Introduction

The interesting fact about the Victorian era is that the novels were broadly written to focus the order and rule of the patriarchal society. The late Victorian era witnessed throes of unparalleled changes, due to industrialization, scientific inventions, consumerism, suffragette movement, evangelicalism, Unitarianism which influenced writers. The patriarchal society of Victorian England gave vent to unbalanced standards of morality, duty and gender that believed in subduing woman and upholding the supremacy of men. Fiction showed significant changes from the novels of the early Victorian era. Bakhtin’s statement, “Novelistic discourse is always criticizing itself,” (49) is a good introduction to revisit the Victorian novel. The Victorian novels have facilitated themselves into the modern and postmodern milieu that has made revisiting constructive. Two post modernist theoretical schools of the 20th century; feminism and deconstruction have depended extensively on Victorian novels to evaluate or define themselves. The late Victorian fiction shows some of the postmodernist tactics such as centering the margins, the refusal to accept the plots and characters of their early Victorian texts, the revaluation of the feminine and the masculine, interest in the body pathologies, feminism and popular culture. The chosen novelist’s assignment comes closer to Frances Thomas’s observation, “‘Woman’, her power, her ‘mission,’ her ‘sphere’ and her ‘influence’ became a site of resistance, where competing ideologies strove for dominance.” (238) The Victorian novelists deliberations on identity crisis, marriage, women question, gender construction, becomes doubly interesting because the novel form may be used to understand and re-assess the literary vehicle of Victorian expression. The novels yield meanings appropriate to theoretical
climes a century ahead; one could still confirm that Victorian literature is not dated. Shades of Victorian and modern preoccupation aids the past to gain precedence over others and one may even perceive the two centuries as one continuum. Gayatri Spivak (2000) says fixation with the boundaries throws light on the marginalized to give voice. Contrapuntal reading has enabled to give serious consideration to other texts that were castigated by the earlier hermeneutics as trash. The transition era saw a change in the very image of women, the angel in the house was slowly transforming into an assertive woman, a woman finding her voice which stimulated confusions in the very understanding of the new woman. The literature that stimulated such confusions signals their readability value. Feminism has shown interest in re-fashioning the past literature which is a positive sign to revisit.

The aim of the present study is to examine how the late Victorian era and the chosen novelists responded to the emergence of the feminist from the feminine. The late Victorian era was a transition from the needle work and knitting to seeking employment in the public sphere. The transition resulted in changes in the cultural attitudes and popular notions about women and men. The novels are in themselves formidable studies of the period. They are instances of a self-conscious narrative that problematises the very understanding of women. Fiction depicted woman in varied ways while some confirmed to the proper feminine image others presented an image contrary to the feminine image. The Controversial depiction of women triggered the complacency of the conservatives. Heated debates, revolutions, movements, affected the content and the subject matter of the novel. George Levine affirms, “Perhaps the most important critical development out of Victorianism was feminism.” (140)
Any serious research requires a willful probing beneath the hype of ideologies, criticism, and tradition with its many concealed agendas to scrutinize what if anything sets the literary output of the late Victorian era apart from the early Victorian era. What needs to be examined is the very understanding of the woman that underwent a change, to recognize whether such a change laid the foundation for future feminism. Such scrutiny raises plethora of questions. What factors led to the emergence of the feminist from the feminine? Do writers go beyond the feminist search for identity and self assertion against patriarchal forces like the contemporary writers? The lesser known women novelists, do they make their women speak in a language that comes closer to Elaine Showalter’s ‘Gynocriticism’ or Helen Cixous’s ‘écriture feminine’? Whether a male writer can be a feminist or a feminist critic? The task is attempted through a close critical analysis of the fiction of Thomas Hardy a mainstream novelist, Mary Elizabeth Braddon a sensational novelist, (Mary Braddon is used in the title as most of the secondary sources have not included the middle name) and Sarah Grand a new woman novelist, who began their writing careers roughly spanning from 1860’s to 1910. Selection of the novelists aroused questions like, why were Braddon and Grand called lesser known writers? Why was Hardy being a major novelist marginalized and condemned like the lesser known writers? Did writers at the turn of the century choose similar themes, similar genre, and similar mode to present their subject? Finding an answer to these questions means finding a wealth of information about their works, about heated debates that surrounded the literary scene then and current perception of the past. Stephen Greenblatt suggests “…that the goal in literary studies is not to seal off the frontier completely but to keep it conceptually alive.” (8) The research focuses on the lesser known women writers who sold successfully during their
time but failed to survive into the 20th century. These novelists interpret women’s silence, and show what it is to lose voice. The selection of the novelists was made as it offers plenty of possibilities for investigation within the fields of feminist studies. Victorian era is used as a central focus to explore the contradictory ideologies as regarding women’s assertion and challenge. The interest in the conventional and popular fiction was driven by the desire to scrutinize the chosen writers’ fiction in the light of marginalization which aids the study to discern the feminine and feminist critical thought.

A comparative study of Hardy with major writers has been a viable source of discussion for many researchers but the link between Hardy, Braddon & Grand is a new venture. It calls for further investigation into the depiction of feminine and feminist sensibilities and to examine the convergence and divergence in the depiction of the same in the chosen writers. Though Hardy has been recognized as a major novelist yet he has been marginalized for depicting the harsh realities of the age, for laying emphasis on women’s oppression and subjugation. The features that made his novels horrendous to idealists were his forthrightness about sex and his candid grasp of women’s complex personality. Braddon and Grand were also marginalized for their same candid depiction of the hidden realities of the private domain. Subversive and critical challenge enters into their work and women represent the destructive influence of gender identities in the patriarchal order with a slight indifference which goes to confirm what Toril Moi observes, “…for Julia Kristeva’ it is not the biological sex that he or she takes up but it is the subject position of a person that determines the revolutionary potential.” (12)

The choice was motivated because individually and collectively the chosen novelists depict various aspects which go to enunciate the emergence of the feminist from
the feminine. It is hoped that through a meaningful study of these three novelists there will emerge critical and meaningful insights not only into their work but also significant developments in the Victorian novel which not only lends itself to tackle issues such as patriarchy, woman’s place, sexuality and identity but also contextualize these issues in our times. Espousal of contrapuntal method has helped to some extent to depose the hierarchy and avoid evaluating it as mainstream against lesser known novels. The thesis is also directed towards showing how the chosen novelists’ remote attitude towards feminism stems from their apprehension that any kind of political idiom be it liberal, socialist, or feminist, will ultimately reveal itself as yet another master discourse. Their disapproval of the feminist insistence on the need to politicize all human relationships is in some ways distant to current feminist debates.

