Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

In the history of English literary movements, there definitely is an unidentified or rather deliberately ignored wave of feminism, i.e., Shavian wave of feminism. Shaw has been a victim of gender discrimination in the banishment of his contribution to feminism as a movement owing to the feminist bias that “only a woman can be the guardian of women interests” even when the echoes of his ideas can be seen in the contemporary tenets of Feminist Movements. His expulsion from the feminist league was deliberate owing to the desire of Second Wave Feminists to obtain monopoly over the “literature of their own.”

Feminist historians have traced its commencement largely with the realization and recognition of how literature propagates and unconsciously creates the stereotypes for the females to follow. The earliest known crusade for women’s rights was raised by Mary Wollstonecraft’s A Vindication of the Rights of Woman. She wrote it in response to a program in France during the revolution that denied girls schooling after the age of eight. Commenting on the book, Showalter said that Mary “anticipated virtually all the demands of the woman’s movements- education, legal representation, the right to vote, the right to property and admission to professions.” Thus, as in many received accounts of feminist literary history and the corresponding Feminism the burning torch of rights of women is considered to be lighted by Mary Wollstonecraft, passed to Virginia Woolf and taken over by Simone De Beauvoir, for instance, Belsey and Moore list no one else between Wollstonecraft and Woolf, no one at all alongside Woolf, and no one after Woolf until Simone de Beauvoir. But the wide gap between
Mary Wollstonecraft to Woolf and Simone De Beauvoir often suggests that certain links in the chain of feminist movement are definitely missing.

In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Mary Wollstonecraft had suggested the power of textual interpretation of women, blaming Burke’s theory of beauty of ladies who ‘have laboured to be pretty, by counterfeiting weakness’, choosing ‘not to cultivate the moral virtues’ that might chance to excite respect, and interfere with the pleasing sensations they were created to inspire” (Wollstonecraft 47). In her introduction to the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, she asserts as well that women have been corrupted and underdeveloped by their reading, which has ‘enfeebled’ their minds with notions of false finesse – a consequence not confined to those who read inconsequential novels, but also communicated through “books of instruction, written by men of genius” (Wollstonecraft 74).

Wollstonecraft’s analysis of the artificiality of gender constructions merges with, and is mediated through her critique of artificial feeling, as can be seen when she indicates in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* that Burke’s ideas of the afflictions of the French king and queen at the hands of the revolutionary mob are ‘pretty flights’ arising from his ‘pampered sensibility’. She asserts: “you become impassioned, and . . . reflection inflames your imagination, instead of enlightening your understanding” (Wollstonecraft 6-7). For Wollstonecraft, Burke is a stereotypically ‘feminine Eve-figure’. She sums up Burke’s anti-revolutionary rhetoric as a manoeuvre to lure his readers into regarding ‘unnatural customs’ as ‘the sage fruit of experience’ (Wollstonecraft 8), “the language here suggesting that this is in fact a fatal fruit, which leads to expulsion from the site of real naturalness: numberless vices, forced in the hot-bed of wealth, assume a dazzling form to blind the senses and cloud the
understanding’, ‘stifling the natural affections on which human contentment ought to be built’” (Wollstonecraft 24).

Wollstonecraft thus exposes the ‘romantic mood’ in Burke’s eulogistic writing, which she related with ‘the pretended effusions of the heart’ and a ‘sentimental jargon’ devoid of the only kind of sovereignty she thinks legitimate: ‘the regal stamp of reason’ (Wollstonecraft 29-30). She showed that Burke is at once “feminised and feminising: he displays the false sensibility, the ‘dry raptures’ and absence of principle of artificial femininity” (Wollstonecraft 29), but he also uses a “discourse of beauty to attach his readers to the idea of aristocracy and monarchy, in short, to induce them to love the idea of inequality, as women are supposed to do.” Both deceptive sensibility and the significance attached to beauty are, for Wollstonecraft, crooked and inauthentic. To her mind, they imply the supposed ‘dignity’ and ‘infallibility of sensibility’.

She therefore sets out to construct a prototype of “non-gendered identity” – one which will eventually benefit both men as well as women, as she realized both to be degraded by “sexualised and oppositional models of identity.” She represents writing and thinking as activities in which the body and its sex are transcended in order to reach beyond women’s objectification and the idea that female ideals, conservatively defined by sexual submission, acceptance of intellectual inferiority and flimsy receptivity, and which was distinct from male ones, defined in absolutely opposed terms.

Such is the strength with which Wollstonecraft’s rejects traditional femininity that it seems as if she is suggesting that there is nothing to be cherished about being a woman. As Barbara Taylor observes, “the rhetorical weight of Wollstonecraft’s attack falls so heavily on her
own sex as to make a reader begin to wonder whether the aim is less to free women than to abolish them” (Taylor 13). The point of Wollstonecraft’s critique of women is that she is determined to reveal the illusive nature of the definitions of both femininity and masculinity; indeed, she calls the word ‘masculine’ a nuisance (Wollstonecraft 78), since the virtues it may denote are human virtues: reason, ambition, self-reliance, active and effective philanthropy – not qualities which are gendered by nature. Gender, she argues, does not exist in the mind or the soul, only in the body, and, until the practice of denying women intellect and an immortal soul will continue, there will be no sagacity in maintaining that gender difference is genuine. She maintains that it is the ‘desire of being always women’, rather than human beings essentially, that is the ‘very consciousness that degrades the sex’ (Wollstonecraft 181). As Janet Todd makes clear by quoting Denise Riley: “Wollstonecraft is denying that there is any essential difference between the two sexes, and trying to point out that gender, if taken as definitive of personal and social identity, is a prison: ‘Can anyone fully inhabit a gender without a degree of horror? How could someone ‘be a woman’ through and through without suffering claustrophobia?’” (Riley 6; Todd 186).

