CHAPTER-2

A POETICS OF DIFFERENCE: TOWARDS THE DEFINITION OF GYNOCENTRICISM
Feminist critics are engaged in a vigorous border-traffic between the world defined for them and the world defined by them which they hope to bring into being. Their project is to be cartographers of new realms. Like cultural nationalists, they reject the map made for them by denying that their difference is peripheral or marginal. Placing the point of the compass where they are, they redraw the circle. They suggest alternate forms of strengths all along on women’s terms or among women. Their aim here coincides with the efforts of women writers to open new dimensions of space, to allow women freedom of movement without hesitancy, or fear, or obstacle, through geographic or political spaces, but more fundamentally, through cultural, conceptual and imaginary spaces (Godard: 1987, 2-3).

The above quotation highlights one definite aspect of feminist writing- Gynocentricism. It is one of the many shades of feminism which is female oriented. It is an ideological focus on female and matters affecting her life. Theorists like Patricia Meyer Spacks and Simone de Beauvoir opine that the peculiarities and distinctiveness of the gender of the creator is clearly reflected in the works by him/her. This difference in the writing by men and women will be focused and discussed in this chapter.
2.1 History of Women’s Writing

Feminist critical theory and practice is the product of the Feminist Movement that took place during the 1960s and 1970s. It is a critique of the patriarchal mode of thinking and its political approach towards literature and literary criticism. The patriarchal mode of thinking subordinates women to men in familial, religious, political, economic, social, legal and artistic domains. This patriarchal ideology teaches women to internalize these concepts in the process of their socialization.

According to Christine Gomez, feminist literary criticism is-“a mode of literary analysis which tries to reinterpret literature from the woman’s point of view and introduces the notion of sexual difference into the study of literature” (Gomez: 1991, 85). According to Marcia Holly, feminism is “a tentative beginning in the development of a feminist literary aesthetic- one that is at odds with masculinist value standards, measuring literature against an understanding of authentic female life” (Holly:1975,46).

It focuses on women and their perspectives, interests, rights and victimization. It is a serious attempt to formulate the issues and find solutions to gender problems. Cheri Register opines that feminist writing needs to fulfill one or more of the following:

Serve as forum for women; help to achieve cultural androgyny; provide role models; promote sisterhood; and augment consciousness rising (Register: 1989, 15).

Over the centuries and in many different countries, women have spoken out for their community and articulated their complaints, their needs and
their hopes as it was believed that women were inferior, uneducated and insulted, oppressed from birth. Most women inevitably grow up ignorant. Girls learn how to be women when they are hardly more than babies, as they grow older, they exploit this femininity. According to androcentric society, womanly behavior means attention to her husband, keeping her children neat and clean and attending to domestic arrangements.

Feminism has given separate space to the women in the society. It has evolved according to the needs and demands of the international women’s movements. The women’s liberation movement started in the 1960s by women who were politically committed and were active participants in the Civil Rights Movements or in the protest actions against the war in Vietnam, or those who belonged to various groups. Their bitter experiences in these movements led them to form their own groups. In the words of Margaret Walters in *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction*:

> The meetings offered women the opportunity to talk: about loneliness, about equal rights at work, about childcare, about housework, about men, about revolution. …( Walters : 2005 , 108 ).

Let us take the example of Betty Friedan, the author of *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) who founded National Organization of Women (NOW) so that they could voice their grievances and fight for their own rights. She surveyed the condition of women by taking interview of wives and mothers. The survey proved that they were merely playing the role of a devoted wife and loving mother and were supposed to seek fulfillment in it.
She took up the issues concerning woman’s consciousness and asserted that women must take each other’s hand and reject the media image of marriage and learn to compete. Thus feminist attention shifted from the social and institutional to the personal power relationship. This was the period of protest.

According to Friedan, the real enemy was woman’s own consciousness. Feminists are re-thinking on issues like mothering, nurturing, taking on the responsibility for the self and reaching autonomy. She emphasized the significance of the family as the source of women’s power. According to her, women are now standing up as ‘women’ and recognizing their bodies and their identity as the female self. What Friedan visualizes and advocates is a close relationship based on the “new equality” in which the men and the women collaborate on equal basis to create a “happy family”. Friedan insisted that each woman must at least ‘ask’ what she truly wants.

Kate Millett, another important feminist of the 20th century, argued that in the patriarchal society, woman had been accorded a demeaning position. She gave a graphic explanation of the insecurities faced by woman. She in Sexual Politics (1969) argued that women were in such an intolerable, subordinate position in the patriarchal social set up that most of them repressed and denied their existence. She graphically explained the sense of insecurity in women and problem society would face in the form of female feticide through prenatal sex – determination tests.

By the late 1960s, feminism had emerged as an important political force in the western world. The early feminists were mainly concerned
with social and political changes. But the feminists who worked in academic institutions became convinced that literature and literary criticism were powerful cultural weapons in the hands of male hegemony.

A few women began to put their experiences, ideas, feelings and emotions into words. They expressed their repressed desires, anguish and anger through writings. But all these writings were only a part of personal experiences. They were not published literature. Two centuries ago, only men wrote publicly, probably because it was considered that only men had the experiences worth writing down. Women’s duties were only confined to the domestic areas. Only a few women began to put their experiences, ideas and feelings into words. If a woman wrote in the language of men, she made herself an honorary man as in the case of George Eliot, but if she wrote on the foreground of emotions, she would be forgotten. So, they published their works under male pseudonyms to express womanly experiences. The only reason a woman has for writing pseudonymously is to get a fair hearing in the man’s world.

Women writers who wrote under male pseudonyms were Mrs. Pearl Graigie, Katherine Harris Bradley and her niece Edith Emma Cooper, George Eliot, Jane Austen, the Brontes etc. As K. K. Ruthven in *Feminist Literary Studies : An Introduction* (1984) remarks:

> It would be worth extending Ohmann’s approach to take account of the reception of other women who wrote as men, such as Katherine Harris Bradley and her niece Edith Emma Cooper, who wrote several volumes of tragedies and poems under the name of “Michael Field” (Ruthven : 1984, 110).
Elaine Showalter in “Towards a Feminist Poetics” expresses her views by quoting:

The distinguishing sign of this period is the male pseudonym, introduced in England in the 1840s, and a national characteristic of English women writers. In addition to the famous names, we all know – George Eliot, Currer Ellis and Action Bell – dozens of other women chose male pseudonyms as a way of coping with a double literary standard (Showalter: 1979, 34).