The use of Emergence of the feminist from the feminine in the title needs to be explained so that the scope and direction of the study is clear. While making the choice of the writers the period was also kept in view to justify the title. Their novels present the changing face of feminine sensibility and the arrival of new sensibility that we call feminist sensibility. The topics they dealt- gender politics, women question, resistance and conformity serve as a common link to connect these writers. They picture women’s journey toward a new image of the feminine where we see the depiction of women's struggle to assert her, ‘self’ within the cultural constraints. A willful probing into the themes, style, and generic modes show diverse multitude of literary work, it also illustrates its plurality that alters our areas of interest and understanding of the 19th century. By addressing inequality the study recognizes differences in power relations within the Victorian context. Bringing feminist concerns into research entails recognizing the differences between man
and woman. To understand the intention of the writers one has to examine the Victorian literary scene to justify the choice of the writers. Writers both male and female may be clubbed under the banner feminist but a perceptive of the subtle variations or similarities in their portrayal of the feminine and feminist makes the study appealing. The period between 1860’s and 1920’s saw varied shifts in the development and growth of the novel and also introduced new genres which deviated from the conventional genre. The deviation in the generic mode, theme, plot and subject are helpful in depicting the changes in the very acuity of the feminine. Feminine virtues that were written in conduct books by Sarah Stickney Ellis, John Ruskin in his letter –Advice to Young Girls and Young Ladies (1888), Coventry Patmore’s Angel in The House (1854) Mrs. Eliza Farrar’s The Young Lady’s Friend (1837) upheld notions of femininity and advised women to nurture qualities of lightness, passivity and submissiveness. The cult of true womanhood is a term that identifies the 19th century ideology. The cult emphasized that the true woman was the angel of the family; chastity and submissiveness were traits that went to describe the true woman. This confirms that the 19th century was a thoroughly masculine domain, which subtly hints at the position of women. Her willful adherence to the patriarchal laws was mandatory and women artists could enter the artistic world only after having learned to adopt a male point of view in their symbolic constructions. The feminine in their novels was already controlled by the phallocentric heritage; the focus is to perceive how these writers endeavor to create new feminine epistemological framework. The study endeavours to illustrate how Hardy, Braddon and Grand do not depict genuine femininity according to the Victorian guidelines or they evade romanticizing concepts of femininity. The 1860’s saw the advent of the feminist not only in the social scene but also in the literary scène. Oscar Wilde’s
lecture “The Decorative Art” (1882) served to alter the ideology of the home, in his House Beautiful (1882) he voiced his opinion against the chore of the private sphere, and Wilde’s work put a twist on the Victorian notion of the home. The work of feminists and the contribution of literary writers signified a potent force in challenging not only the ideology of separate spheres but also the Victorian notion of domesticity. A new ideal of womanhood and a new ideology about home arose out of the new attitudes about work and family. This motivates one to discern how these writers introduced into the realm of fiction the new womanhood. The novel was very much a province of the 19th century yet few writers achieved the canonical status. Victorian era presents a wide range of novelists those who profess knowledge about the Victorian fiction recall names of Jane Austen, George Eliot, Charles Dickens, William Thackeray, Elizabeth Gaskell, Charlotte Bronte, Henry James, and a host of minor novelists who do not fit into the main stream. When we talk of writers who addressed women’s issues we refer to Thackeray’s Vanity Fair, (1847) Bronte’s Jane Eyre (1847) George Eliot’s Adam Bede (1859) or Middle March (1869) Ibsen’s A Doll’s House (1879) These writers who had already started their careers, who were recognized as established writers fell outside the scope of the study.

Hardy who was not so well recognized as Dickens or Eliot as he was still struggling to enter the main stream and made his name only in latter part of the Victorian era was a suitable choice. Selection of the lesser known novelists was made because they were silenced and excluded from the Victorian canon; such a grievous mistake pushed them into the attic obscuring their significance. R.L.Wolff in his colossal Nineteenth-Century Fiction, A Bibliographical Catalogue (5vols, 1982-86,) observes that there are high quality Victorian fiction awaiting discovery out of the 42,000 published Victorian novels.
Academic syllabus simmers down to reading of one or two of the mainstream writers with the idea read one of them you have read them all, which is appallingly disdainful. Such an impression would close the doors and stop one from surveying Victorian fiction lying outside our erudite trajectory. Francis Gorman states,

"Canon revision has been a widespread feature of modern literary studies and Victorian period is no exception feminism has been the biggest influence on this. (9)"

Such a feature excites critical interest to analyse the sensational and the new woman novels because they urge for a different form of revision, (their refusal to adopt the conventional method of literature) Grand created a landmark by introducing a new genre and Braddon popularized the sensational genre. But why didn’t scholars write about such landmarks? Perhaps these lesser known writers wrote at an inappropriate moment, between Victorian and Modern movement. They were popular novelists of the era who can be credited for breaking the generic and gender conventions, writers who were not part of the reviewing groups, unrepresented in critical arena but strongly represented in sales and subscription. Perhaps they were women writers who required a critical enquiry, writers who desired peers to discuss their works, analyse its symbols, its meaning, and demonstrate its continuing relevance to all readers.

Phallocentric criticism of the novel reveals the extent to which patriarchal monist gender reasoning is now under serious interrogation; especially by French and American feminist theorists in particular. Feminist theories have used phallocentrism to critique the supremacy of hegemonic masculinity in social, cultural, and literary relations. Hardy,
Braddon and Grand construct a fictive world where the ordinary accepted world is reversed; contemporary norms are transgressed and put into question. The study illustrates that working on the lesser known writers throws fresh challenges, and introduces us to many genres, (sensational, new woman, gothic novel, Three Decker Novels and so on.) themes, techniques and purpose. A serious scrutiny opens the Pandora’s Box, providing the readers with a host of information, introducing so many novelists, those largely concealed masses who Dickens called my ‘fellow labourers.’ Out of the Pandora’s Box emerged Mary Braddon and Sarah Grand not to mean that others are not worthy. There are a lot of talented women writers such as Mona Caird, Anne Thackeray, Ellen wood, Charlotte Yonge, Eliza Lynn Linton, Margaret Oliphant, Olive Schreiner, George Egerton and many others. Florence Marryat and Felicia Shene who revised the conventional plot in interesting ways, continue to suffer critical and popular neglect. Eliza Linton by exploring the polarity between a passionate young woman and her submissive alter ego shocked the Victorian morality. Egerton by presenting woman as a victim and an agent showed the split in her women that reflected the ambiguities of women in the fin de siècle society. These novelists in spite of their efforts did not get the much desired critical acclaim, you can find them only if you know them, for instance, Margaret Oliphant’s contribution in the field of fiction is enormous; she was admired during her time but is largely overlooked by modern critics. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s list of women writers does not include her; perhaps her inability to show women as the repressed, as the ‘other’ might have been the reason behind not gaining critical attention. Nevertheless her critical remarks on the sensational genre provide valuable information on how Victorian society declaimed the genre for its subversive traits. Lyn Pykett, states that “The construction of canon has involved the
filtering of a great deal of writing, including all of the fiction produced by women.” (3)

A careful scrutiny of the chosen novels opened new possibilities for critical inquiry. It would not be an over enthusiastic remark if Braddon and Grand are called trend setters this remark is made keeping the lesser known women novelists in view, (not lesser known male novelists) as the study focuses on lesser known women writers. If viewed from the standpoint of cultural studies and feminism, value of studying the lesser known writers becomes apparent. The research aims to give a serious consideration to women who did not get as much as a foot note in literary history leave alone serious consideration. Two aspects were taken into consideration while selecting the lesser known writers the novelist’s depiction of women and the use of genre. Considering the critical attention that women’s writing has gathered in recent years it is necessary to re-claim the significance of Braddon and Grand. Their books have been ignored by the critics but revisiting the texts assist to discover the treasure hidden and also give voice to the silent voices barred by the Victorian canon to be heard. Their novels give scope to explore a range of issues such as economics, sexuality, art, identity, imperialism, canonization and social politics. Attention to lesser known writers has served to uncover a female critical tradition expressed by these writers who provide models and emotional support to readers and successors. And the analysis shows how their task endeavors to fulfill the concern of the ‘gynocritical’ tradition.

Mary Braddon used the sensational genre to represent modernity in the depiction of the unusual and aberrant which highlighted the dangers of contemporary British life. The sensational novels of the 1860’s have appeared as a reaction against the trend toward social realism and domestic novel. They were informed by the extravagant emotionalism and criminality of the gothic novel, and were conceived with a particular aim in mind (to alert
women about her potentialities) Periodicals such as Harpers published the serialized version of the fiction. Braddon’s acting career gave a strong rhetorical dimension to writing for instance; she presents the illegitimate world of popular culture to her readers. Her didactic assignment was to teach readers appreciate the popular cultural form. Her novels proliferate with Balzac, Shakespeare, Scott, and it also pulsates with references to Beethoven, Turner etc. The era witnessed the use of popular, marginal, expressive forms that gained momentum and which could be easily transformed. Women’s involvement in the music scene was absent or ignored in the patriarchal world, Braddon’s attempt illustrates how she endeavors to make women appreciate popular music which exemplifies Braddon’s manipulation of the Victorian literary conventions. This aspect elevates her position and sets her apart from other sensational novelists (Wilkie Collins) and presents her a unique place in the 19th century literary scene which is sadly ignored by critics who consider her as a mere sensational novelists. Henry Mansel, Oliphant, declaimed sensational novels as bigamy novel or adultery novels because the novels featured errant woman, whose beauty emasculates her mortal love, taunting her man eternally with the mystery of her power and beauty. Modern critics for instance, Lyn Pykett describes sensational novels as stories which suit the modern life. The choice of Braddon is to evince how her fiction has emerged as a significant literary form in which women critiqued aspects of Victorian gender politics. The choice of the writer and the novels were made to display how her novels mark her as a relentless critic of the patriarchal power and also to view her as an advocate of moderate reforms.