Mary Wollstonecraft, thus, argued against the infantilising effects that sentimental novels have on women. She wanted women to release themselves from the servitude of beauty into the uplifting realm of reason, and give an active contribution in public life. In Chapter 2 of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, Wollstonecraft disapproves of Milton’s characterisation of the first woman as a being ‘formed for softness and sweet attractive grace’, made ‘to gratify the senses of man when he can no longer soar on the wing of contemplation’ (Wollstonecraft 87). In particular, she discards Milton’s description of Eve as ‘adorn’d’ with ‘perfect beauty’, obeying Adam ‘unargued’ as her ‘Author and Disposer’, and attacks the way in which Eve is used to give
vent to Milton’s misogyny: “God is thy law, thou mine: to know no more / Is Woman’s happiest knowledge and her praise.” (Wollstonecraft 87-88)

Such derisory nurturing of the mind as is legitimate for women, she contends, curbs women’s intellectual and spiritual advancement and to all intents and purposes constitutes a deliberate corruption on the part of men which has been described by Wollstonecraft as “weakness may excite tenderness, and gratify the arrogant pride of man; but the lordly caresses of a protector will not gratify a noble mind that pants for, and deserves to be respected.” (Wollstonecraft 98)

Wollstonecraft makes her point on Milton’s emphasis on Eve’s beauty, absolute obedience and lack of independent knowledge as being in opposition to his own representation of Adam’s original request for a companion who is his equal: “Among unequals what society / Can sort, what harmony or true delight? / [. . .] / of fellowship I speak / Such as I seek, fit to participate / All rational delight . . .”

But what incites her is Milton’s insistence on Eve’s inferiority to Adam- an inadequacy closely branded in her beauty. When, for instance, Eve recalls their first meeting, her alarm at Adam’s appearance, ‘less winning soft, less amiably mild’ than the ‘smooth watery image’ of her own reflection, is quickly subdued and her ‘submissive charms’ are displayed in her ‘meek surrender’ to his claims on her as ‘His flesh, his bone’. Again, Milton presents Eve as the justifier of her own subjection: “I yielded, and from that time see / How beauty is excelled by manly grace / and wisdom, which alone is truly fair.”

Milton so describes this eager surrender of Eve as to hint that it is the indispensable prerequisite for the ‘bliss on bliss’ of the duo, ‘imparadised in one another’s arms’. “He emphasises Eve’s
self surrender, submission and self-objectification, her renunciation of sublime ‘manly grace/And wisdom, which alone is truly fair’, and her recognition that her beauty and ‘sweet attractive grace’ is what dictates her ‘meek surrender’ to Adam.” (Plain & Sellers 52) Although Wollstonecraft does not state the episode in *Paradise Lost* to which she is retorting, when she expresses her want for envy of the ‘paradisiacal happiness’ of Adam and Eve, it is rational to suppose that these are the lines which provoked her intense reaction; associating with Eve’s subjugation, Wollstonecraft declares that she has ‘with conscious dignity, or Satanic pride, turned to hell for sublime objects’ (Wollstonecraft 94).

Wollstonecraft’s assessment of Rousseau is similar; indeed, she reviews his ideal woman, as drawn in the fifth book of *Emile* (1762), in words, which reverberate, those used for Milton’s Eve. The first four books of *Emile* have largely been built upon the education of a boy brought up to be free, a self-sufficient, liberated ‘natural man’ not controlled by the ‘slavish prejudice’ or the ‘control, constraint and compulsion’ that Rousseau finds so offensive in civilised society (Rousseau 7, 10). But in the fifth book realising that his ideal Emile would soon need a spouse, Rousseau delineates the education of a girl, Sophie, who is to have the reverse rearing. Wollstonecraft notes that he urges that this education should be intended to illustrate to Sophie her providence as a secondary being: “a woman should never [. . .] feel herself independent [. . .] she should be governed by fear [. . .] and made a coquettish slave in order to render her a more alluring object of desire, a sweeter companion to man, whenever he chooses to relax himself.”

Just as Milton’s Eve is forced to acknowledge that she is ‘Adam’s object’ rather than a human being leading her own desires and ambitions, Rousseau’s Sophie is taught to be in compliance ‘with unrelenting rigour’. Moreover, Rousseau’s idea that this control and constraint
on women’s autonomy will bring out their ‘natural cunning’- the only kind of power possible for them- by taking advantage of tears and caresses, projecting their compassion, offering or withholding sexual favours. Wollstonecraft calls this is an “illegitimate power” because it engages women in self mortification “to their senses, are women made slaves, because it is by their sensibility that they obtain present power; taught from their infancy that beauty is woman’s sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and, roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison” (Wollstonecraft 90, 116).

Instead of striving for power over their men counterparts by the use of their bodies and “sweet attractive grace”, Wollstonecraft urges that women “must return to nature and equality”, and labour “by reforming themselves to reform the world” (Wollstonecraft 87, 90, 117). “She takes Rousseau’s dictum about female cunningness and uses it to redefine what she means by ‘power’”. “‘Educate women like men,’ says Rousseau, ‘and the more they resemble our sex the less power will they have over us.’ This is the very point I aim at. I do not wish them to have power over men; but over themselves” (Wollstonecraft 138; Plain & Sellers, 53) Wollstonecraft is not against sexual attraction. She wanted that women have “a chance to become intelligent; and let love to man be only a part of that glowing flame of universal love, which, after encircling humanity, mounts in grateful incense to God” (Wollstonecraft 144). And then have open expression of the feelings through understanding thereby instead of becoming a prey to subjection by men – as Eve is made subordinate to Adam, women become their equals.

After Wollstonecraft’s death, scandalous details about her private life surfaced in 1797 and 1798 and the increased intensity of anti-revolutionary propaganda in government publications, such as the Anti-Jacobin Review, made it risky for women writers to name her, even when creating their own canons of “literary femininity and women’s intellectual
subordination.” This did not, however, dissuade them from reproducing and multiplying her ideas. Maria Edgeworth’s *Letters for Literary Ladies*, for instance – is a work where Wollstonecraft’s unspoken influence is quite evident. It first appeared in 1795, but was revised and reissued in 1798, with changes which effectively – as its author noted – “asserted more strongly the female right to literature”, to self-directed thought, and to involvement in the public sphere.

As Barbara Caine has noted, Wollstonecraft’s name has rarely been mentioned by Victorian feminists, although her ideas can be felt echoing in the background of the writings by John Stuart Mill, Harriet Taylor and others (Caine 261–2). Harriet Taylor had noted that “the literary class of women, especially in England, are ostentatious in disclaiming the desire for equality or citizenship, and proclaiming their complete satisfaction with the place that society assigns to them”. They were “anxious to earn pardon and toleration” for the strengths displayed in their published work “by a studied display of submission [. . .] that they may give no occasion for vulgar men to say [. . .] that learning makes women unfeminine, and that literary ladies are likely to be bad wives” (Taylor 34–5). With this anxiety about adverse male opinion, the reluctance to claim Wollstonecraft as an influence or source is understandable for Victorian feminists, as Caine suggests, “connection with Wollstonecraft suggested only moral laxity” (Caine 262). Harriet Martineau, for instance, considered Wollstonecraft, “with all her powers, a poor victim of passion”.