Women writers of that generation could not experiment with style and techniques. So the world projected through their writings was just the world wanted by the dominant patriarchal set up.

The problem of inequality between the sexes was highlighted by Mary Wollstonecraft who in *The Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1875) later titled *Thought On the Education of Daughters* appealed for the equality of opportunities for women based upon the equality of values. She was one of the first English women to write eloquently and angrily about the rights of women and the wrongs they often experience. According to her, education can make woman strong and give them the sense of discrimination and judgment

Virginia Woolf, a leading feminist writer, in *A Room Of One’s Own* (1929) gave detailed program for the emancipation of women. Her *A Room Of One’s Own* (1929) is considered to be the Bible of feminism which talks about two important conditions for women. First, the room of one’s own and second an income of one’s own. She favoured economic independence and privacy in the house, so that a woman might be able to
think and write what she desired. She argued that economic independence was the essential precondition of an autonomous women’s art.

She advocated a balance between a ‘male – self realization’ and ‘female – self annihilation’. She rejected the notion of a separate feminist consciousness and hoped to achieve femininity of the unconscious, so that there is no conflict between male and female sexuality. Toril Moi, in *Sexual/Textual Politics* (1985) observed:

Feminism represents one of the most important – social, economic and aesthetic revolutions of modern times (Moi: 1985, 15).

Simone de Beauvoir, another important woman writer gained momentum in the 1960s. Her famous treatise *The Second Sex* (1977) hit hard at the androcentric customs and conventions, art and culture, philosophy and religion which have always given women the secondary or marginalized position. She asks the questions – What is woman? How is she constructed differently from man? And the answer she gives is – she is constructed differently by ‘man’. In this way, she celebrates the difference between man and woman. She says that man considers himself to be the subject, the Absolute, while for him a woman is the other.

Culture distinction is epitomized in de Beauvoir’s views who said “One is not born, but rather becomes a woman. It is civilization as a whole that produces this creature… which is described as feminine” (Beauvoir: 1977, 300). In her views, simply the pubertal transformation is not responsible for a girl to make her a woman but the socializing process of culture which influences her. Women are not inferior by nature, but inferiorised by culture. So woman is a construct in the domain of patriarchal culture.
We find the feminist movement divided into three major stages. The first being the period of imitative. The early feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft and Simone de Beauvoir who were concerned with equality wanted women to be on par with men. The next phase is of rebellion. Kate Millett, Elaine Showalter and Betty Friedan (until she wrote *The Second Sex*) gave a clarion call of revolt. The third stage is that of acceptance. The above three stages can well be explained with the help of three terms — feminine, feminist and female.

Elaine Showalter, an American critic, non fiction writer, essayist and editor, is one of the founders of feminist criticism and developed the concept of Gynocentricism. She is a well known and respected personality in both academic and cultural fields. She, in *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing* (1977) describes the above mentioned three stages in the history of women’s literature. First, according to her comes an androgynist poetics, second a feminist critique and third female aesthetic accompanied by gynocritics follow.

She divided the history of women’s writing into three phases. The first was the imitative phase of writing which has been called the “Feminine Phase” (1840-1880). As she mentions:

In looking at literary subculture we see that they all go through three major phases. First, there is a prolonged phase of imitation of the prevailing mode of dominant tradition, and internalization of its standards of art and its view on social roles (Showalter: 1977, 13).
In the “Feminine Phase”, women writers imitated the male writers in their norms and artistic standards. They portrayed woman happily performing domestic duties, aspiring for marriage, attempting to look beautiful in an effort to charm men. Women writers imitated style and echoed the ideas, values and culture proposed by men. Thus, it is the phase where women, in order to be equal to male, measured their own goals and achievements through male paradigms.

The second is the “Feminist Phase” (1880-1920) in which “there was a phase of protest against the standards and values of the dominant male tradition advocating minority rights and values including demands for autonomy” (Showalter: 1977, 13). The basic characteristic of this age is anger and anguish against men, and also against cultural set up created by the patriarchal society. This phase exposed an outburst of repressed women writers. They rejected the roles given by patriarchy. They wanted to break the established social and cultural values. Women refused to fit into the shape created by men and so they declared freedom not only of mind but also of body from the subjugation of men. They began to criticize men for their suffering and pain. The women writers were out to destroy the patriarchally constructed rules and customs.

They declared that their ‘bodies’ were their ‘estate’ under which they rejected the concepts of romance, love, marriage, family and motherhood. They wanted freedom from their traditional, male formed images. They also began to expose exploitation and oppression by men. Expressing this view, Louise H. Forsyth speaks in “Nicole Brossard and the Emergence of Feminist Literary Theory in Quebec Since 1970”-
Feminist writers have recognized that they relate to others, situate themselves and use language differently. This is true not merely in the texts they write but as a starting point for their presence in the world. This is a radical departure…whenever the feminist critic reads or writes a text, she will necessarily begin with the lucid awareness that she is participating in the literary fact as a woman. As Nicole has suggested, the awareness is enormous, since it will lead to a re – situation of self, a departure from the beaten critical path and a constant search for a new kind of literature ( Forsyth :1987, 215-16 ).

Thus, they questioned the contemporary standard of living imposed by patriarchy and began venturing into areas prohibited for women by men.

The third or the final phase is the phase of “self fulfillment” or “self discovery” in which women started to concentrate upon themselves. Showalter has called it the “Female Phase” (1920 to till today) where women were “in search for their identity” (184). According to Simone de Beauvoir:

They [women] have often aptly described their own inner life, their experience, their own universe, attentive to the hidden substance of things, fascinated by the peculiarities of their own situations; they present their inner experience ( Beauvoir: 1977, XXV ).

In this phase, women have distinct female identity, style and content. According to Showalter:

The third phase, which has not yet ended, they [women] have attempted self – explanation and self – definition. Women writers have created a deliberate female aesthetic ( Showalter :1977, 33 ).
Different feminist writers have different views regarding these three phases. Karen Horney finds the ‘feminine’ type dependent, the ‘feminist’ angry and the ‘female hero’ the one who has released her real self from the clutches of fear and anger. According to Toril Moi, ‘feminism’ is a political position, ‘female’ is a biological term and ‘femininity’ as set of culturally defined characteristics. Julia Kristeva also gave three tiered phenomenon. According to her, firstly, women demand equal access to the symbolic order – equality, secondly, women reject the male symbolic order - femininity extolled and thirdly women reject the dichotomy between masculine and feminine – metaphysical.