Frances Elizabeth Bellenden Clarke chose a female name Sarah Grand, a pseudonym that did not disguise her gender, in doing so she went against the norm of many feminist
writers selecting masculine names, an instance to show how she like her heroines in her novels was a New Woman. Grand gained prominence on the fin de siècle literary and periodical market place. She sought to enhance the status of women’s political writing by establishing the concept of feminine aesthetics by blending art, politics and feminism. New Woman fiction established a tradition of feminist political writings for female audience, the fiction opened up a largely gynocentric space for the discussion of feminist thought. Critics (Ann Heilmann) affirm that the Genre disappeared with the end of first-wave feminism but it laid the base for the revival of popular feminist fiction in the 1960’s and 1970’s. Such observation instills enthusiasm to discern the relevance of the new woman fiction. The dexterity with which they addressed diverse readership from the popular and conservative to the highbrow and advanced arouse interest to comprehend the meaning. My choice of the writer was determined by the penetrating impact that Grand had in shaping of the genre which is seen in her endeavors to voice the goals of the new woman, in her portrayal of forthrightness in woman’s lives. Braddon and Grand successfully project the evolving feminist awareness of the fin –de-siècle era. The study devotes tangible decisive attention to novelists who have been underread, the basic contention is to hint how narratives of today owing to the overbearing influence of the canonical texts have been slightly nonchalant towards the thematic subtleties and genuine intellectual verve of the non canonical Victorian texts.

Hardy’s novels confirm what critics today call the subject in process as he tries to create a platform aptly suited for the emergence of woman who claims self ownership and paves way for the existence of a feminist. The lesser known novels failed to get the critical acclaim that his major novels received but the purpose of the novels cannot be disregarded.
They express the tension between the demands of dominant segments of society and the aspirations of the protagonists. Cautious scrutiny of the novels helped to discern that the lesser known novels also present instances where women display unorthodox representation of sexual female that threatens the Victorian description of women. The chosen novels are worthy of intellectual discussion and the flaws that can be discerned in his major novels are absent in the chosen novels. For instance, the chosen novels are not loaded with too much imagination or too much realism a weakness that haunts his major novels. But it does not mean that it is error free but the balance is well maintained when compared to his major novels. It’s interesting to note that the feminine and feminist concerns are subtly worked out through the women characters and these characters share the traits with Sue Bridehead, (Jude the obscure, 1895) Bathsheba Everdene (Far From the Madding Crowd, 1874) and Tess (Tess of D’Urbervilles, 1891). The relation between Henry Knight and Elfride Swancourt in A Pair of Blue Eyes becomes a preliminary sketch to the story of Tess and Angel. If Tess ends in an appalling tragedy; Elfride’s story ends in stark Hardyean comedy. Though the women in the lesser known novels may lack the grandeur of personality that characterizes, Sue, Tess & Bathsheba, yet the strength and power of women in the lesser known novels cannot be ignored they have given rise to recent critical debate among feminist critics. It’s interesting to study how they desire to seek freedom from the idea of morality and standards of conduct. Hardy articulates crucial aspects of femininity and makes it explicit that the female subjects encounter with and respond to an alterity that exceeds limits and defines her.

Late Victorian era saw the rise of feminist novels a genre that was intimately linked to the British women’s movement. Bakhtin’s argument (The Dialogic Imagination,
2008) that literature is a part of the total cultural context and cannot be excluded rests emphasis on the necessity to understand the social, cultural, and political, conditions that produced the works. The novel became the most interesting platform of modern debates, for instance industrialization; Darwin’s theory of Evolution shaped these works and turned historical process into a subject matter of wide debate, it is scrutinized as,

Darwin’s Descent of Man seemed to offer a consoling logic for fin de siècle thinkers, since Darwin’s theory of sexual selection presented a natural schema in which female ‘choosers’ ruled supreme. (Kaye 95)

Much of the fiction produced in the early Victorian period 1760 -1830 had no serious purchase because the novel reading was considered a frivolous entertainment. But mid Victorian and late Victorian fiction was popular in its own day and now it elicits enormous range of criticism. A serious study of Victorian fiction will present before us varied and diverse literary works and what arrests our attention is its plurality. The literary legitimacy and the cultural authority that the novel exerts today were solidified in the early and mid Victorian novels. George Eliot, Charlotte Bronte were some of the most respected and prolific novelists of the century who paved the way for other women to enter the field of fiction writing. Most novels were written for men, and most heroines were portrayed from a male perspective. The silencing of women writers by publishers and the accessibility of novels made it inevitable for women to publish their own novels. When novels of women emerged they still had to work with restrictions and constraints surrounding them which resulted in many of them supporting the stereotype image that men had projected. The Domestic novels gained popularity because women writers adhered to the norms of the publishers and the norms of the society which largely catered to the male demands.
early Victorian novels failed to break through formal enclosures set by male writers, hence, the adherence to the feminine ideal. Jane Austen was not a feminist in the tradition of Mary Wollstonecraft. George Eliot makes her woman recognize the flaws in conventionality this is an improvement on Austen’s women’s unquestioning acceptance but her works lack the revolutionary zeal of the late Victorian writers. Gaskell is noted for the bold treatment of factory life in her industrial novels but her domestic novels focus on courtship and household life. Though their books showed women their potential neither of them allowed themselves to be icons of feminism because they did not consider femininity as a barrier. Feminine in their novels searches for women’s voice that advocates to the ethics of care.

The early and mid Victorian mainstream novelists showed very little signs of change in the political and social order. The increasing emphasis on the feminine virtue activated the call for women’s movement. By 1860’s novelists endeavored to examine the institution of marriage and women’s identity. Ibsen’s Nora (A Doll’s House) created vibrations by slamming the door. Social structures oppressing women became the theme of the late Victorian novels. They tried to entangle the standards prescribed by the Victorian society which can be detected in the works of Hardy, Braddon, and Grand. Their novels rose above male mimicry and modest approach, their agenda was to undermine cultural ideologies alerting readers to accept female behaviour (their assertion) as an alternative to conventional female roles.

Hardy, Braddon and Grand have created stories that give scope for personal evaluation and development and their novels are replete with feminist ideas which reveal a different cast of mind and imagination because their outlook is tinged with revolutionary zeal. In depicting the docile feminine as the wild, vigorous and assertive and by pushing
the male from the center to the margins, the writers respond to the male writers (Rousseau, Aristotle) dismissive views of women. They create characters, first feminine and then the feminist and liberate their women from histories of suppression. The patriarchal society imposed certain social standards of femininity on all women to make one understand that these standards were natural.

The first wave of feminist issues refers to the movement of conditions and educational rights of women and girl. The rationale of the late 19th century feminists was not only a reaction to the injustices they saw but the image of women bestowed on them by the Victorian ideology i.e. the restricted lives women faced in the early part of the century. Political agitation and increased public visibility led many writers to restore to writing as a means of furthering their political cause without distancing the readers. Hardy Braddon and Grand gave more radical insights into class politics, marriage, and oppression of women. Issues such as man woman relationship, right to vote, right to education and the need to remodel the stereotype women were addressed. Feminists like John Stuart Mill, Richard Pankhurst, Mary Wollstonecraft, Millicent Fawcett, Emily Davies, Florence Nightingale, and Barbara Smith Bodichon reacted against the increasingly suffocating image of the feminine ideal which was glorified in Coventry Patmore’s work Angel in the House. Mid Victorian feminists were known for their philanthropic and social concerns. Late Victorian feminists Sylvia Pankhurst, Barbara Bodichon, and Bessie Rayner Parkes challenged the Victorian notion that women were inferior to men. The unjust treatment was well perceived by the women activists. Women activists and writers addressed the problem of difference they offered a feminine model contrary to the model specified by the male standards by indicating new areas like autonomy and freedom from domestic violence. 1866 saw the
commencement of the suffrage committee by the Langham Place Group. Activists like Sylvia Pankhurst, Lydia Becker attracted women by their oratory skills which marked women’s participation in the public sphere and the influence of woman’s opinion in all matters connected with the elevation of national life. These feminists laid the foundation for Hardy, Braddon, Grand and others to create cultural and intellectual space for women. The personal sense of justice which was expressed in the novels of George Eliot, Gaskell and Bronte became explicitly feminist in the late Victorian novels. The novelists sought to redefine the artist’s role wherein the feminine and the feminist themes are varied as compared to the early Victorian novels. The novels transformed the signs of political and social identity by producing women centric novels with female names, Braddon’s Lady Audley’s Secret, Aurora Floyd, Hardy’s Tess of D’Urbervilles, Egerton’s East Lynne, (1814) Wilkie Collin’s Woman in White, (1859) are few instances to show how the novels justified their assertion. Changing face of the feminine image and feminist assertion in the works of the chosen writers coincides with the promising emergence of the late Victorian middle class feminist movement. The women characters in the novels of Hardy, Braddon, Grand, show that the actualization of woman’s needs is important but also difficult. The fin de siècle response to sexuality was not only reactionary but also evinced advanced thinking. The sexual free community envisioned by the novelists’ galvanized advanced activities well into the 20th century. The British fin de siècle as Showalter (Literature of Their Own, 1977) has illustrated witnessed turbulence agitation and panic. The new woman enhanced the anxieties and fear among British conservatives who found it arduous to accept women as progressive but if viewed through the lens of feminism we see how
chosen writers celebrate women as empowered by positioning girls as central to the narrative.