It was George Eliot – one of those who dared to defy this unspoken rule and claimed women’s sexual freedom in her life, if not in her work – who broke the silence about Wollstonecraft’s feminist legacy in her 1855 essay, “Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft”. Eliot notes the ‘vague prejudice’ against Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*
as a ‘reprehensible book’, and points out that in fact it is ‘eminently serious’ and ‘severely moral’. She praises Wollstonecraft for “seeing and painting women as they are”, and echoes her call for intellectual emancipation for both sexes: “we want freedom and culture for woman, because subjection and ignorance have debased her, and with her Man; for –If she be small, slight-natured, miserable, How shall men grow?’ (Eliot 201, 205). Eliot’s essay, ‘Silly Novels by Lady Novelists’ also seem to take inspiration from Wollstonecraft in its scrutiny of the bearing made by these fictions on the status of women. She deplores the effect of ‘silly novels’, not only on their female readers, but also on men who are antagonistic to the idea of liberation women and who would point to these ‘lady novelists’ as substantiation of the folly of educating women. This antagonism is, she maintains, “unconsciously encouraged by many women who have volunteered themselves as representatives of the feminine intellect”, whom she characterises as keeping “a sort of mental pocket-mirror, continually looking in it at their own intellectuality”, as opposed to those women writers of ‘true culture’, who make their knowledge “a point of observation from which to form a right estimate” of themselves (Eliot 316, 317). Eliot wants women to think, rather than only to feel; to see themselves and others visibly, rather than to become hooked on an untrue perception of themselves.

In her 1854 essay, ‘Woman in France: Madame de Sable’, she compares the French literary canon to the British, asserting that French literature is more ‘feminine’, and therefore of better-quality. Women’s literature in English is, she declares, “usually an absurd exaggeration of the masculine style, like the swaggering of a bad actress in male attire”. Such masquerade is designed to prove that there is “no sex in literature”. French women’s literature, on the other hand, recognises that women “have something specific to contribute”, and that the “psychological and physical differences between men and women can be used creatively.”(Plain
& Sellers, 60) This gap, Eliot contends, “instead of being destined to vanish before a complete development of woman’s intellectual and moral nature, will be a permanent source of variety and beauty” in women’s literature. French women writers have, she insists, freely exhibited “the feminine character of their minds”; thinking “little, in many cases not at all, of the public”, they have instead written “what they saw, thought, and felt, in their habitual language, without proposing any model to themselves, without any intention to prove that women could write as well as men, without affecting manly views or suppressing womanly ones”.

The sources of this confident, unimpeded presentation of self are somewhat paradoxically recognized by Eliot: on one hand, she claims that women are naturally “intense and rapid rather than conservative”, and that this type of intellect is prevalent among male as well as female writers in France; but she also credits French women writers’ superior literary reputation to the lower cultural importance of marriage there, a much more political argument which reasserts Wollstonecraft’s perspective. In France, she explains, marriage, as a union “formed in the maturity of thought and feeling, and grounded only on inherent fitness and mutual attraction, tended to bring women into more intelligent sympathy with men, and heighten and complicate their share in the political drama.” (Eliot 53, 54, 56)

Victorian feminists like Emily Davies, Frances Power Cobbe, Josephine Butler, Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon and Millicent Garrett Fawcett had the “Woman Question” debate revived in the campaigns for women’s rights. These included the rights to higher education, property, employment and suffrage. The Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act permitted women limited divorce, and another Act denied men sexual rights on their wives’ bodies without the latter’s consent. The Married Women’s Property Acts gained for women the right to own and control their property and income. University education to women and establishment of the first women
colleges at Oxford: Lady Margaret Hall and Somerville in the next two years were other milestones in Women Movement. In the 1880s and 1890s, the “Woman Question” became a vital issue in British print media.

The material basis for women’s attaining the prominence of writing subjects, A Room of One’s Own, then addressed the position of women as readers, and raises questions that are worthy of note about gender and prejudice in connection with the “gender semantics of the first person.” After looking at the dissimilarity of experiences that men and women of University go through, the narrator of A Room of One’s Own goes on a visit to the British Museum where she researches ‘Women and Poverty’ under an edifice of patriarchal texts, concluding that women “have served all these centuries as looking glasses . . . reflecting the figure of man at twice his natural size” (Woolf 45). Here Woolf touches upon the forced, subordinate involvement of women in the formation of the patriarchal subject.

Later in the book, she offers a more precise model of this when she portrays the teething troubles for a woman reader stumbling upon the first person pronoun in the novels of ‘Mr A’- “a shadow seemed to lie across the page. It was a straight dark bar, a shadow shaped something like the letter ‘I’ . . . Back one was always hailed to the letter ‘I’ . . . In the shadow of the letter ‘I’ all is shapeless as mist. Is that a tree? No it is a woman” (Woolf 130). For a man to write ‘I’ gives the impression of involving the position of a woman in its shadow, as if women are not built-in for writers or users of the first person singular in language. This shadowing or eclipsing of the feminine in the depiction and creation of prejudice not only highlights the estrangement experienced by women readers of male-authored texts, but also suggests the linguistic complications for women writers in articulating feminine subjectivity when the language they
have to write in seems to have already expelled them. When the word ‘I’ is mentioned, the possibility of discussion goes as it is “always and already signifying a masculine self.”