Showalter sees the possibility of one more phase. In Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing (1977) she writes:

A fourth phase, in which the distinction between male and female visions in art would disappear, is theoretically possible but cannot come about without social equality (Showalter: 1977, 1).

Showalter discusses the “two distinct modes” of feminist criticism – the first is ‘ideological’ which is called “feminist critique” and the second is theoretical which is called ‘gynocentricism’. The feminist critique, the ideological mode of feminist criticism is concerned with woman as ‘reader’ where woman is represented only as a consumer of the male produced literature. It offers reading of the texts by considering the images and stereotypes of women in literature, “the mission and misconceptions about women in criticism and women – as sign in semiotic systems” (Showalter: 1977, 333).
Feminist criticism has gradually shifted the centre from provisionary reading to a sustained imagination of literature by women. With this, a process started which studied women as writers which is a second type of criticism as Showalter mentioned. No English term exists for such a specialized critical discourse, and so Elaine Showalter in “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness” justifies and argues the need for the term ‘gynocritics’ writing:

Feminist criticism has gradually shifted the centre from provisionary reading to a sustained imagination of literature by women. This 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 the collective female career and the evolution and laws of a female literary tradition. No English term exists for such a specialized critical discourse and so I have invented the term ‘gynocritics’ (Showalter: 1988, 185).

She invented this term to describe the positive side of the feminist critical enterprise, the study of woman as the producer of textual meaning. As Barbara Godard in Gynocritics: Feminist Approaches to Canadian and Quebec Women’s Writing (1987) says:

…I have borrowed the title from Elaine Showalter, who coined the term ‘gynocritics’ to describe the growing interest of critics in analyzing female experience in literature...we stop trying to fit women into the models of the male tradition and concentrate instead of an increasingly visible world of female culture (Godard: 1987, V).
According to Showalter, ‘gynocentricism’ studies history, styles, themes, genres and structures of writing by women. Thus, ‘gynocentricism’ is concerned with writings by women and all aspects of their production and interpretation.

### 2.2 Feminist Criticism and Gynocentricism

After highlighting a brief history of women’s literary subculture, the researcher attempts to show how feminism gathered momentum. Women writers started fighting for their rights and struggling to get place in the literary canon. So, each group of women began to speak against their respective kind of exploitation. As quoted in Britannica – Micropaedia:

> In parts of Africa women’s goal were elemental – such as removal of the bride price. In the Muslim countries, they sought relaxation of the dress code and the code of seclusion. In many countries, they decreed the wife’s need to get her husband’s permission to sign a contract or bring a lawsuit. In Western Europe they complain of news media stereotypes of women. In industrial societies they demand equal work vis – a – vis men ( Vol. I, 1998, 733 ).

They believed that women are equal to men in every respect and there cannot be superiority – inferiority relations between men and women. Feminism is not against men, but it is against those social institutions and norms which treat women inhumanly and as second grade citizens. It is very militant against violence to women. The various types of female groups fight for their right and right place in the society.
One of the groups ‘Liberal Feminism’’s primary aim was to bring equality between men and women in the framework of the existing social system. The liberal tradition should be seen to imply that women have an equal right to as much education as men. It offers the basis on which our ideas of freedom and equality might be developed. So, women can enjoy the individual rights to which all men have long been thought to be entitled.

‘Socialist Feminism’ seeks to analyze the subordination of women. It is an attempt to fight for socialism with that for women’s liberation. They claimed that liberalism had never paid enough attention to economic issues because of its concern with political issues. Women could gain all sorts of legal rights such as the right to vote, the right to equal admission to schools, the right to join certain clubs, the right for abortion.

In ‘Radical Feminism’ sexual oppression is the centre. It aims at changing all oppressive social institutions. They have adopted a militant, anti – men stand. Personal liberty was at the highest peak. For them, patriarchy is a historical fact which is rooted in biology. According to them, the oppression of women is based on the belief of gender differences. Women should first free themselves from this sexist notion which is internalized in them. Women must fight the male dominated institutions and values.

‘Marxists Feminism” analyzes women’s oppression from the economic point of view. They see women’s struggle as part of a large class struggle against an exploitative capitalist system. They felt that the fight for women’s liberation is not a fight of women against men, but of
women against the capitalist system and all capitalist social relation of male dominance. They believe that once the private property is abolished, the oppression and exploitation of women will automatically disappear.

Thus feminism broke into various streams. But it completely ignored the field of study. Each section of feminism was so involved in asserting their demands that they were unaware of what was being written by the writers of their time. They all were busy in exposing the problems, pain and miseries of women. As Nina Auerbach writes:

As a school, our [feminist critics’] belief in ourselves is so potent that we decline communication with the networks of power and respectability. We say we want to change (Auerbach: 1980, 258).

The feminist critique tries to interpret and reinterpret how women have been depicted in literature. It questions the prevalent dominant phallocentric tenets and examines how women are portrayed in literature. In most literary histories, women writers were excluded from the literary canon. They were treated as minors, and bundled with other minorities.

According to Dorothy Smith, the institutions have been controlled by men and consequently women have been “excluded from the product of the forms of thought, images and symbols” (1978, 12) in which their experiences have been ordered. Women writers were excluded from the circle which was created by men.

The women writers had to fight with the barriers of male dominated literature in order to gain the centre and creative maturity. The feminist critics have to face great conflict between the world defined for
them and the world which they desire. As Barbara Godard, in the article “Introduction” expresses:

…these writers are attempting to break the circle of the critical establishment that has pushed them out to the margins. We are re-reading the circle from the circumference where we are circulating other knowledge…Feminism suggests that alternate forms of strength and relationship have existed all along on women’s terms or among women. We seek in women’s culture and autonomous origin of knowledge which may be brought of as alternative and equal to masculine discourse (Godard: 1987, 11).

Feminist critique, thus, questions and raises brows at the numerous prejudices and assumptions about women made by male writers. These activities of feminist critiques have been termed by Showalter as an “obsession with correcting, modifying, revising, humanizing and attacking the male critical theory” (1988, 182).

Here the feminists are the readers of the texts written by men involved in the task of exposing biases and misrepresentations of women. Mary Ellmann in Thinking About Women (1968) says that women’s writing is devalued. As she remarks:

Books by women are treated as though they themselves were women and criticism embarks, as its happiest, upon an intellectual measuring of busts and hips (Ellmann: 1968, 29).