It’s against this background that Hardy, Braddon and Grand are chosen to explore the feminine and feminist pursuits as a personal form of politics, with the idea that the personal is political and that woman’s experiences are an integral part of a feminist assertion, (considered as one of the basic insights of feminism in the late 1960’s & 70’s.) Three lesser known novels of Hardy A Pair of Blue Eyes, Woodlanders, The Hand of Ehtelberta, and The Return of The Native, are chosen as the primary source because it provides a broader platform to argue and debate about the convergence and divergence in the presentation of the feminine and the feminist. The inclusion of one major novel was made to justify that his lesser known novels contain strong and powerful women. Two novels by Braddon, The Lady Audley’s Secret, and Aurora Floyd, and two novels by Grand, Ideala and The Beth Book are chosen as the primary source. The impulse to discern whether Braddon and Grand excel Hardy in their presentation of woman or to regard them as equals made the inclusion of these novels necessary as it would expand the scope of the study. The chosen novels exhibit two types of exemplars-the angel and the practical woman. It presents the heroines struggle for self mastery, learning the pain of conquering her passion. Women desire autonomy and thus undergo a discipline within which to realize feminine obligation, and learn to balance society’s demand and her desire for freedom. This proves that femininity is compulsory and their narration hints that women can never find freedom by agreeing to live in the man’s world. But the novels equip women to deal with the changed circumstance; their challenge is wide ranging, from a tentative assertion of women’s freedom to a celebration of the rewards of leading a life without the masculine aid. To
make the past accessible it is necessary to analyze the past critically in relation to the present. Looking back might be productive in giving voice to the cultural memory of the past to which the chosen novels bear witness. Victorian cultural studies mark important developments in the explicit theorization of class, gender, sexuality, culture, femininity and masculinity. Trivial culture references to pure/impure, modest/immodest and Madonna/whore frequently serve as ideological and such an ideology subtly devalued individuals. Scholars like Martha Vicinus, and Michel Foucault saw the final decades of the 19th century as a crucial period in the development of modern sexual & gender identities. The late Victorian novels had to interact with new forms of social identities; the traditional relation between man and woman were re-examined because as George Gissing states it was an era of sexual anarchy. It was an era in which conduct and identity did not seem applicable to Wilde, Moore, Hardy, Eliza Linton, Egerton, Grand and Braddon. It is this feature which makes the study of the chosen novels attention-grabbing for it arouses curiosity to observe if female transgression and subversion are seen as deviant entities or as spectacles of desire. Men manipulated women as inferior, weak, passive and non being, and in turn women writers on the edges of 19th century challenged the very foundations on which the feminine and masculine was built. Women began to resent the imposed literary categories “…to be seen as a woman writer” was “to be seen in a sub category” (Kharbe 261) they openly challenged and attempted to disrupt the logo centric tradition. Phallocentric world forces women writers to identify with men and male standards but this restriction was imposed not only on female writers but also on male writers who intended to emancipate women from the clutches of the patriarchal hegemony. The inclusion of Hardy aids the study to show how both male and female writers were victims
of the patriarchal society. Hardy’s novels are proof enough to show his radical verve where he is involved in questioning the phallocentric world for the reason that it provides no space for women’s specificity and which treats her as an outsider in the literary tradition. The analysis explores the nature of female and male writer’s depiction of the feminine considering how these writers are confined in the myth of phallocentric creativity. Do they reiterate the same and reproduce femininity as projected by patriarchal discourses, or do they successfully represent woman’s specificity? The women characters in the chosen novels prefigure the speech act that contemporary feminist scholar Bell Hooks labels “Talking Back” (1989) in her book by the same title. The writers’ satiric reinvention of the feminine defiantly mocks the male dominated history of western patriarchal thought, (that pushes women to the margins to render her as voiceless) Critics (Mansel, Oliphant) have condemned the literary quality of the lesser known novelists often criticizing their works on the basis of enormous output and propaganda contest. To consider such assessments as biased and to give serious consideration and useful sense of recognition the attempt to link Hardy, Braddon, and Grand is intended. Analysing the conditions that made these writers inscribe and challenge subjectivity becomes a major force in making feminism a resolutely paradoxical endeavor it is this feature that stimulates curiosity to add on to the wealth of information. The thesis examines what can be learned about the feminine, feminist, gender, and culture of the Victorian era. In order to set the scene this study scrutinizes briefly the rise of Victorian feminism, and also evaluates their endeavors by looking at some contemporary reviews. Building on Cathy Davidson’s findings (in Revolution and the Word 1986) the cultural and literary scene is scrutinized to appreciate the advent of the feminist, as it is necessary to carefully appraise the events in which literature is produced.
To discern the endeavors of Braddon and Grand to make their heroines speak in a female language and to explore their relevance feminist theories by Helen Cixous, Irigaray, Elaine Showalter, Julia Kristeva and Judith Butler serve as a viable method. It helps in outlining a feminist perspective that allows critiquing the late 19th century repertoires and methods. If Braddon and Grand have subverted the tradition of feminine fiction to cater to their own imaginative impulses, how did they achieve it? Do their writings uncover a female tradition that provides models to readers? How do their novels fulfill the concern of ‘gynocritical’ tradition? Feminism brought the study of the fin de siècle woman in fiction to prominence, as these novels subvert gender categories to serve an additional purpose of undermining the one dimensional representation of women. The thesis also surveys if Braddon and Grand fulfill the task that Showalter assigns for women writers. “To write as women is the real task they have to perform” (199) Women writers had to adhere to the ideology of women’s proper sphere (women destined to mind the private sphere) prescribed by convention. Grand and Braddon were probably contemplating their own proper sphere as a women and as a writer, and their heroines were in the process of looking their own in the novels. They elaborate in their novels what Thackeray and Gaskell were concerned, the place of women, and her struggle to attain a place in the male dominated world. The chosen novelists show how women are conditioned to help their own subordination. This makes one assess the writers attempt at a consciousness-raising method endeavoring to collectively reassess their lives. Study of the past shows gender politics playing a role while awarding titles to distinguished thinkers and writers. Ibsen is seen as the fore runner of feminism, to some extent Charlotte Bronte and George Eliot are included in the wing and Hardy has also shared a place with them for calling the fallen
woman a pure woman. But why didn’t historians and critics think of Braddon, or Ellen Wood? These novelists made their women slam the door much before Ibsen (Lady Audley’s Secret, East Lynne,) but failed to create vibrations. The new woman novels were condemned as merely popular lacking in universal appeal. Were they marginlised because of gender politics? Was it because of the genre they chose? Did society then term women as incapable of innovation or revolutionary thought? The study makes a humble endeavor to provide answers to such questions in the chapters’ feminine and feminist sensibility. It also aims to pull the sensational novels out of such enclosures as bigamy novels or adultery novels and also to consider new woman genre not as a popular fiction but as fiction that requires a serious critical inquiry. Their novels center around women’s trauma, her assertion and transgression but their purpose was condemned and sidelined by George Eliot as trash. Distinguished male contemporaries such as Oscar Wilde, Joseph Conrad and even minor writers like Rider Haggard and Bram Stoker sidelined the novelists. Viktor Shklovsky in his article Art as Technique (1917) considers any work of art as an autonomous construct, a self sufficient entity that is brought out through conscious craftsmanship. Adhering to this view the works of the chosen novelists can be considered as an autonomous art. The liberty the genres provided makes one see how their stories offer a feminine and feminist point of view on issues of sexuality, aesthetics, and quest for identity. Showalter (Daughters of Decadence, 1993) finds these are the missing links in the fiction of Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf.

