Conclusion

The purpose of the study as stated in the introduction was to understand through a close scrutiny of the novels of Hardy, Braddon and Grand the emergence of the feminist from the feminine in the late Victorian fiction. The chosen writers have strikingly different and distinctive traits, but their understanding and depiction of the feminine and the feminist sensibilities are more or less similar which illustrates their common concerns and response to the emerging changes in the fin de siècle era. The combination of variance and similarities in the image of women provide a broad spectrum and makes it possible to use their work to draw certain conclusions, about their realization and triumph. The desire to connect Hardy, Braddon and Grand which was perceived as a new venture indeed served the purpose. It helped to unravel findings that had not been ventured upon previously. The very understanding of the concept of the feminine and the feminist from the Victorian perspective, from the point of view of writers, and modern understanding of these concepts served to give the study validity. It also proved that Victorian novelists have much to say that is sadly ignored by today’s scholars. The study has scrutinized how the chosen writers have responded to unprecedented changes in the Victorian era. The focus has been in particular on exploring if there has been a shift in the understanding of the feminine and how such a shift eventually led to the birth of a new woman, who may be identified as the feminist. The novelists’ portrayal of simmering discontents among Victorian women who perceived the patriarchal dictates as dominant, rigid, arbitrary and irrational signal the birth of feminism. The fundamental definition of the feminine and the feminist as a self-reflexive procedure preoccupied with centuries old problem of illustration has emerged
systematically in the generic analysis of the chosen novels. The study has also discussed
the objective of studying the transition from the feminine to the feminist which serves to
explain the turmoil and confusions in the era. In order to illustrate the chosen novelist’s
relation to feminism the analysis has moved to the margins. The contradictory values
presented in the novels emphasize the ambivalence and ambiguities that surrounded
women. The protagonist’s involvement in writing scheming, oratory, and charitable
activities show their vocation to engage in new and vital practice. The resurrection of the
lesser known novelists served to enhance the purpose and aim of the novelists and also the
purpose of the genres which was largely misunderstood by the Victorian critics as not
worthy of reading. It is now a decisive affirmation that Hardy is at his best in his portrayal
of the revised feminine virtues and feminist assertion in woman. But Braddon and Grand
depict the feminine and feminist sensibilities with an involvement which a man inspite of
his best intentions may fail to do because a man cannot experience woman’s trauma and
assertion the way a woman experiences. The study also illustrates how Grand and Braddon
equal or at times excel Hardy in the depiction of the feminine and the feminist. The
creation of women protagonists who move from victimization to self-assertion provides a
consciousness of the women in the fin de siècle. A careful analysis of the sensational and
new woman genres has shown their courage to challenge patriarchal ideology. These
writers may deal with women centric writing and concentrate on man/woman relationships,
sexual politics, gender identity, femininity and masculinity but the analysis shows that
these writers have internalized the lessons of women’s movements and are sensitive to
social oppression of all kinds. The late Victorian fiction has given expression to a self –
assured critical voice that investigates all aspects of living from an all-encompassing social perspective. We observe how

Reading feminism into the text becomes a challenge for critics, for in a way, it is reading against the grain of emphasis positioned by the authors themselves. (Lal 151)