While gynocentricism differs from feminist critique. It agrees with feminism in its intention, its inclination towards women. In feminist critique, the centre is the writing by male writers, while in
gynocentricism, a woman and her texts are in the centre. It concerns with a woman as a creator of texts, as a writer, not as a reader.

The feminist critics present texts by men writers to “consider the linkages and stereotypes of women in literature” (1988, 122). The emphasis of the ideological mode was to re-read and re-interpret the texts written by men from a feminist point of view. It analyzes the portrayal of women by men in their literature.

Feminist critics like Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar insist on “women’s self-representation”. In the late 1970s, three major studies on women writers were published which tried to reconstruct a female literary tradition in British and American literature.

(1) Ellen Moer’s *Literary Women* (1976)
(2) Elaine Showalter’s *A Literature of Their Own* (1977)
(3) Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s *The Mad Woman in the Attic* (1979)

In her essay, Sandra Gilbert “What Do Feminist Critics Want?” very comprehensively puts forward the case of feminist critic regarding the provisional reading of the text by expressing:

Feminist criticism wants to decode and demystify all the disguised questions and answers that have always shadowed the connection between textuality and sexuality, genre and gender, psychological identity and cultural authority (Gilbert: 1979, 19).

Attacking and demolishing phallagocentric or androcentric culture would definitely pull down patriarchy but feminists go further to the problems faced by women. They have to extend their understanding to analyze and
comprehend what women have felt or written about themselves. And that is the basic concept of gynocentricism. The concept of gynocentricism will be discussed in detail in the remaining part of this research.

2.3 Turn in Feminist Criticism

The early feminist critical writings have been political in character while recent feminist criticism has been called ‘gynocritics’. Its ambition has been to reconstruct a female framework for the analysis of women’s literature. Now feminist critics have started to interpret and re-interpret texts written by women and this is a great turn in the field of feminist criticism. In this context, three texts are of much importance:

1. Katharine M. Roger’s *The Troublesome Helpmate* (1966)
2. Mary Ellmann’s *Thinking About Women* (1968)
3. Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics* (1971)

These three texts form a solid basis for the later development in Anglo-American criticism. These texts analyzed how women’s experiences shaped the women’s creative expression.

Katharine M. Roger’s book is a study of sexism in literature. She claimed the patriarchal desire to keep women subject to men in the “most important cause of misogyny”. Mary Ellmann’s book had a direct appeal for feminists as she was interested in the phenomenon of “women as words”. Kate Millett defined sexual politics as the process where the ruling sex – men seek to maintain his power over the subordinate sex – women. She analysed the repressive role of female
They all believed that writing by women were at best when they were written about experiences of women themselves. Patricia Meyer Spacks was the first academic critic to notice this shift from an androcentric to a gynocentric feminist criticism.

In *The Female Imagination* (1975), she pointed out that few feminist theorists had concerned themselves with women’s writing. Expressing this view, she wrote:

> Directly and indirectly, women discuss the function of their creativity – expressed through their domestic and maternal life, through their artistic achievement, something through their evolution and presentation of a self (Spacks: 1975, Prologue).

So, it became the first woman centered book, concerning woman as a writer as well as a reader. Gynocentricism is an area of study which centers on women and concentrate its energy in knowing about women. This shift of the centre of feminist criticism is the second mode of feminist criticism as Showalter describes in “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness”:

> A cultural theory acknowledges that there are important differences between women as writers. Class, race, nationality and history are literary determinants as significant as gender. Nonetheless, women’s culture forms a collective experience within the cultural whole, an experience that binds women writers to each other over time and space (Showalter: 1988, 260).

Showalter englished ‘la gynocritique’ as ‘gynocritics’ in 1970s. She coined the term ‘gynocentricism’ to describe literary criticism based
on a feminine perspective. Probably the best description Showalter gives of gynocritics is in “Towards a Feminist Poetics”:

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 adopt male models and theories. Gynocritics begin at the point, where 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 (Showalter: 1979, 131).

As Elaine Showalter says that the emphasis definitely shifted by the late 1970s from ‘andro texts’ (books written by men) to ‘gyno texts’ (books written by women). There is a conscious and concentrated attempt towards representing biological differences and their implications, revaluing women’s experience, rethinking the canons of texts, discourse and language, re – reading and representations of the conscious and the unconscious and recognizing the socio – cultural, economic and political conditions in the society. As Elaine Showalter has observed ‘gynocritics’ aims to develop new models based on new insights into female experiences made available by research in many disciplines. The aim was not simply to fit women into the male dominated tradition; they also wanted to write the history of a tradition among women themselves.

This does not mean that the goal of gynocritics is to erase the difference between male and female writing, gynocritics is “on a pilgrimage to the promised land in which gender would lose its power, in which all texts would be sexless and equal, like angels” (Showalter:
Rather gynocritics aim to understand the specificity of women’s writing not as a product of sexism but as a fundamental aspect of female reality. She sees that gynecentricism is a way to “learn something solid, enduring and real about the relation of women to literary culture” (Showalter: 1979, 249). About ‘gynecentricism’ K. K. Ruthven in *Feminist Literary Studies: An Introduction* (1984) discusses:

…it is commonly agreed that the negative task of exposing androcentric bases against women in general and women writers in particular ought to be complemented by the more positive task of defining the specificity of women’s writing (Ruthven: 1984, 93).

This ‘positive task’ is the orientation of the gynocritics. They are moving beyond the programme of dismantling of the androcentric culture towards a goal of rebuilding. In contrast to this literature created by male, the programme of gynocritics is to construct a female framework for the analysis of women’s literature, to develop new models and theories. They study the female subculture in the relationships between women, as mothers, daughters, sisters and friends; in sexuality, reproduction and ideas about the body. Michelle Rosaldo writes in *Woman, Culture and Society* (1974):

The very symbolic and social conceptions that appear to set women apart and to circumscribe their activities may be used by women as a basis for female solidarity and worth. When men live apart from women, they, in fact, cannot control them, and unwillingly they may provide them with the symbols and social resources on which to build a society of their own (Rosaldo: 1974, 39).
In dealing with women as writers, Virginia Woolf wrote in her essay “Women and Fiction”:

…as much elasticity as possible is desirable; it is necessary to leave oneself room to deal with other things beside their work, so much has that work been influenced by conditions that have nothing whatever to do with art ( Woolf : 1976, 14).