Thinking about identity itself we come upon a form of critical endeavor which in practical terms is incredibly rich and productive. It is amazing how as Jonathan Culler, once put it reading it as woman or reading it as an African American if it is done alertly
transforms everything, that is to say it has an incredible practical pay off. It leaves woman
to understand the trauma, the conflicts and the struggle that her own sex has traditionally
endured. Having an identity itself gets identified dialogically (Bakhtin, 2008) the way in
which the language of the text gets itself expressed needs to be read with notions of
identity. The present study gives a subtle focus on gender identity while analysing the
feminine and feminist sensibilities. Economic independence was a well thought out
assignment undertaken by feminists of the era which is also voiced by novelists. It was
perceived as important by Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One’s Own*, (1929) who alerted
her army of women that it was necessary to have a room of one’s own, and economic
independence to free them from patriarchal regime. Facts of money and power continue to
bother feminist criticism even to this day. The study aims to bridge both modern and
Victorian approach to feminine and feminism by referring to feminist critics. Such an
approach is to illustrate feminine and feminist tradition not as chronological but as a kind
of simultaneity in which the emphasis on men’s marginalisation of women, the stress on
women’s consciousness and tradition can be set forth at the same time. The novelists
include a new phase of self awareness which brings them closer to the modern times.
Though feminism had not taken its form in the Victorian era, Hardy, Grand and Braddon
show how female emancipation had become a rallying point in the fin de siècle world.
Their philosophy and strategy might be different hence divergence in their approach is
studied critically to understand the uniqueness of the writers in their portrayal of women.
The focus on the feminine and the feminist concerns is in some ways a narrow one, but it
allows a detailed analysis of the intricacies of the emergence of feminism, the interaction
between personal experience, political attitudes, religious beliefs and patriarchal ideologies
on one hand and feminist assertion on the other. The chosen novels refer to the situation of women, the nature of femininity, masculinity and lesbian overtones that reverberates feminist sensibility in women which are persuasive points to enhance the scope of the study. In each of the fictive world accepted norms are transgressed and put in to question which makes us consider that feminist rhetoric is not a new venture. Their project might be similar to what Cixous affirms in the *Laugh of The Medusa* (1975) calling for a revolution in women’s writing that focuses on an alternative style. Braddon and Grand’s women interrogate the imprisoning and homogenizing sameness that patriarchal language bestows by replacing it with a trangressive medium, (questioning the male views about women.) Critics claim both explicitly and implicitly that a male literary experience is fundamentally different from female literary experience. The study makes a humble effort to show how Hardy’s depiction of women appears to transcend these categories. Hardy like Braddon and Grand endeavors to depict his women characters by tapping the wide range of concealed sensations and rewarding fantasies of protest more candidly than had been done previously. The novelists destabilize and interrogate the cultural clichés angel in the house and the fallen woman. While Hardy and Braddon make their fallen woman, Elfride (*A Pair of Blue Eyes*) Aurora (*Aurora Floyd*) enjoy a respectable place, Grand makes Ideala (*Ideala*) and Beth (*The Beth Book*) aspire for a relationship outside marriage. Can such depiction of woman describe the antithesis of femininity?

Classification of novels as the sensational, the popular, the radical or the conservative (by the critics) hampers the urge to look beyond such classification. The chosen novelists attempt to define woman as neither a passive object nor an aggressive siren (clichés in the patriarchal tradition) they attempt to show how their characters both
men and women face victory and failure, how they experience loss of masculine dominance and feminine weakness. Transformation in the very understanding of man woman relationship, motherhood, womanhood, enhanced the confusion in the fin de siècle era. The study endeavors to illustrate how these confusions help to understand whether the writers, challenge or reinforce the ideological notions. Their stories reveal a change and progression in women over the course of 19th century, it is also believed that

The nineteenth century saw a historic change in gender politics, the emergence of feminism as a form of mass politics, a mobilization for women’s rights, especially the suffrage, in public arenas. (Connell 249)

Novelists through their works and feminists through their activities illustrate this fact, although the novels spend quite a bit of time detailing woman’s problems without resolution but the novels accelerate an understanding about the political and power struggles of the female sex. The writers repeatedly shift between fixing the image of woman as a particular object of male gaze and permitting her to defy the male gaze. The Victorian critics condemned such attempts as unworthy and modern critics denounce them for making their woman stressed, beleaguered and hunted by the male gaze. The study aims to give a balanced approach by not fully rejecting the popular assumptions of the modern critics but by endeavouring to show the difficulty of the writers to free their women. It also aims to show how these writers identified their woman as fellow rejecters by integrating their own situation as an object of public vision.

The three waves of feminisms are kept in view though the chosen novels fit in the context of first wave feminism. Feminist reading of the 19th century novels are often
situated within the late 19th century and early 20th century debates - The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1885, The Divorce Laws, Married Woman’s Property Act passed in 1870 and 1882 and The introduction of the Women’s Suffrage Bill to Parliament, etc. A venture to look beyond the boundaries of first wave to the second and third wave feminism is made in order to perceive whether the contemporary understanding and shifts in the perception of the feminine and the feminist fit the late 19th century context. Such an attempt enables to illustrate that Victorian novelists understanding of the feminine and feminists are still relevant. The first wave of feminism confronted voting rights, education, stereotypes of women, and in particular, claims of proper female behavior and talk. Both women activists of the era and writers see patriarchy as a debacle; they share the liberalism and universalism of modern western political construction of enlightenment and laissez-faire. To enhance the scope of the subject, the study attempts to see the chosen novels as a representation of the first wave, where each of the female characters confront the secondary status of women. They struggle within their marriage and social expectations of femininity, the use of girlhood and education allow consciousness-raising of characters. Radical second wave feminism gave priority to de facto inequalities; their feminist agenda was an effort to combine social, sexual and personal struggles.

A careful investigation of the novels in whole or in part is made to understand how much of Showalter’s ‘gynocriticism’ or Helen Cixous’s ‘écriture feminine’ is applicable to assess the narratives of Braddon and Grand. These Victorian novelists were unaware of these terms and might have used masculine monologic language or might have found it tedious to free their narratives from the phallocentric world. Today’s researchers are motivated by the fact that these writers wrote and felt as women and if they stumble upon
expressions that come closer to ‘gynocriticism’ it would be an exciting and innovative adventure.

Betty Friedan’s book *Feminine Mystique* (1963), inspired many feminists. What aspects of her theory serve to assess the assertion of women characters? Carol Gilligan’s *In a Different Voice* (1982) and Nancy Chodorow’s *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978) view women from a different perspective by focusing on woman’s productive capacities in terms of motherhood and care taking. New woman writers, Grand in particular, show motherhood and caretaking as a positive trait which credits woman with productive capacities echoing the project of second wave feminists who re-evaluated and understood motherhood competencies as signs of empowerment.

Like the third wave feminists do these writers use subversion as a rhetorical device? Third wave feminists position themselves for a transversal theory which commands respect for the diversity of both men and women. Expressions of feminism on one hand appear to replicate gender stereotype and on the other hand they ridicule them through imitation and subversion.

Third wave aspects are taken into consideration since Hardy, Braddon and Grand show their women coming closer to such portrayal; where all take part incessantly in commanding constructions of gender, and while performing in social life they find it difficult to evade the pitfalls of equity and difference. Their writing is one locus where women carve out a space of their own in which they conform or confront or contest categories of gender to represent them.

