Nalini continues performing food-related tasks in her own kitchen and goes shopping for selecting and purchasing foodstuffs even though there is a cook to do culinary duties for them. Nalini can be active during “lazy afternoons” (OHSW, 2003, p. 7) through dealing with culinary issues.

Nalini and her children, Maya and Satchin, live comfortably in India but their lives change drastically following their immigration to England upon the demand of Raul, the father of the family. Raul is a businessman working in England, and he wants his family to live with him



in this country. For this reason, Nalini leaves everything behind in India and moves to England together with her children. This is a very crucial step in Nalini's life, and she experiences various challenges following this decision. Being far away from her motherland causes great sadness for Nalini who always dreams of her past in her motherland. As an Indian woman immigrating to England, Nalini tries to maintain the food preparation steps that she has learned from her mother to keep their traditional values alive. Maintaining their cooking routines can offer relief for women immigrating to a foreign land, and "by means of menu planning, grocery shopping and cooking, women assert their individual connotations of womanhood and ethnicity" (Vallianatos & Raine, 2008, p. 371). Accordingly, Nalini does not hesitate in cooking night and day for her family even though her husband eats out and her children's food preferences start to change gradually. She narrates that

I cooked huge meals and placed them on the dining-room table. From morning to night, I would concoct dishes, remembering recipes and stories from my mother, cook and forget the place I was in. I would polish the cutlery and decorate the table. Nobody ate what I made. Raul had either eaten at the office or with clients or friends, and the children preferred their new-found meals of burgers and fishfingers. I would secretly garnish these with spices so that they would never forget where they were from (OHSW, 2003, p. 82).

Following their immigration to England, Nalini feels an emotional void, and to be able to fill it, she does what she knows most about, cooking and performing food-related tasks. For her, these tasks can help keep her sanity, and she reveals that

happiness; happiness was a state of mind, happiness was a state of mind; if I said it enough times perhaps it would seep into my consciousness. I had to do something, anything, so I got Raul to have groceries and spices delivered to the house. At least I could cook to keep my sanity (OHSW, 2003, p. 82).

It is clear that Nalini tries to do her best to minimize the feelings of isolation, homesickness, unhappiness, and other negative feelings that she has in the foreign land. Vallianatos and Raine (2008) state that "immigrant women value their habitual cuisines, and through continuation of their culinary practices, evoke and connect with "home" (p. 371). Similarly, furnishing her kitchen with foods and culinary details of the Indian cuisine and creating an atmosphere surrounded by the smells of spices cause a kind of relief for Nalini who longs for everything belonging to her hometown. It should be noted that she primarily misses her mother, Ammu, and the only way to fulfill her longing is to do cooking by remembering her mother's guidance and instructions about the details of Indian cuisine. It is obvious that foods can go beyond the traditional considerations regarding nutrition when the stories of immigrant women are depicted. In their stories, foods can also "serve to connect with oneself, and to recall the foods, tastes and people of "home" (Vallianatos & Raine, 2008, p. 369).

Even though Nalini strives to do her best, her sadness turns to be a kind of grief after her husband's infidelity. Nalini and her children's life alter dramatically when Raul leaves them unexpectedly. In this foreign land, Nalini has to cope with various challenges and protect and look after her children on her own. She cannot explain Maya and Satchin that their father abandons them for the sake of a secret relationship with another woman. Since she does not want her children to be upset due to their father's betrayal, Nalini tells them that Raul dies as

a hero in an accident while saving a child from being killed by a bus. It can be inferred that Raul dies in the eyes of Nalini who thinks that

Who was this man who called himself a husband and a father? ... No matter what reasons he had, he could never come back, and I would do whatever it took to keep him away from my children. Nobody could come back from this with the pitiful excuse of being a father, he didn't deserve them. And so that was the day he died (OHSW, 2003, p. 86).

She endeavours to keep Maya and Satchin safe from the troubles including the ones caused by her own husband. As a responsible mother, Nalini starts a new life together with her children in England. She strives to earn money and meet her children's basic needs including shelter and food. During this period, they go through a great range of difficulties. However, the cooking ability of Nalini helps them recover from crises and challenging circumstances. Following a period of adaptation to changing living conditions, Nalini reminds her potential stemming from her talent in cooking which becomes a source of income in England. D'Sylva and Beagan (2011) express that

food work, otherwise thought of as an oppressive and limiting practice for women, may develop into a source of power and transactional arrangement; food skills may become currency, culinary capital, a resource in the construction and maintenance of gendered ethnic identities (p. 287).