Gynocritics evaluate this specialized discourse which contents women’s language, women’s ideas, and women’s ways of communication, women’s careers, their history, styles, themes, genres and structure of writing. So gynocritics have written about the characteristics, distinctiveness and uniqueness from the women’s texts. They tried to find out positive aspects from the texts. In short, the great difference between feminist criticism and gynocentricism is -

Firstly, feminist critics worked with a negative point of view. It represents the biases present in men’s writing while gynocritics work with positive viewpoint which highlights women’s works and their characteristics.

Secondly, in feminist criticism, the centre of study is male writers while in gynocentricism, the centre of study is female writers.

Thirdly, the feminist critique is mostly unified because his / her activities are based on one despised centre, while the gynocritics have many ideological rifts.
Fourthly, the world of androcentricism is a limited one while the gynocritic world is increasing as it looks into the specificity of women’s writing which is on the ever expanding universal.

Fifthly, feminist critique studies stereotypes of women, the sexism of male critics and the limited roles women play in literary history. Here we cannot learn properly what women have felt and experienced, but only what men thought woman should be. While gynocentricism gives importance to women’s wishes, desires and their attitudes towards life. It offers an alternative framework for the interpretation of women’s literary history. Here, we can learn properly what women have felt and experienced.

Sixthly, feminist critique examines the anti – female biases of traditional readings and literary canons. It shows how women are as good as men. While gynocentricism examines female’s life from female’s point of view. It expresses a distinctive female consciousness.

Seventhly, feminist critique represents women as reader – with woman as the consumer of male – produced literature while gynocritics represent women as writer – with woman as the producer of textual meaning with the literature by women.

Eighthly, the feminist critique is essentially political and polemical with theoretical affiliations to Marxist sociology and aesthetics while gynocritics is more self – contained and experimental, with connections to other modes of new feminist research.
Carolyn Heilbrun and Catherine Stimpson compare the feminist critique to the Old Testament “looking for the sins and errors of the past”, and gynocritics to the New Testament seeking ‘the grace of imagination’. As Showalter in the beginning of her essay “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness” mentions:

Carolyn Heilbrun and Cathorine Stimpson identified two poles of feminist criticism. The first of those modes, righteous, angry and admonitory, they compared to the Old Testament, ‘looking for the sins and the errors of the past’. The second mode disinterested and seeking the grace of imagination, they compared to the New Testament (Showalter: 1988, 179).

2.4 To Retrieve Old Texts Written by Women

The literary archaeologist hunts the archives and second hand book stores seeking evidence of the lost voices of women writers, and peeling back the layers accreted, attempts to constitute that interpretive community which will give these writers renewed circulation and understanding (Godard: 1987, VI).

An important challenge of gynocentricism is retrieving lost texts written by women and highlighting the distinctiveness and uniqueness of their writings. Many women writers were lost with a passage of time due to ignorance and disregard. The gynocritics aspire to locate such texts and then wish to place them in the respective place in the literary canon. This would fill the gaps in the history of tradition.
Showalter’s study is remarkable. Its real value lies in its rediscovery of lesser known women authors and their works. Because of her efforts, many unknown novelists came into limelight. As she wrote:

Before we can even begin to ask how the literature of women would be different and special, we need to reconstruct its past, to rediscover the scores of women novelists, poets, dramatists whose work has been obscured by time and to establish the continuity of the female tradition from decade to decade, rather than from Great woman to Great woman (Showalter: 1979, 34 - 35).

So, an important task of gynocentric criticism is to provide proper place to the women writers in the literary history as they are neglected and suppressed by the androcentric society for ages. As Margaret Anne Doody suggests:

The period between the death of Richardson and the appearance of the novels of Scott and Austen which has ‘been regarded as a dead period, a dull blank’ is in fact the period in which late eighteenth century women writers were developing ‘the paradigm for women’s fiction of the nineteenth century novel itself (Doody: 1980, 267-268).

Gynocritics show how the female tradition can be a positive source of strength and solidarity. It can generate its own experiences and symbols which are not simply the observations of the male tradition

Here, the focus changed from denouncing men’s works to exploring women’s writing, re-evaluating the canon of received texts to include non-canonical genres where women excelled and attempted to
define a female tradition in writing. In this way, they were in search of ‘white ink’ that could answer the ‘blue ink’ of men.

2.5 Pillars of Gynocentricism:

From the above discussion, one can find out that the gynocentric study is women centered which differs from that of the male counterparts. There are four pillars or models of difference of theories of women’s writing on which the whole theory of gynocentricism is built up. They are biological, linguistic, psychoanalytical and cultural. Each is an effort to define and differentiate the qualities of women writers and their texts. My attempt is to discuss in detail these four models. The subtitles given on each of the models of difference has been borrowed from Showalter’s essay “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness”.

2.5.1 Women’s Writing and Woman’s Body

It is in the differentiation of the sexes that we learn our earliest and deepest lessons about sameness and difference. Sexual differentiation is the basis, not only in our social systems but of our logic as well. If there were three sexes, our computers would not have begun to think in terms of binary opposition (Scholer: 1971, 197).

A gynocritic analyses women’s texts from various angles. When we discuss the woman’s body in women’s writing, gynocritics counter the patriarchal condemnation of biological imagery and metaphors in women’s texts. They say that both men and women are biologically different and therefore their experiences are also different.
Both the men and women’s bodies are having separate characteristics. Physical phenomena like pregnancy, child birth, lactation, menstruation have been happening to female body. Male body, on the other hand, has strong body structure against delicate body of women and features like beard and moustaches and stronger muscles which in fact led the foundation for differentiation, dependence and domination over female by male. Due to this separate socio-cultural roles in society, sex is referred as only biological and physical phenomena. Division of role on the basis of sex and body has given rise to different social roles and status for man and woman. Socio-cultural status of women is considered inferior to men because of physical weakness. Discussing gender, Catherine Stimpson says:

Cultural laws of gender demand that feminine and masculine must play off against each other in the great drama of binary opposition...In patriarchal culture, the struggle must end in the victory of the masculine; complementarily must arrange itself hierarchically: androgyny must be a mythic fiction ( Stimpson : 1986, 1 ).

One of the most urgent concerns of gynocritics has been a woman’s rights over her body. So, they insist that they seriously rethink and redefine biological differentiation and its relation to women’s writing. They argue that women’s writing proceeds from the body, that women’s sexual differentiation is also their source. Emphasizing this view, Adrienne Rich writes:

Female biology...has far more radical implications than we have yet come to appreciate. Patriarchal thought has limited female biology to its narrow specifications. The feminist vision has recoiled from female biology for
these reasons, it will, I believe, come to view our physicality as a resource rather than a destiny. In order to live fully human lives, we require full control of our bodies, the corporeal ground of our intelligence (Rich: 1976, 62).