**Methodology**
Feminist study is the key theoretical aspect chosen for the study of novels as it becomes necessary to reflect critical awareness of identification & illumination. Patricia Maguire, (1987) believes that feminism deals with women’s oppression and it is a commitment to comprehend and unearth the causes of oppression. Feminist method has also enabled to value subjective meaning, and giving voice to the oppressed. It gives flexibility and helps the researcher to arrive at an objective analysis of women’s personal experiences. Exploratory and analytical method was used in the selection of the topic, analysis of individual novelists, and in the analysis of the chosen novels. Qualitative methods of research helped in the selection of the authors and in the collection and analysis of the material. Research method involves collection of data from primary and secondary sources, a brief survey and analysis of the data available helped to distinguish their perspectives. Feminist study of the novels involves interpretative paradigm which allows seeing women as the marginalized. It aims to bring the neglected aspects of social reality which helps to put gender in a new context which helps to raise women’s consciousness. The element of control in Quantitative research methodology is grounded in the epistemological base of objectivity. The method is used to scrutinize the definitions and comprehension of the feminine and the masculine to arrive at an analysis that is unbiased. Literary and cultural analysis, are considered in the evaluation of the works, the most obvious of it are feminist and deconstructionist; historical, post colonial and biographical. Each method of analysis is potentially connected to one or more forms in significant ways to discuss Braddon, Grand and Hardy. The research gives scope for post colonial and post modernist analysis but that will not form the major chunk as the focus is more on the feminine and feminist struggle against oppression. Feminist study of the novels aids to perceive the experience of woman
from the perspective of a woman. The use of language to translate their experience and
perspectives, the use of words, concepts and stereotypes of society are observed in order to
illustrate that they provide new knowledge grounded in realities of woman’s experience.
The deconstructionist and feminist analysis are used as it works together to offer examples
of strong women. Historical method is used as a qualitative methodology as it helps to
comprehend the predominant beliefs of the past. The method helps to understand the
relationship between the past and the present. New historical method helps in the analysis
of the sensational and new woman novels as Burke emphasizes in his work New
Perspectives on Historical Writing, (1992) that new historical method practices history
from below, as this allows diverse and opposing voices of the silent people to be heard.
Analysis of the text has enabled the study to develop an objective, systematic and unbiased
interpretations. The procedure of collecting quantitative and sometimes qualitative data
from written records was followed. Qualitative analysis of the internal content of the novels
was synthesized into a meaningful pattern of reconstructed facts. The interpretation is done
by using imaginative insights and scholarly objectivity. The cartoon pictures of the New
Woman were studied carefully to analyse the reception of the new woman. Comparative
analysis is adopted while analysing the works of the novelists but the frame work of
comparative analysis does not mean a hierarchy, does not mean that one is better than the
other. Espousal of such analysis offers an alternative to the built in notions, exclusions,
and the rigidly defined boundaries. (Comparing woman as perceived by the patriarchal
society & woman as perceived in the works of the novelists) The method serves to perceive
the formation of the text and how text reflects age’s expectation. Besides, such an analysis
offers flexibility to compare themes and issues in the chosen texts. Cultural study is given
focus in order to study culture in part, (literature) in relation to other forms of human activity. The approach is interdisciplinary, the study relies on French deconstructionist theories of feminine subjectivity. Analysis of the texts depends on the feminist theories propounded by French and American feminists. The inclination is not only to take lessons from such theoretical success but also to apply theory with a light hand; such a method illuminates the workings women’s assertion and subjugation in the novels. Feminine, feminist, patriarchy, ideology, subversion, transgression, feminine sensibility, feminist sensibility, masculinity, public and private domain, marriage, center and the margin, are used as catch phrases as it gives depth and makes the thesis effective. Selection of the phrases is largely determined by the purposes of its unity and coherence and is associated with feminist theory. The method followed for documentation is adopted from MLA Hand Book for Research Methodology. The references are given parenthetically, works cited is given at the end of each chapter and the bibliographical details are given at the end of the thesis.

**Review of Literature:**

The study is a long standing interest in the Victorian fiction. The literature available shows the benefit to be gained from readings founded on a vast canvas of earlier observations and aspirations which arouse inquisitiveness to expand current knowledge. A brief glance on the nature of critical studies available on Victorian fiction and on the chosen writers is essential to validate the need for a research project. Works on Hardy like diggers in the sea mud may be numerous but the treasure is not exhausted. Like every classic Hardy is undergoing reassessment because his Wessex novels are as germane and fresh as it was during the late Victorian era. The critical works on lesser novels is
comparatively less. Elaine Showalter in her essay “Towards a Feminist Poetics,” observes the necessity of, “… discovering and paying attention to so-called minor writers who help to create a certain tradition of writing, particularly a writing which belongs to a subculture.” (137) The tradition of lesser known novels has still not been formulated; it is very significant that this kind of disproportionate distribution of critical notice should be set right. Recent studies on the sensational and new woman novels show the growing interest in the genre. Studies that seek to explore the agendas of the popular genre show sensational and new woman novelists as the harbingers of today’s feminism. Talking of Victorian women novelists, George Eliot and Jane Austen grab the lion’s share of attention, Braddon and Grand get minimal share, this throws light on the fact that they fit into the circle of underread or lesser known writers and is still a terrain that is not explored by research scholars in India. Lack of critical attention does not mean that the chosen writers lack depth. Reviews written by Victorian critics did not encourage the content and subject matter of the sensational novels. H.L. Mansel, in his article “Sensational Novels,” Quarterly Review (1863) observes the sensational as silly crop novels and that the reading of such novels marks the decline in moral and intellectual standards. Margaret Oliphant’s work on Sensational Novels Blackwood Magazine, (1862) links the emergence of the sensational novels with the complex and restless mood of the era. Her criticism shows her anxiety about the effects of the novels popularity which she believed would disturb the strong foundations of Victorian ethos. Nevertheless these Victorian critics have provided the major paradigms through which the genre has been evaluated focusing more on the immoral content and subversive traits that marred the prospects of earning a serious consideration.

The literature available provides information about many feminist works and their valuable contribution in the field of literature. These books cover a wide range of topics which go to display Victorian writers and their narratives as significant products of their study. It shows how women writers had to confront issues of chauvinism, sexist bias, in order to raise consciousness of women about their rights and potentialities. The literary achievements of individual novelists were assessed by a survey of books, journal articles that display the merits and flaws of the writers.
Debates over late Victorian fiction waned with new criticism in the 1940’s but 1960’s saw the rise in important books on Hardy illustrating the scholarship of Hardy. The Case Book Series, Ed. by Ronald Draper (London: OUP 1974). Thomas Hardy by Norman Page. (UK: Routledge; 1977) A Complete Guide to Thomas Hardy by Geoffrey Harvey. (UK: Routledge, 2003) The Genius of Thomas Hardy, Ed. by Margaret Drabble (London, Macmillan, 1978) Hardy in History a Study in Literary Sociology by Peter Widdowson. (UK: Routledge, 1989) provide information on Hardy’s narrative dexterity, the predominance of nature in Hardy’s novels, Hardy’s philosophy, Matters of Gender in Hardy’s works and so on, the critical material helps to discern his literary achievements. Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays by D.H. Lawrence, Ed. by Bruce Steele. (UK: Cambridge UP; 1995) The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Hardy Ed. by Dale Kramer (London: CUP; 2009) evince how the novel form allowed him to say some things about class and gender relationships. Like all canonical writers Hardy has been subject to newer critical approaches and has been radically reshaped. Thomas Hardy on Screen by Terence Wright (New York: Cambridge UP; 2005) shows Hardy’s attempts to transfer his novels to the screen and to explore the interconnections between life and art, so as to show modern interpretation in film and television. Journal article by Snow James, Two Different Ethics; Philosophy and Literature (Journal, Mosaic 1997) gives an insight to the ethics that Hardy’s women characters follow. Thomas Hardy A Feminist Reading. Ed. Patricia Ingham (UK: Orion; 1989) pays attention to the multiple voices of the texts and offers a close linguistic and gendered reading which reflects the ideological tensions in the late nineteenth century. Women and Sexuality in The Novels of Thomas Hardy by Rosemarie Morgan. (New York: Routledge; 1988) resurreccts Hardy’s voluptuous women. The Sense
of Sex: Feminist Perspectives on Hardy, Ed. Margaret Higgonet. (USA: Illinois Press, 1993) offers a concise account of feminist criticism in Hardy, drawing variously on psychoanalytic theory. Sexing Hardy Thomas Hardy and Feminism by Margaret Elvy. (UK: Crescent Moon Publishers; 2007) provides a feminist analysis of Hardy. Extensive explorations on Hardy are proof enough to show that Hardy’s works have interested modern critics. But these books analyze Hardy’s major novels extensively not that they ignore his lesser known novels but they are not widely discussed as his major novels in the public domain or in the academic arena. The review also shows that feminine and feminist analysis of lesser known novels is nominal when compared to Hardy’s major novels. It also helped to understand that it is crucial to study the lesser known novels as it aptly helps to elaborate and enunciate the significance of the title.