The birth of theories saw the revival of the underread texts and the analysis undertaken evades an over-enthusiastic application of the term feminism and such an approach has enabled the study to see the balance between the feminine and the feminist which the novelists have skillfully managed. The chosen novels give sufficient stage time to radically authoritative women; their voices are heard for a time but the forces of a dominant order work to restrain, edit, silence, erase those subversive voices. It represents not only an exploration of the turn of the century womanhood but a gusty movement at the crossroads. The novelists like their women are caught between traditions assigned to them by the 19th century and the mores of a new era. The selected decades 1860’s to 1901’s are not too far but fair enough to blend old and new understandings of the feminine and feminist concepts. Besides the choice of the decades has enabled the study to understand the legacy of the past and benefits that women have gained owing to such legacies. The analysis shows how the feminine sensibilities displayed is not overtly conservative but it also enunciates how their feminist struggle ends showing the women as helpless against the overwhelming weight of social hypocrisy. The novelists like postmodern feminists Irigaray, Cixous, and Kristeva appreciate the peripheral and the repressed; they hint that women can get through binary opposition by speaking and writing of suppression that helps women to triumph over phallocentrism and logocentrism. The subject of marriage develops into a source of
anxieties for the women characters, hence show the reason for their desire for relationship outside marriage or choose to remain alone. Such acts signify a change but not complete break from the past. The display of feminine attributes rest in the women characters’ demand for individuality instead of the angelic feminine ideal. The chapter on Victorian feminism was undertaken to reflect the social and political factors that gave rise to feminism. The link between the novelists and Victorian feminists illustrate how the era was surcharged with revolutionary zeal which made the Victorians re-assess the stance and position of women. The study illustrates how the fiction of the late Victorian era is closely related to these movements which mark the emergence of the feminine from the feminist The chapters on feminine and feminist sensibility prove women as occupied with difficulties of fulfillment and self definition in man’s world. They may differ in their pursuits but it would be coarse not to preclude recognition because modern feminists share the basic concerns of Victorian feminism. Havelock Ellis in the 1880’s and John Bayley in the 1970’s have singled out women as weak; while Ellis speaks of the lack of ‘virility’ Bayley speaks of their lack of ‘firmness.’ The chapters show how the feminine virility and firmness in Ethelberta, Aurora, Lady Audley, and Eustacia preserve their attractiveness. They are feminine by default they may be imperfect but not weak, and they may also given the phallic undertones be called male. This proves that very few lived up to the dictates of the cult of womanhood. It would not be an overstatement to state that the desire to give a serious consideration to the lesser known women novelists has been fulfilled but this is not to condone the mainstream novelists or celebrate the lesser known novelists but to show that we ought to think and understand them before we come to any conclusions about them. The chapters analyse how the socio political conditions affected the conduct and attitude of
women. Christine Krueger in *Function of Victorian Culture at the Present Time*, (2002) while observing the cultural functions of the era states that the Victorian era shows slight adherence to the past but also affirms that one cannot disclaim the fact that it was also the harbinger of modernity. The study also confirms the importance of understanding the Victorian texts in the 21st century. This is proved in the analysis that despite the transformations that have occurred in our meaning of the feminine and the feminist; the fact remains that a Hardy or a Braddon or a Grand’s project is vital in its understanding of the extensive relevance of Victorian culture to current practices and values. The sensational and the new woman genres that make the Victorian literary tradition rich was taken up to evince that the Victorian works are not dated, their ideas are selling and it still exists. The novelists’ espouse varied ideas about women’s desire, women’s nature, and all these writers wrote about this explicitly in terms of a new woman who declined traditional ideals and intended a new life. The chapters show how the analysis lends itself to construct a new kind of concerted critical attention to these novelists. It also avoids fixing them in the Victorian context by relating them to the three waves of feminism which show that contemporary understanding and shifts in the perception feminine and feminist fit the late 19th century context. Each of the chapters argue for the significance of the lesser known writers and linking them with Hardy has given sound basis to prove the worthiness and the critical astute of the lesser known writers. The analysis shows how their works grab deeper attention and a widespread recognition in the 21st century. Rosemarie Morgan quotes Hardy (*Candour and Fiction* 1890) who argues that they were only two options that were open to him. “Either he produced in his characters, ‘the spiritual effect of their being in harmony with social forms and ordinances’ or, by leaving them alone to act as they will…” (Qtd.
Morgan 4) The chosen novelists more or less follow such a course. John Barthes essay, *The Literature of Exhaustion* (1984) in *The Friday Book*, cites re-reading as a literary touchstone and the study through objective scrutiny of the chosen novels shows the value of such revisiting. Shared Victorian and modern pre-occupation, aids Victorian past to gain precedence. The chapters on sensational and new woman novels identify the progressive social views of the women writers and this may be termed gynocritical, and Lyn Pykett confirms it by quoting W.T.Stead’s observation that “they are novels by a woman about women from the standpoint of woman”,