Men or male, as they are born, confirm superiority over women or female, as they are born, only because of their sex. Some of the male critics believed that women are born with lesser developed cognitive organs and thus they are lower in intelligence. They also believed that women are unable to write. They produce inferior literature because of biological differentiation. Spacks expressed this view in the following words:

So what is a woman to do, setting out to write about women? She can imitate men in her writings, or strive for impersonality beyond sex, but finally she must write as a woman (Spacks: 1975, 35).

Gynocritics reject this biological inferiority. Critics like Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar analyze women’s writing around the metaphors of paternity. They argue that “in patriarchal culture… the text’s author is a father, an aesthetic patriarch, whose pen is an instrument of generative power like penis” (Gilbert and Gubar: 1979, 6).

It is suggested that women are unable to write successfully. Their writing reflects the anxiety or lack of power to create literature. Gynocentric writers reject this belief. They believe that women’s body and their experiences are the source of immense energy and power for women writers. They perpetuate the idea that women’s biological experiences are extremely fulfilling, enriching and satisfying but the
patriarchal notions make such experiences oppressive and burdensome for womankind.

Gynocritics accept the basic biological differences. But they disagree that the biological differences can lead to differences in abilities and aptitudes. They challenge and believe that women are more naturally mothers and home makers. They believe that because women are biologically different from men, they are also psychologically and emotionally different. They argue that the difference is not shameful, but something to celebrate. Women should be proud to be women. They argue that feminism should work to liberate women from the system of male-centered values and beliefs and should empower them to discover their own uniquely female identity. This identity is described as being more co-operative and empathetic, more connected to others and more accepting of multiple viewpoints, unlike male identity, which is monolithic and authoritarian.

Thus, according to gynocritics, women are different from men biologically which is also reflected in their writings – so it is important to study biological imagery in women’s writings. The gynocentric point of view helps the readers to understand how women conceptualize their situation in society and the image of body is expressed through the medium of language and literary structure. As Brossard claims that the inscribing of women’s imaginary and physical experiences in writing, would create a new reality and a new history. Their bodies and experiences must be assumed and lived fully, be written down in order to turn women from object of men’s fictions to subjects in their own circle of reality. Cixous in ‘The Laugh of The Medusa’ writes that more body, hence more writing is quite true. Miller, very appropriately puts their
situation by saying that “emphasis should be laid in the body of her writing and not in the writing of her body” (Miller: 1980, 271).

2.5.2 Women’s Writing and Women’s Language

Women are the blanks and holes in communication, what is unspoken, solidified into gesture, silence or nonsense. On the level of theory then, as well as of social structures, women are excluded from the literary scene. If they are to enter it, they must make their difference a subject, without opting for the principle of identity or oneness (Godard: 1987, 16).

The above statement highlights the problem of language faced by women in the patriarchal society. Another issue of concern of gynocritics is women’s writing and their language. They have focused on the specificity of ‘women’s language’. According to gynocritics, language used by women is different from language used by men “whether sex differences in language use can be theorized in terms of biology, socialization or culture; whether women can create new language of their own; and whether speaking, reading and writing are all gender marked” (Showalter: 1988, 339).

Language for women is constructed by men. During the course of history, men have created norms and rules for women’s language and speech. They have been deprived of “essence of expression” and have been jolted into the abyss of silence. In androcentric society, women do not have access to language to reveal their own view. What should be spoken by women is decided by male constructed culture. When a man writes, he is hailed authoritatively and reverently, almost gloriously as a great writer. But, if the writer happens to be a woman, she is
condescendingly granted the status or label of a ‘woman writer’. She writes as a woman as her experiences of life are different. Even Jane Austen who enjoys canonical status in the great tradition of the English novel, is supposed to have worked only on ‘one – inch piece of ivory’.

If we accept Foucault’s concept that what is true depends on who controls discourse and the answer is man controls the discourse. So naturally man’s domination of discourse has trapped women inside a male truth. From this point of view, it makes sense for women writers to contest men’s control of language rather than merely to treat into a ghetto of feminine discourse. K. K. Ruthven in “Constructing Feminist Theories of Criticism” remarks:

She would be able to speak her own meanings and experiences, provided she was able to communicate in a language free from patriarchal interference. But ‘woman’ is not an essence but a construct in the domain of patriarchal culture, a dispersed subject, historically variable, socially feminized and a site on which masculine meanings get spoken and masculine desires enacted (Ruthven : 1984, 45).

Thus, feminism is also a struggle for the right to speak and write. Nelly Furman puts the problem of language very appropriately. She explains:

It is through the medium of language that we define and categorize areas of difference and similarity, which in turn allow us to comprehend the world around us. Male centered categorizations pre – dominate in American English and subtly shape our understanding and perception of reality; this is why attention is increasingly directed to inherently oppressive aspects for women of a male constructed language system (Furman : 1978, 182).
Moreover, language is connected with knowledge. Knowledge is stamped with father’s signature that cannot be reached by a woman. Virginia Woolf shows this condition by expressing following views:

A woman’s writing is always feminine, it cannot help being feminine, at its best it is the most feminine, the only difficulty lies in defining what we mean by feminine (Woolf: 1977, 164).

Gynocritics like Mary Jacobus propose women to try to “modify language and write within the male discourse… ceaselessly deconstructing language to write what cannot be written” (1979, 12-13). They have focused their inquiry upon the specificity of ‘woman’s language’. They believe that the specific differences between male and female language that has been identified cannot be explained in terms of “two separate sex specific language” because the use of language has been a social and cultural giving to male and female writers. Gynocritics refute the idea of “genderlect”. They wish to work on communicative strategies providing equal access to language for both the genders. Gynocritics are in search of that type of language which is not oppressive or does not leave women speechless but loosens their tongue. Robin Lakoff has suggested that the problem is not that language is insufficient to express women’s consciousness but that women have been denied complete usage of language and therefore they express themselves best through silences, gaps, euphemisms and circumlocution.

But if they remain silent they will be excluded from the history, and if they start speaking and writing like men, they will enter the history. By remaining silent, they become what Ann Rosalind Jones calls “the invisible and unheard sex” (1985, 200) in her essay “Inscribing
Femininity: French Theories of the Feminine”. Emphasizing this view, Elizabeth Janeway mentions:

The marginality and powerlessness of women is reflected in the ways women are expected to speak (Janeway: 1971, 10-11).