The narrator of *A Room of One’s Own* ascertains that language, and particularly literary language is not incapable of excluding women as its signified connotation and can also use ‘concepts of the feminine itself as signs.’ Bearing in mind, both women in historical memoirs and woman as sign, Woolf’s narrative points out that there is a substantial discrepancy between women in the actual world and ‘woman’ in the symbolic sect “that is, as part of the order of signs in the aesthetic realm”:

> Imaginatively she is of the highest importance practically she is completely insignificant. She pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history. She dominates the lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in fact she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger. Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband. (Woolf 56)

Woolf highlights not only the poor representation of women’s experience in history, but also the more complex question of how women are already bogged down by the conventions of their representation: “How is it possible for women to be represented at all when ‘woman’, in poetry and fiction, is already a sign for something else? In these terms, ‘woman’ is a signifier in patriarchal discourse, functioning as part of the symbolic order, and what is signified by such signs is certainly not the lived, historical and material experience of real women.” (Plain and Sellers 75)
Woolf understands that this “odd monster” derived from history and poetry, this “worm winged like an eagle; the spirit of life and beauty in a kitchen chopping set”, has “no existence in fact” (Woolf 56). She renovates this twofold image to an optimistic motif for feminist writing- “by thinking poetically and prosaically at one and the same moment, thus keeping in touch with fact – that she is Mrs Martin, aged thirty-six, dressed in blue, wearing a black hat and brown shoes; but not losing sight of fiction either – that she is a vessel in which all sorts of spirits and forces are coursing and flashing perpetually” (Woolf 56–7). This model merges “prose and poetry, fact and imagination” and is pivotal to Woolf’s “modernist aesthetic, encapsulated in the term granite and rainbow” (Plain and Sellers 75). It supplies in narrative the “exterior, objective and factual (‘granite’), and the interior, subjective experience and consciousness (‘rainbow’).” The modernist method of ‘Free Indirect Discourse’ practised and polished by Woolf makes this a play between “the objective and subjective, between third person and first person narrative.” A Room of One’s Own is at times perplexing because it puts forward paradoxical sets of arguments, not least Woolf’s much-quoted paragraph on androgyny that influenced “the later deconstructive theories of gender.” There she gives the declaration: “it is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex” (Woolf 136) and an example of androgyny in writing derived from Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s work is what she quotes: “one must be woman-manly or man-womanly. It is fatal for a woman to lay the least stress on any grievance; to plead even with justice any cause; in any way to speak consciously as a woman . . . Some collaboration has to take place in the mind between the woman and the man before the art of creation can be accomplished. Some marriage of opposites has to be accomplished.” (Woolf 136)

Shakespeare, the poet playwright, is the epitome of androgynous writing for Woolf. She records others – all men – who were also able to pull off androgyny (Keats, Sterne, Cowper,
Lamb, and Proust – the only contemporary). But if the ideal is for both women and men to achieve androgyny, elsewhere A Room of One’s Own puts the case for finding a language that is gendered – one appropriate for expressing women when writing about women. One of the most contentious of Woolf’s speculations in A Room of One’s Own concerns the possibility of an innate politics in aesthetic form, exemplified by the suggestion that literary sentences are gendered. A Room of One’s Own winds up in the prediction of a poetess equal to or rival of Shakespeare: ‘Shakespeare’s sister’. But in collectively preparing for her advent, women writers would have to expand aesthetic form in quite a lot of respects. In prophesying that the aspiring novelist Mary Carmichael “will be a poet . . . in another hundred years’ time” (Woolf 123), she might be intending to suggest that prose must be investigated and harnessed in certain ways by women writers before they can be poets. She also finds fault with contemporary male writers, such as Mr A, who is “protesting against the equality of the other sex by asserting his own superiority” (Woolf 132). She understands this as the obvious result of women’s political agitation for equality: “The Suffrage campaign was no doubt to blame” (Woolf 129).

She further brings up apprehensions about ‘politics and aesthetics when she remarks on the hopes of the Italian Fascists for a poet worthy of fascism: “The Fascist poem, one may fear, will be a horrid little abortion such as one sees in a glass jar in the museum of some county town” (Woolf 134). Yet if the uncompromising patriarchy of repression cannot engender poetry, being denied a maternal line, Woolf contends that “women cannot write poetry either until the historical canon of women’s writing has been uncovered and acknowledged.” (Plain and Sellers 76) Nineteenth century women writers were faced with great effort as they lacked a female line of work: “For we think back through our mothers if we are women” (Woolf 99). They therefore lacked literary tools suitable for expressing women’s experience. The dominant sentence at the
start of the nineteenth century was “a man’s sentence . . . It was a sentence that was unsuited for women’s use” (Woolf 99–100). Woolf’s statement that women must write in “gendered sentence structure” that is work out a feminine syntax, and that “the book has somehow to be adapted to the body” (Woolf 101) stands in opposition to the declaration that “it is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex.”

She recognizes the novel as “young enough” to be of use to the woman writer: “No doubt we shall find her knocking that into shape for herself . . . and providing some new vehicle, not necessarily in verse, for the poetry in her. For it is the poetry that is still denied outlet. And I went on to ponder how a woman nowadays would write a poetic tragedy in five acts” (Woolf 116). Now the goal of A Room of One’s Own has shifted from women’s writing of fictional prose to poetry, the genre Woolf finds women least advanced in, while ‘poetic tragedy’ is the form establishing Shakespeare’s brilliance and therefore the same should be aspired by ‘Shakespeare’s sister’. Woolf’s speculations on feminine syntax are the precursor of the more recent écriture féminine French feminists such as Cixous talked about. “Woolf’s interest in the body and bodies, in writing the body, and in the gender and positionality thereof, anticipates feminist investigations of the somatic, and has been understood as materialist, deconstructive and phenomenological.” (Doyle 2001).

“Women – but are you not sick to death of the word?” Woolf confesses with a bitter taste in the closing pages of A Room of One’s Own, “I can assure you I am” (Woolf 145). Because it implied the space provided by patriarchy from which women must speak and which they struggle to redefine and expand. In Woolf’s generation there are many modernist writers who are now acknowledged for their contributions to the ethnic and political discussions on gender. Their playful narrative tactics received different feminist reactions, particularly prompting Elaine
Showalter’s disapproval (Showalter, 1977: 282). Toril Moi’s opposition to Showalter’s analysis forms the basis of her introduction to French feminist theory, *Sexual/Textual Politics* (1985), in which Woolf’s ‘textual playfulness’ looks forward to the deconstructive and post Lacanian theories of Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray. The allusion to the Scottish ballad supplies a subtext in Woolf’s contention concerning the containment of the role of motherhood – “Mary Hamilton sings the ballad from the gallows where she is to be hanged for infanticide. (Marie Carmichael, furthermore, is the nom de plume of contraceptive activist Marie Stopes who published a novel, Love’s Creation, in 1928.)”

Judith Fetterley’s *The Resisting Reader* offers her reading of male-authored, standard works in America as “a self-defence survival manual” (Fetterley viii). The sentiment is intentionally overdone and amusing but does not puts out of sight the gravity of her intent. To Fetterley, “the American canon is largely unreadable for women since so many texts demonstrate man’s power over women, while the narrative strategies of these texts oblige the woman reader to identify as male. The problem of American culture, says Fetterley, is not the emasculation of men but the ‘immasculation of women’” (Fetterley xx; Plain & Sellers 107). The woman reader, then, should become mindful of these narrative approaches, and “make palpable their designs” (Fetterley xii).