Hardy, Braddon and Grand present experiences that serve as a looking glass world, where age old notions about the feminine, masculine, the line of good and evil are suspended to present a world divergent to the patriarchal world. This means that they challenge to render the threat of prowling in the fathers’ course of authority. The feminine practice finds place in these genres because the image of confinement captures the historical female experiences of being subjugated and relegated to the place of the ‘other.’ The enterprise to create an insight into feminine and feminist concerns through a close scrutiny of the chosen novels by relating them to three wave’s feminism served the purpose. It helped to validate the claim that the feminine and feminist ideas developed in the novels relate to second and third wave feminism. It also confirms that gender and sexuality cannot function in seclusion but always work as unified categories of oppression and right. The writers expose the dangers hovering in the patriarchal channel of dominance and supremacy. The passing of femininity with the ‘other’ was a crucial issue which displayed women’s abject condition and the writers in presenting such conditions were bound by a cause to hint at the hidden truth. They espouse reality not as they saw, but as
things existed and showed static beliefs as not stationary but transient, which is seen in the
transition from the feminine to the feminist. The fin de siècle society was obliged to accept
this harsh reality inspite of its opposition. The analysis also shows how this project of
defining the new woman was well conceived by the lesser known writers. This is seen in
their creation of new identities for women and which is evidenced in how Grand like
Cixous, returns to the ‘Good mother’ and sees it as the source of poetic vision of
women’s writing. Beth’s vocation as a writer and an orator presents new structures of
authority and new political initiatives which would apparently change the value judgments.
But one is aware that Grand and Braddon may find it difficult to fulfill Cixous’s belief that
“…a woman’s body …will make the old single grooved mother tongue reverberate with
more than one language.” (qtd. Seldon et.al.146) but it is rather in the way that Virginia
Woolf saw them, women caught between the father and the mother. It is hard for writers’
male / female to erase negative constructions of woman founded on the theory of ‘penis
envy’ that is based on the view that woman is man’s ‘other’, lacking the penis; hence the
act of silencing prevails in the fictional world. Nevertheless, the novelists celebrate
women’s difference, –their fluidity, and multiplicity that apparently rupture western
representations of women. Hardy, Braddon and Grand undertook the mimetic project with
the aid of pen substantiating the dictum that the pen is mightier than the sword. Braddon
and Grand unconsciously perpetuate the patriarchal bourgeois structure which they may
have intended to transform. They redefine the decorum of the proper feminine, and voice
the limitations of the feminine discourse. The chapters show how specific instances in the
novels circulate the discourse of feminism, lesbianism, and also focus on distasteful
outcome of traditional masculinity and femininity such a project re-presents the Victorians
from a vantage point as these texts deal with modern and postmodern milieu. As critics opine (Jola Skulj 2000), cultural identity as a constituent of historical process cannot remain static. The study shows how Cultural and literary influences that are taken into account show a merger it does not result in loss of identity but gives rise to varied elucidation. It has envisioned dormant possibilities to interact and unite women, their novels also show how patriarchy has been successful in dominating woman but underneath its apparent success it is also marked by radical anxiety about its aims, and its achievements. The analysis shows that patriarchal desire to rule is somewhat frustrated by the replacement of feminine with the feminist, this is done not by excluding the feminine traits but developing new feminine signs. The novelists like Irigaray involve positioning female sexuality in a new way. We see a new image, a new self which clearly displays the early stirrings of a transition in literature that takes full force in 20th century. Subtle references of the feminine and feminist sensibility as understood by the other cultures and literatures allowed revitalizing the stand points of the chosen novelists. The novelist’s depiction of the emergent feminist breaks the cannibalistic notion which sees difference as a pre-requisite of equity. The personal narratives suggest that the various faces of feminism lie in different personal stories of women, which are capable of creating local and global change. The focus on the deconstructionist project has shown how the chosen novels move towards a new equity, where men and women are not restricted by masculine and feminine gender roles. This confirms what Judith Butler states in Gender Trouble (1999) that we cannot see women as a unified homogenous group since every woman is unique and individualistic. “The very subject of women is no longer understood in stable or adding terms.” (1) By addressing inequality the study recognizes differences and addresses it as a
part of the process. It also shows how differences that are negotiated are hinted in the text. This links them with Anne Phillips a liberal feminist (Democracy and Difference 1993), who opines that equality is impossible if men and women are seen as fundamentally different. The analysis also shows how the novelists avoid stereotyping threats, for instance; classing the women as wholly docile or as wholly rebellious. Such a scrutiny illustrates how the novels not only present a new and self-assertive feminine images but also less pompous kind of feminist images. Such an image shows interest in women not men, to be pro women without being anti-men, an approach that is akin to post feminist’s radical approach. Female characters in the chosen novels are constantly searching for a man who is worthy. The interest and urge for a worthy man makes us perceive woman as one who is engaged in a conscious raising method that motivates women to change the world and transform the personal to the political. The feminine and feminist concerns enable a more intricate conversations about women’s issues in which the self identified and non-identified feminists are recognized.