Writers like Adrienne Rich call the present language an “oppressor’s language” while others attack it as “sexist” and “abstract”.

Thus, study of language in which women try to express their feelings, emotions, desires and experiences is a very important aspect of gynocentric theory. American, French and British feminist critics have drawn attention to the philosophical, linguistic and patriarchal problems of women’s use of language. Women can create new language of their own. Lakoff in “Language and Woman’s Place” writes that in the matter of lexical choice, only women ever use words like “sweet” and ‘divine’ to convey non ironical approbation. Cixous also believes:

Women must write herself and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies (Cixous: 1979,334).

Cixous wants women to write from the experiences of women. She acknowledges and accepts the differences between women and men and she argues that it is because of this difference that women need to learn to write in a different way. Critics like Shoshana Felman believe that the basic challenge that women are facing today is to-

Reinvent language… to speak not only against but outside of the secular phallagocentric structure to establish a discourse the status of which would no
longer be defined by the phallacy of masculine meaning (Felman: 1975, 10).

A woman tries to open an alternative literary and cultural space where women can find their own values, will never have to feel fear or shame for their emotions, and where they will not have to apologize to seek permission to use language their own way. As Brossard, on one occasion announced repeatedly: “This writing does not pardon” (Brossard: 1975, 3,4,6,8,10). Even Suzanne Juhasz argues –

… that women use words in ways that men don’t, or can’t but that many of their ways are different, and that their ways are for the purpose of expressing in art their real selves, not the selves that have been created for them (Juhasz: 1976, 202).

### 2.5.3 Women’s Writing and Woman’s Psyche

The third issue that gynocritics are concerned is women’s writing and her psyche. The aspect of female psyche includes biological and linguistic models of gender difference, as the body shapes the psyche. Feminist critics correlate creativity to the author’s psyche and so there is a relation between gender and the creative process.

The conventional psychoanalytical approach was dominated by both Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. Penis envy, the castration complex and the oedipal phase have become the Freudian and Lacanian co-ordinates defining women’s relationship to language, fantasy and culture.

Freud based his theory of sexuality on the possession of the phallus/penis. A male is a male because he possesses the phallus; a
woman is simply not a man. Therefore, a woman is a lack, a negative entity. This lack of the female self can also be reflected in art and literature; where women frequently appear as objects of men’s desires. Penis envy in women leads them to the sense of anxiety and lacking. Freud’s psychoanalysis has been an important milestone towards further discussion on the nature and understanding of masculine and feminine identities and in the development of feminist philosophy. Many feminists disagree with Freud’s biological determinism in the analysis of femininity. Freud considers woman as inferior, weak and passive. He discusses women as sex objects to men. He further suggests that men split women symbolically and erotically into mothers and sisters, on the one hand and prostitutes on the other. Gynocritics have denounced Freud’s concept of penis envy, passivity, masochism, lesser rationality and weaker super ego in women as mere patriarchal viewpoints.

Nancy J. Chodorow in *Feminism : A Psychoanalytic Theory* (1989) discussed how Freudian theory could be used to understand the nature of masculine and feminine identities and the cause of male domination over female. She regarded masculine identity as man’s mothering. Freudian psychology regards women as castrated men suffering from penis-envy. He argues for the superiority of the penis. Penis envy is universal in women and is responsible for their castration complex. So women write with the sense of lack. Freud further argues that the unsatisfied dreams and desires of women are chiefly erotic and these are the desires that shape the plots of women’s fiction. A gynocentric reading reveals these repressed desires and fantasies in women’s writing.
Jacques Lacan modified and rewrote Freud’s theory with his linguistic, structuralism and semiotic approach. He expostulated that the penis (the signifier) is the symbol of sexual power or phallus (the signified) of the father and of all men. He regarded the “phallus” as the key source of power in language and being, which treat men as the norm and women as “the other”

In the patriarchal system, the law of the father is at the supreme status which represses femininity. Lacan mentions that the feminine enjoyment does exist but is not articulated freely within the patriarchal system of language discourse. Thus, according to Lacan, women are the victims of the identity crisis.

In Lacanian psychology, the second stage of the development of a child is “mirror stage”. In this stage, the child sees its reflection in the mirror either it sees it literally or in a metaphorical sense, but the fact is that the child is still living in the pre – lapsarian or pre – linguistic world. When a child enters the symbolic stage ‘of language’, he starts getting his own identity. But in the history of mankind, women have hardly entered that ‘symbolic stage’. They have always remained in ‘imagery stage’ or ‘pre – lapsarian stage’ or ‘pre – linguistic stage’ of ignorance. Here, the father stands for the symbolic order and so a female child is not able to identify with him completely due to the absence of the biological organ. Lacan further explains that a girl’s language and its laws are always negative, so it is characterized with lack.

According to him, the distinction between the imaginary and symbolic is the difference between the maternal and the paternal. Kristeva claims that the Lacanian model has a masculine bias to it. Lacan
argues that the acquisition of language and the entry into its symbolic order occurs at the Oedipal phase in which the child accepts his/her gender identity. This stage requires an acceptance of the phallus, but women lacks phallus. As Gora Kalpan remarks:

The phallus as signifier has a central, crucial position in language, for if language embodies the patriarchal law of the culture, its basic meanings refer to the recurring process by which sexual difference and subjective relation to a third term, for it is characterized by an identification with lack (Kalpan: 1977, 3).

Both Freud and Lacan believe that men and women are essentially different from biology to creativity. As regards to creativity, gynocritics link female and male creativity to female and male orgasm. They argue that phallocentricism validates male creativity and sees it as superior to female creativity. Gynocritics accepts the psychoanalytic differences in women and men but demands that female creativity be validated.

According to psychoanalysts, absence, lack, inchoateness, insatiability, nothingness etc. are monstrous images of feminine and gynocritics have reacted bitterly to the view of women as passive, narcissistic, masochistic and penis envying as nothing in herself but only miserable and measurable in relation to a male norm.

The duty of gynocritics is not to accept women’s writing as inferior to men’s writing. Their writing is of as equal status as the writing by men. They are critique of Freud and Lacan because of their gender bias. A gynocentric reading represents a repressed egoistic and ambitious fantasy in women’s writing, but it is not highlighted by the women writers
because this type of fantasy of power is outside the world ascribed to women by the social boundaries.