Showalter’s essay ‘Towards a Feminist Poetics’ is an entreaty to advance from this position. Without mentioning Fetterley’s study, she gives example of what she terms ‘the feminist critique of a canonical author’ in examining the opening lines of Thomas Hardy’s *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. The hitch in this approach is that it is ‘male-orientated’: 
If we study stereotypes of women, the sexism of male critics, and the limited roles women play in literary history, we are not learning what women have felt and experienced, but only what men have thought women should be’ (Showalter, 27).

The danger with such a work is that it spreads a victimised perception of women and a ‘temporal and intellectual investment’ (Showalter 28) in the works of men. Showalter’s shift of emphasis shows the drifting apart of female readers from male-authored texts, towards their empathy with female-authored texts. Reader, author and character coalesce in what Showalter envisions as a shared “female subculture” (Showalter 28), in which the convergence of focus on women facilitates new methodologies. This outlook liberates women from being tokens or the ridiculed ‘also-rans’ in a male literary tradition. Showalter called this methodology ‘gynocriticism’ and it became the leading feminist literary approach in the Anglophone academy.

Showalter proposed three stages for women’s literature – the feminine, the feminist and the female. The first phase starts with imitation and the internalisation of the well-known tradition of writing, soon moving to disapproval and demands for sovereignty and then to the phase of self-discovery that breaks the chains imposed by compliance to the social norms. “Gilbert and Gubar recast Harold Bloom’s characterisation of literary history as an ‘anxiety of influence’ in which each generation battles with its ‘precursor’, the literary father, in an oedipal contest to the death.”(Plain and Sellers 110). But the woman author is restrained by an “anxiety of authorship”. With hardly any female precursors, they find themselves pitted in an unequal struggle against a firmly rooted male tradition due to which the woman author begin to doubt her calibre in creativity. And thus, when she comes across her forerunners, she does not want to ‘kill’ them but to cherish them and to learn from them. As Rita Felski shrewdly notes, the
gynocritical writers generate the precursors they require rather than the ones they have to manage with.

Showalter thus, felt crucial that new reading calls for new methodologies and as Fetterley illustrated these readings often go against the tide. Simple questions like where were the women writers, what did they write, how did they come to write unearthed a mass of new material, elaborated our understanding of literary history, “impressed on critics the importance of gender in the production of writing and revitalised interest in more private literary forms such as letters, diaries and journals.” (Plain and Sellers 108)

Gynocriticism however holds a position in the literary canon which is inherently contradictory- it presents itself as a critique of literary history and canonical thinking but intended to be a part of the same; it looked for shared aims among women but had to be cautious of commanding uniformity; it queried conventional aesthetic values and yet used them to ascribe value to women writers; it intended to voice all women yet empowered a particular ethnic and classed group, at a specific historical moment. But, in insisting on ‘women writers’ as a group, however challenging, in thoroughly re-assessing the established view of literary history, in presenting a whole other way – in fact, lots of other ways – to tell the literary history, in asserting on the need of a link between aesthetics and politics, gynocriticism decided on an agenda that is still prolific.

However, in this concern with gynocriticism and establishing women as independent of men in the literary history, Shaw was ignored altogether in the critiques given by the Second Wave Feminists. On being asked about the neglected role of George Bernard Shaw in history of feminism, Greer responds in The Guardian (2011):
Feminists have had about as much time for Shaw as he had for them, which strikes me as fair enough...From where I sit, GBS seems less irreverent than irrelevant.

To this, Philip Graham gave a written and fitting reply in The Guardian:

But given her revelation that she read all his plays at the impressionable age of 12, I'd suggest the opposite: that Shaw's feminist views did not just anticipate hers, but were her inspiration.

The second wave feminists have shrewdly chosen only those male writers whose works had elements that catered to their interests of showing patriarchal subjugation of women through literature. Simone De Beauvoir, for instance, in her famous treatise The Second Sex selects authors Montherlant, D. H. Lawrence, Claudel and Breton through whom she discussed the way contemporary writers portrayed social, sexual and ardent relations and supplied a particularly noteworthy reference point for her interest with the problems of ‘the independent woman’.

All four of these authors were found to be manipulating the patriarchal myth in varying degrees that Beauvoir talks about earlier in her book and her evaluation thus allowed her to articulate her aggravation with contemporary sexual mores. Each of these authors allowed her to focus on a different aspect of myth:

Montherlant, the first author, she discussed, illustrates an age-old tradition of misogyny which equates “woman with weakness and the flesh, and converts her into a monstrous praying mantis” (a myth which reverberates throughout The Second Sex). Beauvoir also uses his instance to associate misogyny to racism and fascism. D. H. Lawrence was the next author discussed in her critique. He is known for equating woman with nature- “she is man’s partner in a cosmic
communion with the universe, but always subsidiary to the supreme power of the phallus.” (Plain and Sellers 91) Catholic writer Claudel whose works were evaluated next by Beauvoir exalts woman as divine (myth of Mary); her very godliness denounces her to the gendered subordination in societal role as ‘man’s vassal and servant.’ Breton, the fourth writer to have undergone the scrutiny of Beauvoir similarly romanticizes woman, equating her with beauty, poetry and truth, but at the same time he reduces her to the child-woman and never visualize her as a subject. Only Stendhal for the most part keeps himself away from conforming to the mythmaking process, though even he, towards the end, believes that the fate of woman is always decided by a man. “Overall, Woman emerges as flesh, immanence, nature, poetry, and man’s means of communication with God or with the surreal, destined to serve man – and if she refuses these roles, she becomes monstrous.”(Plain and Sellers, 92) Beauvoir’s analysis provides sufficient explanation of the working of these myths that she had stated earlier.