sensational novel as trash owing to mass production of the novels. While past critical reception of the novel has led to permanent silencing of the novel modern critics desire to revive it by giving serious consideration. Moulding the Female Body in the Victorian Fairy Tale and the Sensational Novels by Laurence Talairach –Vielmas (USA: Ashgate Publishing House, 2007) the book throws light on the impact of consumer culture and commoditization owing to which women have turned themselves into objects that hints that modernity has transformed these women into ‘phantasmagoria. Feminine Sensationalism, Eroticism and Self Assertion; M.E. Braddon and Ouida by Natalie Schoroeder. (London: Tulsa studies, 1988) analyses the novels of Braddon showing streaks of modernity in the presentation of its themes and plot. Victorian Studies in Scarlet: Murders and Manners in the Age of Victoria by Richard D Altick (New York: W.W. Norton, 1979), Henry James. ‘Miss Braddon’ The Nation (9 Nov.1865) repr. Notes and reviews (Cambridge, Mass, 1921) “Forgotten Writers, Neglected Histories: Charles Reade and the Nineteenth Century Transformation of the British Literary field.” by Mary Poovey (ELH 71 2004) the above critical material by critics provide an insight into the fear that surrounded the conservative critics and their attempt to hamper the growth of the genre. Such readings helped to get give an objective analysis of the works.

Specialist’s works on new woman fiction are of greater use and these works are included in the review because directly or indirectly they help to understand the critical frame work which is applicable to both male and female writers. They throw light on what distinguishes the lesser known writers from the main stream novelists. Married Middle Brow and Militant: Sarah Grand and the New Woman Novel by Teresa Mangum. (Michigan: University of Michigan press; 1998) The New Woman Fiction and Feminism at
the Fin de siècle by Sally Ledger (UK: Manchester UP, 1997) The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact, Ed. Angelique Richardson (UK: Palgrave 2001) Ann L Ardis New Woman, Novels, Feminism and Early Modernism. (New York: Rutgers UP, 1990) Daughters of Decadence Women Writers of Fin- de-siècle by Elaine Showalter (New York: Rutgers UP, 1993) Literature of Their Own Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing by Elaine Showalter (London: Virago, 1977) The works speak of the importance of the new woman in fiction who is seen as an intellectual struggling to equal men unlike the depiction of new woman by the punch magazine. The Punch Cartoon Titled Miss Heavy Top’s Bicycle Lesson (Punch 13. September, 1899) gives an insight to the depiction of the new woman by magazines which pictured her as the glorified spinster, a novissma. Bicycles Bangs and Bloomers: the New Woman in the Popular Press by Patricia Marks (USA: UP of Kentucky; 1990) gives an account of the new woman depicted in late 19th century by humorists of the English and American press. Reading about the new woman helped to understand that the new woman was bestowed with multiple identities by the press and by the fiction, which made the new woman difficult for comprehension in the fin de siècle world that made them term her an enigma.

There is not a substantial body of critical works available on Sarah Grand, essays in an anthology that discuss about new woman fiction discuss Grand’s novels along with the other new woman novelists Olive Schreiner and Mona Caird. A whole length study dealing exclusively on Grand and Braddon is not substantial. Ann Heilmann’s book, New Woman Strategies Sarah Grand, Olive Schreiner, Mona Caird. (UK: Manchester UP, 2004) is a groundbreaking work that is suitable for scholars and research students as it offers an innovative approach to the late 19th century and new woman novelists. It makes a close
study of the shifts, inconsistencies and performative acts of Grand, Caird and Scrihener.

reception of the fallen woman which also served to understand how the image of the fallen
women in the late Victorian fiction is contrary.

The study employs the insights of feminist critics to illuminate the space. Luce Irigaray: *Philosophy in the Feminine* Ed. by Margaret Whitford (New York: Routledge; 1991), analyses Irigaray’s argument that Lacan’s idea of the language being phallic is dangerous and women should subvert the phallic needs in order to have an identity of their own. The analysis helped to comprehend the aspects brought out in the chosen works and to discern if the chosen novelists show streaks of Irigaray’s deliberation. Helen Cixous’s work, *The Laugh of The Medusa* Ed. by Marta Segarra (New York: Columbia UP, 1975) a celebrated manifesto of women’s writing that asks a woman writer to uncensor herself, and her bodily territories that have confined her. Her theory makes one reassess the Victorian novelists’ project, it enhances interest to see if the chosen women writers create new identities for women. Mary Jacobus, works *Reading Woman: Essays in Feminist Criticism*, (UK :Methuen, 1986) and *Women Writing and Writing About Women*. (UK: Routledge, 1979) makes one perceive woman’s writing as one that desires to reshape, and its aims to disrupt fixed meaning; and encourage textual free play beyond critical control. *Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan (New York: W.W. Norton, 1963) is credited with the sparks of the beginning of second wave feminism which launches into a detailed exploration of what she believes causes the problem. The book helped to analyse the chosen women writers who wrote to equal the intellectual achievements of the male culture.

A typical feminist analysis comes from *Towards a Feminist Poetics*. (London: Virago; 1979) by Elaine Showalter, *Daughters of Decadence Women Writers of Fin-de-siècle* by (Rutgers univ. press; 1993) *Literature of Their Own Women Novelists from Bronte to
Lessing. (Virago, 1982), *A Jury of Her Peers* American Women Writers from Anne Bradstreet to Annie Proulx. (New York: Vintage, 2010) refers to the destiny of many women writers in literary culture organized around patriarchal rules, ethics judgment and laws. Valuable inputs were gathered from these works to comprehend how the chosen women novelists who were influential in their own days have just disappeared from the literary and historical texts. Toril Moi. Ed. *The Kristeva Reader* (UK; Blackwell; 1986) raises queries that are crucial to feminist aesthetics and Kristeva recognizes how otherness has been neglected though her philosophy is largely founded on absence. Simone de Beauvoir; *The Making of An Intellectual Woman*. Ed. Toril Moi. (USA: OUP, 2008) insists on the commitment to theory if the personal has to be marked as personal. Ellen K, Feder, Mary C. Rawlinson Emily Zakhin. Ed. *Derrida and Feminism Recasting the Question of Woman*. (New York: Routledge, 1997) is a useful book as it makes one consider reading and writing as a planned science which helps to perceive the limits, and margins that are adorned within the text. It also aids to scrutinize how the feminine style forces the author to get ensnared in the importunate relegation of woman’s identities as bodies and concepts. Their theories give thoughtful insights about feminist theory and assist to understand the personal agendas of the writers. Post modern theory helps to see feminism of the chosen writers as written by the ideological, cultural and social forces that surround them.

Grin Verlag, 2009) Shows madness as a defensive strategy where women expressed their aggression for which the culture gave them no outlet. The female monster in many female authored texts depicts the disorderly heroines to attic refuges which enable one to understand the mad woman in Braddon’s novel from a postmodernist perspective.