Another important issue of gynocentricism is mother – daughter relationship which is an immense source of female creativity. As Godard in “Mapmaking: A Survey of Feminist Criticism” expressed:

Unlike the young male, the female has a more complex development to make, one which involves the recognition of identity as well as of difference, whereas the young male makes only the later distinction in the formation of his ego. In order for women to grow into authentic individuals, they must explore their relationship with their mothers, and by extension, their place in the matrilineal literary tradition (Godard: 1987, 12).

Here, there is a question. Why does the psychoanalytical theory fail to explain the difference in the way women have written in certain groups? To find this, certain critics like Showalter mentions that “we must go beyond the psychoanalyses to a more flexible model of women’s writing” (Showalter: 1988, 197).

The idea of sisterhood is also an important characteristic of gynocentric theory. According to Cheri Register, the aim of a gynocritic is “to provide sisterhood” (6). The idea of sisterhood stands as a symbol of rejection of the powerlessness that women felt because of the patriarchal structure of the society. Here the meaning of sisterhood is that women are different from men in their experiences and they, in group, share a common culture incorporating their attitudes and vision of the
world. Thus, the aim of gynocritics is to redraw the circle around a new centre focused on women’s own experiences.

### 2.5.4 Women’s Writing and Women’s Culture

The feminist project is to end male domination. In order to do this, we will have to destroy the structure of culture as we know it, its art, its churches, its laws, its nuclear families based on father–right and notion–status, all of the images, institutions, customs and habits which define women as worthless and invisible victims (Dwarkin: 1982, 61-62).

The theory of culture incorporates ideas about women’s body, language and psyche but interprets them in relation to the social contexts in which they occur. The above statement highlights that women’s writing is devalued because of the patriarchal set up. The ways in which women conceptualize their bodies and sexual desire are linked with their cultural forces. The female psyche is also well linked to the cultural environment because woman’s psychology is influenced by the kind of the family in which she is born and brought up and language has strong cultural dimensions and determination that help us to understand their linguistic pattern. A cultural theory acknowledges that there are important differences between women as writers: class, race, nationality and history are literary determinants as significant as gender. Women’s culture forms a collective experience. The female culture, Showalter writes, is defended by “distinguishing between roles, tastes, activities, behaviors and functions actually generated out of women’s life” (Showalter:1988, 198).

The gynocritics define women’s activities from a woman centered point of view contrary to the way it was done by the dominant patriarchal
culture. The term ‘women’s culture’ represents assertion of equality, awareness of sisterhood and a community oriented attitude to women. Women’s culture therefore, is not a subculture but a completed perpetual and interfusion between two cultures.

Gynocritics do not believe in the subordination of women in the patriarchal society. The gynocentric theory of culture is further discussed through the diagram of the relationship of the dominant and the muted group created by an oxford anthropologist Edwin Ardener.

X – The Dominant Group (The General Culture)
Y – The Muted Group (The Women’s Culture)

The two circles stand for men’s and women’s culture. Most of the part of women’s culture lies within the general culture but with the distinctiveness and difference represented by the crescent. Both men and women have these crescents standing for the wild zones. Both the crescents show the difference in the cultures of men and women spatially (a place where each culture is forbidden for the other), experimentally (aspects of life style where no one can reach fully) and metaphysically (reflects unconscious mind). Women are aware of the unconscious aspects of men’s culture as through various legends and myths, it is put
forwarded by men, but men cannot reach women’s unconscious as they have been forced to be invented. So, there are aspects of women’s culture completely inaccessible for men and totally incomprehensible too.

No publication is fully independent from the political and economic pressure of the male dominated culture, so there can be no writing or criticism totally outside of the dominant structure. So, women’s writing is a part of the dominant group as well as a part of the wild group. So it is a ‘double voiced discourse’ and every step that feminist criticism takes towards defining women’s writing is a step towards self understanding and self fulfilling. Thus, the important task of gynocentric criticism is to situate women writers with respect to the literary culture.

Showalter does not advocate a separation of the female tradition from the male tradition. She argues that women must work both inside and outside the male tradition simultaneously. According to her, the most constructive approach to future feminist theory and criticism lies in a focus on nurturing a new feminine cultural perspective within a feminist tradition that at the same time exists within the male tradition but on which it is not dependent and to which it is not answerable. Gynocritics evaluate woman an individual and reject the assignment of roles based on gender. They reject negative cultural images of women and affirm their strength, capacities and intelligence.

Gynocentricism has become important to trace out a matrilineal tradition in women’s writing, as Ellen Moer in *Literary Women* (1976), Showalter in *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing* (1977) and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The
*Mad Woman in the Attic* (1979) have demonstrated the historical phenomenon of writers as readers of each other’s texts. These women desire to establish ‘sisterhood’.

Another task of gynocritics is to plot the “precise cultural focus of female literary identity and to describe the forces that intersect an individual women writer’s cultural field” (Showalter: 1981, 200). Gynocritics map out the exact cultural and social determinants which form the heart of a creative woman’s writing. They locate the areas on which the women writers throw light and then explain what cultural issues come in their way of cultural identity which they try to represent in their writing.

Gynocentricism thus includes the psychodynamics of female creativity, linguistics and the problem of female language, the trajectory of the individual or collective female literary career, literary histories and study of particular writers and works. As Showalter clarifies:

> 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 experiences, rather, than adapt male models and theories (Showalter: 1988, 172).

Thus, to sum up the discussion, the researcher would like to assert what gynocritics have always emphasized that creative writing can never be sexless or androgynous in nature. Creative writing is a mirror through which the gender of the writer is clearly reflected in the narrative of the writing. As Elaine Showalter in “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness” says:
…a few years ago feminist critics thought we were on a pilgrimage to the Promised Land in which gender would lose its power, in which all texts would be sexless and equal, like angels…We may never reach the promised land at all for when feminist critics see our task as the study of women’s writing, we realize that the land promised to us is not the serenely undifferentiated universality of texts but the tumultuous and intriguing wilderness of difference itself (Showalter: 1988, 201).

To conclude, Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar, Helena Cixous, Toril Moi, Julia Kristeva and other women writers are deconstructing androcentric male ideology in order to put their gynocentric ideology for better future, fortune and prospect. Through gynocritics, we, the readers, have the opportunity to learn something solid, enduring and real about the relation of women to literary culture. Now this theory of gynocentricism will be applied to Shashi Deshpande’s novels in the next chapters.

**Work Cited**