Similarly, Millett begins her examination by analysing portrayals of sexual intercourse written by men, particularly Henry Miller in his Sexus (1949) and Norman Mailer in his An American Dream (1965). Millett reveals how the language used in the unfolding of the sexual act articulates the suppression of women as individuals, which consecutively addresses the major issue of a “patriarchal power structure.” The politics of sexual activity—that is with whom and under what conditions it is legitimate for women to engage in sex—is a crucial part of what defines patriarchal authority. Millett elucidates that in such a hegemonic structure, women are never their own representative; they turn into goods hushed by the sexual liberty men possess over them. The implicit compliance of women forces them to come under the influence of and to define their selves in terms of men.
The first area of influence Millett terms “ideological”; human personality is identified as either “masculine” or “feminine.” A masculine personality is characterised by “aggression, intelligence, force, and efficacy” while a feminine personality displays “passivity, ignorance, docility, ‘virtue,’ and ineffectuality.” Millett further defines the ‘male/masculine’ role as typically involving “leadership and ambition” and the ‘female/feminine’ role as “involving domestic servitude and childbearing.” Having constructed her theory through the substantiation of sexual politics in literature, Millett forwards another argument of sexual politics that involves an expansion of the personal, private view of the sexual act to the broader range of political reference.

Like Beauvoir, Millet also deals in separate chapters with D. H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, Norman Mailer, and Jean Genet and reveals the application of the general concepts of sexual politics to the discipline of literary criticism. “In the development of Millett’s analysis, Lawrence is ridiculed for his sentimental presentation of macho virility, Miller is exposed as a misogynist of the first order, Mailer is seen as anxiety-ridden and fearful of losing power to women and homosexuals, and Genet is shown to parody heterosexual love relationships in his depiction of homosexuals”. (Plain and Sellers 106) What is common in all these male writers is their interest to broadcast (consciously or unconsciously) male dominion over the female. It is important to note that Millett believes that all these writers are worthy and talented writers although the effect of their literary productions is detrimental according to her.

In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir sheds light on varied facets of women’s lives through women writers. She includes in her appraisal over sixty different women writers but at the same time, Beauvoir makes it clear that she does not deem the works produced by them a work of
genius (despite all her appreciation of Colette and Woolf). She however acknowledges this as a result of existing situation of women rather than suggestive of their future capability.

Thus, the majority of feminist wrote about what women should be while Shaw showed what women can be. In their concern with enlightening and forcing women in creating masterpieces of feminine experience, the torch bearers of feminism overlooked the confidence that Shaw’s creations gave to the coming generations of women. His female characters who broke the stereotype of Victorian society in voicing and following their dreams and desires without the fear of societal sanction paved way for the coming generation of women to have the confidence of exploring all the untouched horizons which were till now forbidden to them owing to various societal restrictions.

Before Greer, Shaw's contribution to the feminist cause was widely acknowledged. Lady Rhondda, probably the foremost feminist of the interwar years, wrote of Shaw:

Here is a man who can understand that a woman can be attractive as a person without being concerned with sex; and, more than that, one who can be interested in a woman who is not sexually interesting – here in fact is a man whose concern with people of either sex lies in the fact that they are human beings. Oh, marvel!

The oblivion into which Shaw was deliberately forced was no wonder, as just like Shaw, no importance is given in the Feminist movement to the men who raised their voice for women as feeling individuals and not mere a shadow; whose works gave their women characters an outstanding place in the minds of the readers; and which was more than once against the patriarchal norms. In his introduction to *Feminism and Masculinities*, Peter F. Murphy writes that “Male authors of pro-woman and pro-feminist works span at least twenty-five hundred years
and represent a vitally rich tradition.” He also hints that “an intellectual history of male authors who have supported women’s rights and causes is long overdue” (Murphy a: 1). Although in his introduction he does not “provide such a wide-ranging history”, Murphy does present “an abridged overview of this critical tradition” that bring forward a remarkable roster of men’s names, from Aristophanes to Bertrand Russell. Further recording that his “initial research has identified a minimum of 250 male advocates of women’s rights”, Murphy points out that “since 1960, the field of feminist masculinities” – pro-feminist studies of masculinity by men – “has burgeoned” (Murphy a: 18). If the “rich tradition” of pro-feminist male writing really extend over twenty-five hundred years, it might seem rather miserly to direct one’s focus on only the last forty years.

Even though the support from male feminists prior to the twentieth century, were sporadic, isolated and relatively unconnected to broader feminist movements and in the early twentieth century, male involvement in ‘first-wave feminism’ –which “endorsed the franchise for women, equal opportunities in the professions, access to higher education, and the elimination of restrictions in marriage” (Murphy, 2004a: 8) – was not adequate enough, their overall contribution to make women reach the contemporary scene cannot be relegated into the background, especially when the United Nations through its “He for She” campaign is looking forward to the participation of males in the movement towards gender equality.

Even in the late medieval period, men were conscious of texts’ that had potential to cause impairment to the way women were perceived, and thus which should be avoided. This might have been the possible reason why the translator of the late fifteenth-century Spektakle of Luf (Spectacle of Love) suspected the “displeasure” that his text might cause to “all ladies and gentlewomen” due to its portrayal of women (Wogan - Browne et al. 207). Stripping down the
term “Feminist Literary Criticism” to some basic elements that allow for historical change, a concept can be built which may give the liberty to explore its efficacy in the late medieval period in England – “a period without a concept of civil rights as understood today, a period in which the victim’s consent in rape law was ‘irrelevant’, a period in which sexual activity was seen in terms less of reciprocal relations than of acts done by one person to another” (Cannon 76; Karras 2005).

Doing so, it is possible to show that medieval feminist analysis not only engages the category of ‘woman’ but also locates its relation to a range of overlapping concepts including gender, empire and embodiment. In this way, a new and more elaborate genealogy of the modern phenomenon of feminist literary criticism can be envisioned. In re-establishing the feminist literary canon, the infamous medieval literary episode from denouement of the Wife of Bath’s Prologue involving a woman and a book can be an apt chapter to start with. A woman who had been tormented by her husband’s jovial recital from an anthology of stories of horrible wives day and night, finally, in anguish tears pages out of that book as he reads it and hits him in the face with her fist. This long autobiographical introduction to Wife of Bath’s tale on the road to Canterbury written by Geoffrey Chaucer is a fiction, but while Wife of Bath wasn’t real, she is much more than what she appears on the surface in The Canterbury Tales. The impression of ‘medieval feminist literary criticism’ that develops from the gesture of vandalizing a hateful text does not confirm to the literary history of oppression that the feminists always project.