Conclusions are also drawn on the premise that women writers used the novel as a channel through which they raise social awareness and promote changes and reforms. Not ignoring significant facts which hint that they were encoded not vocalized from a platform. The women characters physical appearances function as shorthand for post feminism’s commitment to the self and its participation in promotion of beauty and culture. In Lady Audley, and Aurora Floyd, the urban designer wardrobes exhibit expansive tastes that promote consumerism as the means to heal social and sexual disgruntlement. Eustacia’s fitting between Budmouth and Egdon Heath suggests easy transition between modernity of the city life and the retreat to traditional values and femininities of the countryside. Within
the post feminist culture one may see in the description of Lady Audley’s “yellow hair” (57), Eustacia’s “nocturnal eyes” (58) Beth’s “bright eyes” (67) Elfride’s “blue eyes” (9) Aurora’s ‘blue black hair’ (20) an attempt to represent the rejuvenated version of feminism. Through such depictions the novelists actively seek to make their women a spectacle, requesting to be acknowledged, and desirous of being watched. This also means, commoditization of woman’s body; is constructed entirely out of the male gaze such politics of the gaze brings it closer to post feminist culture. The novelists’ attention to physical vigour and robustness of the heroines imply that woman can be defined. The transition between the feminine and the feminist transforms woman as intelligent and political beings, which is similar to the post feminist agenda. The entwined histories and viewpoint becomes essential if one has to perceive the contrapuntal leanings in the works. Edward Said’s, perspective to consider the views of both the colonizer and the colonized demand us to understand Said’s contrapuntal advance which allows us to perceive the culture that the text depicts as liberated not monolithic. Such an understanding enables us to observe that the paradigms of power and authority are not fully articulated, but are accompanied by resistance and subversion. Current events assist to distinguish the antiphonal voices, Hardy, Braddon and Grand are already at the threshold of contrapuntal reading their project to subvert and adhere shows its attempt to topple the hierarchy and avoid the rhetoric of censure. Contrapuntal reading has enabled to give serious consideration to other texts that were castigated by the earlier hermeneutics as trash. The inclusion of Hardy, Braddon and Grand is made to prove the worthiness and the significance of the lesser known. The heroines are placed as sex subjects but the study has shown how their purpose is to please men and make them consider woman as a person with
one chance in life. This has facilitated a vision in which patriarchy, ideology, woman’s resistance are viewed simultaneously, as Daniel o’Neill states,

Girl and women do experience particular social, cultural, economic and political circumstance that give them different abilities and opportunities to access learning and different experiences. (197)

The feminine and feminist analysis show that no one text has the once for all meaning to challenge any claim possessing the last word. The chapters show how the authors have moved away from Victorian concerns to current concerns, which evinces that perspective of the novelists’ has become more comprehensive. The reference to Various perspectives offered by Helen Cixous, Julia Kristeva, Showalter and Toril Moi, on feminine and feminist concerns evince how late Victorian novels participate in contemporary debates. The transgressive femininity emphasized illustrates the shifting face of femininity. The study shows the alienation between the inner self and outer selves in various ways, (the disorderly woman, and sexual inversions.) their repertoire of the feminine suggests the anxieties that surround the Victorian era. The analysis has shown that it may be arduous for a woman writer especially in the Victorian generation to verbalise this alienation without recourse to dominant masculine myths, Ruth Robin’s feels,

Women writers in their own way …fully equal men, but they are different from them because of different opportunities for the observation of life, because of different educational experience, because of sexual differences. (73)