First, she starts preparing and selling bottles of pickles at home and then extends her food-related enterprise and continues selling pickles under the brand name "The Abundance of Spice" (OHSW, 2003, p. 108). As a self-conscious woman, she opens two shops and employs other people in these shops during different time periods of her story. Moreover, she also works as a cook for one of their household clients, Ravi Thakker, who will be Nalini's husband after a while. Whenever she feels confused, she starts cooking because, for her, "in cooking, there are always answers" (OHSW, 2003, p. 119).

The conflict between Nalini, Maya, and Satchin appears due to the fact that their food preferences of them start to change after their immigration to England. The moment during which they are mesmerised from the new tastes is narrated by Maya as

the burgers came and they had flags made from cocktail sticks on top of them and came with something called chips and ketchup. It was an amazing taste and Satchin and I looked at each other chomping into our food and drinking cola (OHSW, 2003, p. 21).

Nalini desires her children to consume the foods belonging to the Indian cuisine while Maya and Satchin insist on consuming foods of the new place that they start to live in. Regarding this case, Maya states that

her food would often go to waste as Satchin and I discovered that we liked burgers and fishfingers with ketchup a whole lot better. We would gang up against her and make her place these items on the grill instead or tell her how to make English things (OHSW, 2003, p. 24).

When the attitude of Maya is specifically analysed with a female perspective, it is seen that she does not have an inclination towards learning the details of Indian food culture from her mother when it is compared with the moments during which Ammu teaches everything about their own cuisine to Nalini. Regarding this issue, Maya narrates:

Killing time, I started cooking ... How Amma would laugh at me if she could see me now, struggling with the ingredients. So many times throughout my childhood she tried to get me cook with her in the warmth of her kitchen, and perhaps in my early teens, I spent a few moments there but that was all, a brief moment (*OHSW*, 2003, p. 187).

Moreover, Maya is not keen on eating the traditional foods of their motherland, but she is eager to experience new tastes via the foods of the immigrated country. She states that

food was the battleground between her and us, used to establish the balance of power, and Satchin and I stood firm. She was a skilful opponent, packing the iddies into our lunch boxes or putting tomato ketchup on the side so we would be enticed (*OHSW*, 2003, p. 238).

In fact, one of the reasons for this conflict between Nalini and Maya can be the communication problem occurring between the mother and daughter following their immigration England and especially after Raul leaves them unexpectedly in this foreign country. This communication problem becomes more obvious during their conversations about the food-related preferences. Maya states that

when she cooked Indian food, I insisted on something else. I wish I had never done these things but I was desperate for her to shout at me, to react, to tell me that she didn't love me, that she couldn't cope with it all and that she was going too, but she never did (*OHSW*, 2003, p. 51).

Their familial problems influence also their decisions about insisting or rejecting particular types of foods. However, this conflict comes to an end as the story develops. Maya realizes Nalini's efforts for protecting them from troubles that they may encounter, including the ones caused by their own father. After learning the truths about her father's infidelity, Maya's attitude towards her mother and also her own cultural background alters totally. The rejection of the cultural values leaves its place to the reintegration of them step by step into Maya's life. It can be underlined that Indian cuisine and especially spices play a very crucial role while the equilibrium between two cultures is established for Maya through the end of the story.