Chaucer, as a man writing on behalf of a woman opposes this tradition of women abuse and also at the same time showed the effect a written literature has on the construction of gender. The anthology destroyed by the wife in the story is in fact a real compilation of anti-feminist literature, and the wife’s gesture is feminist as it combats this well-established treatise of anti-
feminism. Her husband Jankin’s ‘book of wicked wives’ consists of the classics of this age-old and callous tradition, and in its progress from the Bible (the Parables of Solomon, Proverbs 10:1–22:16) Vulgate to antiquity (Ovid’s Art of Love) to the Patristic era (the writings of Tertullian and Saint Jerome) to the later Middle Ages (Trotula, the woman who allegedly authored medical texts; Heloise, ill-fated lover of Abelard), it shows the chronological span of the tradition of woman-loathing. Thus, it might be quite appropriate to say that Wife of Bath is a character created to cater to the interests of feminist literary criticism. In his characterisation of Wife of Bath as well as of other characters, he operates on the gendered structure of literary writings only to present a critique of that structure. Proserpina, in the Merchant’s Tale, thus can be seen as the precursor of Woolf and Showalter and other feminists in detesting the oppressive use of textual authority by men. As David Wallace puts it, ‘men will see, but women will explain what men see’ (Wallace 294), she, through her actions in the tale reverses the traditionally gendered structure of masculine analysis of feminine subject matter.

Chaucer’s creation of Griselda in the Clerk’s Tale brings the gender politics of “vernacular translation” to the front and looks at the interpretation of an allegory from the point of view of a woman. In the androgynous character of the Pardoner, Chaucer threatens the possibility of interpretation itself as it was quite outside the gendered structure of literature of his times. Criseyde, a woman whose trafficking was done between groups of men at war in Troilus and Criseyde, is well aware that ensuing literary criticism will not be kind to her. Chaucer’s representation of her uses the metaphor of war for literary history which just like war is a man-to-man affair, and women readers left without any other narrative or interpretive resources are given to judge and form stereotypes from the men’s point of view. ‘Alas’, wails Criseyde at the end of her sad story:
of me, until the end of the world,

No good word will be written or sung.

For these books will disgrace me.

O, rolled shall I be on many a tongue!

Throughout the world, my bell shall be rung!

And women will hate me most of all. (Plain and Sellers 17)

With this understanding, it also follows that the history of female subjugation and oppression through literature and literature-born stereotypical characters had already been traced down by a male feminist much before Mary Wollstonecraft was born. What the feminists thus did was listing down the same history in the perspective of their contemporaries which Chaucer perhaps had started.

“The feminist Bible”, that is, John Stuart Mill’s ‘Subjection of Women’ (1869) is another example of the involvement of men in the cause of women. Mill’s sympathy towards feminism was one aspect of his conviction of an individual liberty in the essay. He stated that women’s position was not natural but was the result of political oppression by men. Elaborating Mill’s idea, Gail Finny reflects that:

Mill’s ‘Subjection of Women’ (1869) deplores the fact that “women have been socially conditioned to live for others and deny themselves, to shut themselves off from productive occupations, and, worst of all, to assent in their own subjection.”
Why the inclusion of Bernard Shaw is crucial in re-writing the history of Feminism and Feminist Literary Criticism can be well answered from the fact that he had defined man as a: “woman without petticoats”, that is, “man” in terms of a “woman”, thereby freeing women from the “I” shadow and at the same time foregrounding them. Within these six words Shaw has not only defined men in terms of women but also has shown how the constructed gender differentiates the otherwise equal “Man” and “Woman”. Gareth Griffith is of the opinion that:

By the 1890 Shaw’s name was connected intimately with the propaganda on behalf of ‘the new woman.’ As the arch progressive he was eager to argue the case of radical feminism, to preach the rebel’s gospel of liberalism.

Although Virginia Woolf accredits Shakespeare as the first true androgynous writer, he wasn’t so. His outstanding female characters could expand the wings of their skills and intellect only if their sex is disguised as it’s opposite. Whether it is Portia or Rosalind, the acceptance of their brain was only when they were taken for men and the times when their virtues were celebrated were those when they presented themselves as the apostles of set feminine standards. The one woman who defied socially celebrated standards for a woman was Katherine, ‘the shrew’ who came to be accepted only after being tamed down by her husband. Even in his tragedies, self-abhorrence and suicide was the fate that made the reception of Lady Macbeth acceptable on stage while Macbeth died as a tragic hero. In the light of the above illustrations, it is very hard to believe that Shakespeare didn’t have the interests of a particular gender in his mind when he was writing these plays. The case is not the same with Shaw whose female characters were so bold and unconventional that due to them his earlier plays like Mrs. Warren’s Profession was banned even before they could be staged.
There were many women in Shaw’s life whose ultra-modern ideas and actions had an influence on his campaign of Feminism, especially his mother, Lucinda who left her young son and her husband, George Carr Shaw, once she realized that he was alcoholic and inept in supporting the family. She moved to London with Shaw’s sister and George Lee, a “Professor of Music”, and they lived on income from her job as a singing teacher (Holroyd 6-12). Lucinda became Shaw’s ideal of an independent Feminist woman who did not conform to conventional women’s role as a mother and a wife; Shaw said about his mother that “she was simply not a wife or mother at all” (Holroyd 8). Her “liberated sexuality, self-efficiency and career fulfilment” agreed with the Feminist hypothesis of the “New Woman”, a figure of modern woman who refused to submit to the Victorian ideals of Womanliness.

Bernard Shaw, thus, was a feminist long before the term became familiar. In his plays and prefaces, he exposes the iniquities suffered by women; his women characters do not conform to the Victorian notions of femininity. Not only was he the first to present the New Woman on the British stage but also his portrayal of three great historical figures, Cleopatra, Joan of Arc and Catherine II, shatters their romantic image. Cleopatra masters statecraft; Joan defies the well-entrenched feudal system and the Church; Catherine who dominated 18th century Europe, appears human with her frailties. The de-romanticized New Woman appears in Shaw’s non-age novels as early as 1880. Marian Lind in The Irrational Knot anticipates Henrik Ibsen's Nora Helmar by six years. She yearns to be “a wife and not a fragile ornament kept in a glass case.” She even uses the word ‘doll’, while referring to her position in her husband's home. Thus, it is possible that Candida is not inspired by Ibsen’s Doll House but is an extension of one of Shaw’s own creations. Shaw accords woman the nobler role of the life force which, in his view, would
eventually produce a superior race. In this philosophical treatise of his, he advocates the celebration of womanhood by women.