Arguments such as these only foster our understanding that novels unfold the movements and modulations of critical thinking from the first emergence of what is now recognized
as literary theory. These novels show novelists adept at capitalizing the challenges intrinsic in the domestic ideal in order to present even more radical claims. They not only encourage hegemonically complicit conduct through language and patriarchal motifs but also create rupture. Woman is termed as the authorial depiction of the hegemonic structure this forces woman to conform and present herself to the prescribed role. The study to illustrate the transition from the feminine to the feminist has moved to the margins, deconstructionist, postmodernist and post colonial theory in order to show that meaning is not static but gets postponed. The subjugated when heard emerges as powerful, which re-characterises the feminine as assertive and challenging, which invests them with the power to demand for equity and rational justice. The political concern of feminist discourse, like post colonial discourse is striving against oppression and injustice they are bounded by a common purpose. The marginalized woman is akin to the colonized subject and the novels purpose has been to show patriarchy like imperialism is phallocentric that believes in oppressing the week. Chapters on feminine and feminist sensibilities show how a predecessor text contains variety of perception that may be relevant. Revisiting has helped to prove that the 19th century interrogates the feminine and feminist issues which not only featured in the past but continues to garner the literary and cultural landscapes of the 21st century. Women in the post feminist era can choose, Public participation is definitely on the rise but there are difficulties. Modern media has shown how the feminine and feminist issues have risen phoenix like (Desperate House Wives American T.V. serial) this is proof enough to show how the ghosts of the by gone days are still with us. We cannot say that they are being brought closer but at the same time they are not fading into the past.
The analysis also evinces how each of the writers studied has attempted an understanding of the transition through the depiction of the feminine and the feminist. It also shows how the varied images of women are nearer to what Judith Butler observes as fluid. The way we behave in different situations determines the masculine or feminine traits, in so doing they move towards new equality where men and women are not restricted by gender roles. The scrutiny illustrates how the reasoning of the state or the existing social order be it patriarchy, law, and religion, is to curb or restrict the rebellious because to them a revolutionary writer or a thinker is a whistle blower of society. The writer with the revolutionary project need not propose a solution but it is enough if a writer offers a dystopia without offering a utopia to replace it. In all this viciousness where do Hardy, Braddon and Grand stand? To elicit an answer may not be an essential requirement as Foucault in *Polemics, Politics and Problemtizations* (1984) states that an intellectual is an individual who is concerned with only an element of the radical project. The study confirms that the chosen novelists’ project is to attempt a critique of the system yet they are in the loop; so, they are in some ways cold and allow their women to be subjugated but they recognize oppression as a problem. The emergence of the feminist from the feminine is met with affronts for it signaled the dethroning of the angel in the house which makes us understand that the throne is not all secure but a mere make belief. The novelists like signposts have made it appear brutal but they are unable to suggest any palliative, as Foucault states, “It is more on the order of problemtization …which is to say the development of a domain of acts, practices and thoughts that seem to me to pose problems.” (384) Their yearning to criticize is sufficiently implicated in the ‘domain of acts’ this puts them in a precarious situation to find an Archimedean point to critique. They cannot afford an arena
for critique outside ideology because their critique operates within the patriarchal ideology this lacuna entrenches them in the ring of experiences, and has little to offer. Hardy, Braddon and Grand have shown that simulacrum is layered and that our relation to simulacra is not a simple one. Patriarchal description of woman, scientific perception of woman and the religious imaging of woman go to show woman as weak and passive. These images are considered more real than the immediate personal perception of the characters. Woman’s defiance to such depiction no doubt illustrates her feminist assertion but the resulting effect of such assertion is her fall. Feminist sensibility is explored in connection to the value of the female voice, marriage and identity and these elements act differently in each novel articulating the responses of women, and the reaction of the writers at the fin de siècle era. Close attention to specific novels by the lesser known novelists aim to correct the errors in Victorian appraisal of Braddon and Grand as sheer popular novelists. The attempt might not be sufficient to understand and assess the lasting worth of these writers. This illustrates that their endeavors, their radical and audacious stance to experiment, certainly deserve recognition and can be taken as a folder for valuable output by lesser known novels.

An interesting and significant follow up to this would be the link between novelists lived experience and femininities that have to be explored extensively. Far more needs to be known about how women have lived their lives, both now and in the past. The potential of ethnography to study how femininity is brought off in a variety of cultural settings needs to be explored. Throughout the study novels have been drawn upon as a valuable resource providing insights into feminine and feminist concerns. These older texts address these concerns indirectly even obliquely and can be read profitably against the grain. Masculinity
and femininity have been touched upon to show how these concepts account for the transition between the feminine and the feminist. Reading texts in a deconstructive way is not to state the absence of male experience but to hint at lack of familiarity by readers about reading texts in a particular way. The link between the new woman with the new man needs to be scrutinized, the new man is a pro-feminist and not a hedonist grooming himself in the narcissist tradition. These traits acknowledge that the male role has changed; to explore these possibilities would be exciting. Imaging femininity and masculinity and the commercialization of masculinity or femininity through a wide range of advertising and media techniques is not explored broadly. The need now is to research how the subjective experience of femininity is affected by age, class, cultural location, ethnicity, sexuality, and geography. Gynocentric analysis has helped to see if Braddon and Grand fulfill Cixous’s ‘écriture féminine’; to assess how the inscription of the female body and female difference is brought out in the novels. The insistence that woman should write like a woman also prompts one to ask, why does a women’s writing have to be essentially women’s writing? What is essentially women’s writing? Why can’t a work of art be written with a male and a female mind? Can one shed one’s gender while writing? Slightest effort to provide an answer to these questions has not been attempted in this study as it would have made the research cumbersome. But it is an imperative necessity as it would allow us to see the intricacies of gender identities, and also to explore the complexities of writing that is neutral. Alice Jardine coined the term ‘Gynesis’ which describes the mobilization of a poststructuralist analysis of a woman because such a writing is not particularly gendered but interrupts fixed meanings and supports free play beyond authorial control. To provide a solution to these questions one has to devise one’s own research project. Re-reading of the
contemporary texts can also be embarked upon, a quick reading of the past and the present throws up a treasure trove of affluence.
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