It is seen in *One Hundred Shades of White* (2003) that Ammu, as an ancestral maternal figure, represents the traditional Indian heritage and hands down her knowledge to the posterior generations by means of sharing every detail that she knows with her daughter, Nalini, who will transfer these details to her own children. Thus, their traditions will be alive as long as they are known and applied as per to their original background. One of the most important elements of the Indian culture is its cuisine which is rich in spices as depicted in the novel. Ammu and Nalini spend lots of their time in the domestic or professional kitchens and participate in culinary issues in order to have the best results in cooking Indian food. They devote themselves to carrying out each culinary step appropriately, and thus, they transcend the traditional descriptions related to the relationship among foods, cooking, kitchens, and women. That is to say, this devotion leads them to attain self-worth and dignity together with financial well-being. Considering the interrelated story of Ammu, Nalini, and Maya, it can be stated that even though Maya's food-related journey follows a pathway which is totally different from the ones observed in the journeys of her mother and grandmother, she can reintegrate the Indian cuisine into her life following a visit to her motherland through the end of the novel. She is not as talented as Ammu and Nalini and does not have a particular interest

in learning and applying the recipes of the Indian food culture. Additionally, she even rejects to have a relationship with this food culture and insists on preferring the food culture of the immigrated country. However, her attitude towards Indian cuisine alters when she visits India. Because of the experiences that she has and the feelings resulted from these experiences, her attitude towards her own cultural background starts to change. By means of a letter in which Ammu bequeaths Nalini to teach Maya everything that she once teaches her, Maya does not resist anymore and starts engaging in culinary issues under the guidance of her mother who is guided and trained by her grandmother. Thus, foods and food-related deeds find meaning in Maya's life. The inherited knowledge related to foods and cooking leads to a sense of wholeness for the female characters although they go through different experiences in their lives at the centre of which there are unforgettable memories about foods, culinary issues, ingredients, spices, recipes, food preferences, and eating habits.

To sum up, it is clear in *One Hundred Shades of White* (2003) that Preethi Nair does not describe foods and food-related issues as a requirement solely for meeting the nutritional needs in line with the traditional perspectives, but she assigns different meanings and functions to them while creating the stories of the female characters, through deconstructing the traditional thoughts on food-related tasks performed as a daily requirement to be fulfilled by females in their own kitchens.

### **Conclusion**

Foods have multidimensional properties in fiction and female authors have benefitted from this potential offered by foods while creating fictional works and rendering the experiences of females from a female perspective. In this regard, Preethi Nair can be considered as one of the female authors who establish an interactive relationship between food-related matters and female characters. As it is underlined by Eagleton (2007), "Showalter's project, like that of the other gynocritical writers, was the creation of a female literary tradition which would offer new ways of understanding representations of women" (p. 109). Accordingly, foods and food-related experiences have multiple effects on the lives of females portrayed in fictional creations of female authors with a renewed perspective, and *One Hundred Shades of White* (2003) is one of these novels in which each phase of preparing, cooking, serving, or eating food might be regarded as a clue for gathering information about females' lives by means of the dynamic nature of foods going beyond traditional descriptions with the creative intervention of female authors. Together with being a daily need for survival, foods have crucial roles also in the social, psychological, and financial well-being of Ammu, Nalini, and Maya in Preethi Nair's novel.

*One Hundred Shades of White* (2003) is analysed with a gynocritical focus by paying attention to the relationship between foods and female characters and focusing on foods and culinary issues that go beyond traditional properties and have a close interaction with the experiences of female characters in their daily lives. Namely, foods cannot be considered solely as a matter of nutrition in fictional creations of female authors because the dynamic nature of foods leads to the appearance of a great range of topics and themes related to women in female poetics, and thus, it is not easy to have a final conclusion on the function of foods and culinary issues in literary works in which foods can even serve as fictional characters by means of changing the order of events, having a notable impact on psychology, behaviours, attitudes, beliefs, and

habits of female characters, and bringing out the hidden or even unknown feelings of female characters.

As a consequence of this study, it can be stated that foods, spices, and cooking-related tasks can go beyond traditional nutritional values enabling women to find a way to express themselves and raise their voices. Thus, three-generation female characters in *One Hundred Shades of White* do not feel isolated, marginalized, or limited while performing culinary duties in the kitchen where they find a place of their own to express themselves via foods rather than words. As Andrievskikh (2014) states "... in contemporary women's bestsellers, imagery of cooking allows for expression of female experience in contexts of transformation, creation, and empowerment" (p. 147) because female characters transcend the borders of kitchens through the advantages offered by foods and food-related performances carried out either domestically or professionally in kitchens as it is represented in the story of Maya and Nalini who are guided by Ammu in line with the traditions of Indian food culture that forms a spicy intersection among the three-generation Indian women.

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