Shaw floors the so-called progressives with his remarkably ingenious arguments. Like a progressive, he too believed in the emancipation of women but his approach is novel and refreshing. The older reformer will opine that women should have equal rights with men but Shaw declares that their rights should be identical with those of men. Shaw also says that no extra courtesy should be shown to women because they are equal to men whereas other feminists want women to be treated more graciously. He does not consider a woman as a prophetess but only as a comrade. This can be best seen in his play *Pygmalion*. In this play, Prof. Henry Higgins present the outlook of Shaw treating Eliza Doolittle as a comrade and thus does not show her any extra courtesy while Colonel Pickering, a thorough gentleman, represent the outlook of contemporary feminists. Feminists want women to be as much interested in physical activities as men and argue that they should become soldiers if necessary. But Shaw states that women have been soldiers even in the past in his *Saint Joan*. He does not plea for the emancipation of one sex at the cost of the other, nor does he want the women to be ill-treated. He has developed this type of equality of the sexes in his early plays.

Drama as a genre was the most popular literary and recreational activity since its introduction. It was introduced to England from Europe by the Romans, and auditoriums were constructed across the country for this purpose. By the medieval period, the mummers' plays had developed, a form of early street theatre associated with the Morris dance, concentrating on themes such as Saint George and the Dragon and Robin Hood. After that the mystery and morality plays occupied the stage to cater to the religious needs of the Church going population. With English Renaissance, drama achieved its crowning glory of production. The two earliest
plays in English, Nicholas Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister* and the anonymous *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, both belong to the 16th century. Soon after, the University Wits Marlowe, Thomas Kyd, John Lyly, and Robert Greene took the charge of experimenting with drama and took it to a stage from where Shakespeare, perhaps, the greatest playwright of all times took over. Shakespeare’s plays created a distinct age in the history of English drama. Many critics list no one in between Shakespeare and Shaw owing to their towering figures in English drama.

It is because of the ‘Interregnum’ in the reign of Oliver Cromwell which when restored produced plays that catered to the tastes of Nobles and Royalty. New genres of the Restoration were heroic drama, pathetic drama, and Restoration comedy. Notable heroic tragedies of this period include John Dryden's *All for Love* (1677) and *Aureng-Zebe* (1675), and Thomas Otway's *Venice Preserved* (1682). However, it was the Restoration comedy which paved the way for the plays that occupied the stage in later centuries. The Restoration plays that have best retained the interest of producers and audiences today are the comedies, such as George Etherege's *The Man of Mode* (1676), William Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1676), John Vanbrugh's *The Relapse* (1696), and William Congreve's *The Way of the World* (1700). This period saw the first professional woman playwright, Aphra Behn, author of many comedies including *The Rover* (1677). Restoration comedy is famous or notorious for its sexual explicitness, a quality encouraged by Charles II (1660–1685) personally and by the rakish aristocratic ethos of his court.

However, from Romantic and Victorian period, a revolutionary metamorphosis took place in the literary field. All the concepts inclusive of conventions, techniques, structure, character, purpose as well as dramatic perceptions were reversed. The change of dramatic rudiments from imaginary romanticism to reality of life transformed the whole scenario with
realistic approach to theatre and drama. The theatre abandoned traditional modes of expression and came haltingly into modernity. The popularity and advancement of theatre in life and literary field are discussed by Craik in *The Revels History of Drama in English* as:

The period between 1880-1900 marks the birth of the theatre of the twentieth century as a social and literary force....radical changes came about.... in the constitution and behaviour of its audiences. The theatre became fashionable, its artists respectable; the breach between stage and literature was healed.

Nineteenth century drama is a “formless mass of mediocrity”. It is dull, repetitive, lacks literary quality and thematic significance. It is also a “vast sea of theatrical trivia and downright badness, a drama that slumbered fitfully for a hundred years while the glorious dawn of Shaw and Oscar Wilde waited in an East pregnant with momentous art”. This is the general opinion of literary historians and critics who thought nineteenth century dramatic and theatrical potential an arid wasteland of indifference and contempt. Thus, a change revolutionised the London stage which was initiated by Irishmen George Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde and the Norwegian Henrik Ibsen, all of whom influenced domestic English drama and vitalised it again.

Shaw saw that the dramatic form of realistic theatre has a promising potential to communicate with the contemporary audience about Socialist and Feminist ideas because the nineteenth-century British theatre, under the shadow of Shakespeare and Eugene Scribe’s sentimental plays, presented not realistic life of people in the society “but daydream, not thoughts but sentiment, not experience but conventional surrogates”. For Shaw, the theatre was not merely a matter of pleasure but it could represent unpleasant things happening in reality. Shaw affirmed the use of theatre as a venue for debating over social and political ideas in his *The
Author’s Apology to Mrs. Warren’s Profession. He was “convinced that fine art is the subtlest, the most seductive, the most effective instrument of moral propaganda in the world” (Shaw 33).

He determined to dramatize the circumstances from a realistic point of view by creating his own dramatic genre of ‘Drama of Discussion’ as “a new technical factor in the art of stage-play making” in the chapter of ‘The Technical Novelty in Ibsen’s Plays’ in The Quintessence of Ibsenism:

Formerly you had in what was called a well made play an exposition in the first act, a situation in the second, and unravelling in the third. Now you have exposition, situation and discussion; and the discussion; and the discussion is the test of the playwright.

Thus, the present research attempts to fill in the gaps by repositioning Shaw in the history of Feminism and Feminist Literary Criticism. The forthcoming chapters are designed to illustrate through the selected texts of Pygmalion, Candida, St. Joan and Mrs. Warren’s Profession how Shaw gave the ideologies that have been adapted by the Second and Third Wave feminists. The second chapter explores the differences that existed between Shavian “New Women” and those who were revolutionising the character and position of contemporary women in other genres and pieces of literature. The third chapter attempts to reveal how the influence of Marx on Shaw contributed in recognizing the requirements of Marxist feminism. The fourth one tries to show Shaw’s recognition of the mutually supporting bond between women and nature that with the third wave feminists formed the eco-feminist tenets. The fifth chapter presents a critique of the philosophy of ‘Life-Force’ and interests of lesbian feminist criticism; and the concluding chapter discusses Shaw’s position as a Feminist. The research methodology used in the present work is Feminist research methodology and discourse analysis has been used as the
method of textual interpretation. As Judith Fetterley points out regarding the aim of Feminist criticism which is “not simply to interpret the world but to change it by changing the consciousness of those who read and their relation to what they read”, the present research attempts to do the same for the plays and perception of George Bernard Shaw’s position in feminist movement.
Works Cited