Subversive Discourse: The Cultural Production of late Victorian Feminist Novels, by Rita Kranidis. ( Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995) John O Jordan and Robert L. Ed. Pattern Literature in the Market Place Nineteenth century British Publishing and Reading Practices.(USA: Cambridge UP,1995) The Nineteenth Century First Person Anonymous Women Writers and Victorian Print Media, 1830-1870 by Alexis Easley. (USA: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004) Victorian Novelists and Publishers by John Sutherland. (Michigan: Athlone Press, 1976.) Show the politics of publication that not only went to decide the novels as good and bad but also went to decide the elevation and subjugation of the artist. Publishing industry proprietors of the library were largely responsible for considering the novels as mainstream and popular. To be a woman author in Victorian society was to be a first person anonymous writer which meant to adhere and subvert notions of individuality. Women writers were obliged to negotiate and capitalize upon these publishing conventions. Such readings help to analyse the novel beyond Victorian criticisms and modern assessment.

Deconstruction, Feminist Theology, and the Problem of Difference Subverting The Race/Gender Divide by Ellen. T. Armour. (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago press; 1999) the book argues that though feminists express their desire to avoid deconstruction Derrida admits that there is a vital association between deconstruction and feminine studies. A deconstructive method of reading helps to uncover the multiple meanings of texts.
Deconstructive mode enables to reveal needs of the subdued or the marginalized, an apt mode to analyse the sensational and new woman writers and their women characters. Reading the Romance: Women Patriarchy and Popular Literature by Janice Radway, (USA: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1987), examines vilified popular forms in the romance novels construed them as offering a way for women to resist the powerful structure. Dialectic of Enlightenment by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, (California: Stanford UP, 2002) shows mass culture as a means of domination. Such readings helped to evaluate the popular novels from below which also present possibility of an alternative image of reality. Feminist and feminine analysis help in the scrutiny of categories such as masculinity, dominance, surveillance, deviance and punishment and also to locate how these categories function. French and American feminists theories included in the review are helpful in interpreting the relevance of the chosen novels. Discipline and Punish by Michel Foucault. (London: Vintage Book 1995) theorizes the social space which demands adherence to the dominant order. It helps to consider the novel as a space of investigation, spaces that unravel secret and punish the deviants. Foucault’s analysis helps to find the terrain for the present study. His methodologies are enriching because it serves as a means to explore the period rather than dismantling it. This strategy serves to see the violence between men and women.

in the chosen novel. It also assisted to analyse whether the depiction of masculinity and femininity hints at the demise of masculinity and femininity as a gendered identity, specific to men and women. Feminism Bakhtin and the Dialogic. Ed. Dale Bauer & S. Jaret Mckinstey. (New York: U. of NY press; 1991) combines feminism and Bakhtin in order to interpret texts. Analysis through these two lenses serves to arrive at new insights, Bakhttin’s theory and dialogism appears to be similar to what Cixous and Showalter describe as the feminine language. Bakthin’s theory of otherness is central to the feminine and feminist analysis because it invites new possibilities for change. Post colonial theory and English literature: A Reader. by Peter Child. (Edinburgh UP, 1999). Simulations by Jean Baudrillard (semiotext; 1983) Edward Said and Critical Decolonization. Ed. by Ferial Ghazoul. J. (Google Books, 2007) helped to understand the significance of post modern and post colonial theories and how some of the aspects can be applied to the past texts which make revisiting worthy. Elizabeth Eger and Lucy Peltz. Ed. Brilliant Women: 18th Century Bluestockings. (New York: Yale UP, 2008) records the reception of the bluestocking and its connection to a tradition of feminist pioneers. Readings such as these helped to understand and evaluate the new woman and the sensational novels as feminist novels which lead us to larger debates such as the problem how to retrieve and appraise women’s forgotten voices.

The review hints at the necessity of more extensive research directed towards not only examining individual writer’s contribution to depict woman in the transition era but also finding commonalities in responding to the feminine and feminist sensibility. A scrutiny of the critical works was largely responsible for undertaking the present project. Reviews by Elaine Showalter. Lyn Pykett, Teresa Magnum places the sensational and new woman
novels firmly back on mainstream Victorian literature. The survey shows the quandary of their voice being lost in the 20th century but recent studies show the burgeoning interest in the sensational and new woman novels concentrating more on the strategies, aestheticism, plot and technique and few studies pay attention to feminine cum feminist aesthetic. The literature only makes one culpable for having spent years as acquiescent learners of English literature without learning anything about this body of work. A sudden introduction to their works and the reviews available enunciate its undeniable motifs and standing as literary texts, which is a motivating factor to evaluate the chosen works intelligibly and theoretically. Feminist analysis of Hardy’s lesser known novels is surprisingly few and books that are there center on vague notions of sexism and misogynist views. Knowledge of the current theories has inspired the study to use up-to date research in the field of feminism including centering the margins, lesbian and gay theories. The chosen novels also offer an exciting and radical reappraisal of identity, patriarchy and gender in fiction which evince the daring attempts made by the chosen writers to stride not so familiar terrain which may be recognized in the ring of literary criticism. The study analyses the labeling of the proper and ‘improper feminine’ by tracing the social and cultural background of the Victorian times. It examines what can be learned about the feminine, feminist, gender, and culture of the late Victorian era. The chosen novels may be site, wherein the meanings of femininities are reworked and negotiated. Women’s resistance to patriarchy depicted in the novels need not mean that the chosen novels are characterised by resistance but they provide a framework in which struggle and resistance can be explored.

The thesis also examines how Hardy, Grand and Braddon’s view of life, art, and feminism were intricately connected and this evinces how they privileged the political and
the social which pitted the feminist writers of the fin de siècle against the mainstream art. In order to set the scene this study scrutinizes briefly the rise of Victorian feminism looks at some of the contemporary reviews for a careful appraisal of those moments in which the works were written. The study links the arenas of literary critics by investigating what can be learned from the late Victorian feminists and feminist’s writers.

**Plan of the Thesis.**

The thesis contains 5 chapters in addition to the introduction and conclusion. Each chapter will begin by laying down the framework of analysis of the topic to be enclosed in that chapter. The chapters also contain sub divisions which take into consideration aspects that are crucial to justify the purpose of the chapter. Each chapter has made use of two or more authors to illuminate its central concern. The chapters are designed to enumerate the meaning of the title. The new trend that was visible at the turn of the century emphasizes the operation of social and political causes that led to the transforming of society and individual destinies. Several forces were responsible for the emergence of the feminist from the feminine. It is significant to comprehend the social and political impact on the literary scene and the evolution of the feminist which made writers of the past respond. The link between novelists and feminist can be discerned in their intention to bring in reforms.

**Chapter 1 - Victorian Feminism:** focuses on the lives and activities of prominent 19th century English feminists. The study of feminism has always concentrated on a certain kind of patriarchal agency, particularly violent, anti-patriarchal struggle. Feminism did not happen but had to be forced by women activists by their rebellion and protest against male hegemony. The chapter provides a conceptual vocabulary for the reading of the emergence
of the feminist from the feminine in the late Victorian context. The subdivisions of the chapter: Victorian Era – a Source of Thought, Subtle web of intricate feminisms, Awareness through Media, Sexual double standards were central to women’s movement, and Diversity and complexity in Victorian feminism, record the upsurge of women’s activities. The final decades of the nineteenth century were a time of social upheaval, featuring feminist agitation. The influence of Quaker, Unitarian tradition, Evangelicalism, Darwinism, on feminists and writers show Victorian feminism as a source of thought. English feminists Emily Davies, Millicent Fawcett, Barbara Smith Bodichon, Josephine Butler to name a few and late Victorian and early 20th century feminists like Sylvia Pankhurst, Emmeline Pankhurst, Lydia Becker uncover the range of diversity and complexity of Victorian feminism. The exploration of ideas and beliefs of these Victorian feminists and strategies the relationship between male politics and feminist commitment gives an insight into the vision and beliefs of these Victorian feminists. A common purpose that links the Victorian feminists and novelist is their reservations against the ideal of feminine image, marital laws, single status of women and domesticity. The chapter is designed to show how myriad of narratives illustrate that feminists were a challenge to the Victorian sentiments. History of Victorian feminism is crucial because the era saw feminists and writers appealing to diverse public on the place of woman. The woman’s entry into public domain signifies the decline in the feminine image of woman but it does not mean complete violation of femininity but casts a new light on Victorian feminine practice. History of Victorian feminism and its impact on society and literature arouses interest to study the Victorian novels from the marginalized perspective.
Chapter II - Feminine Sensibility: The focus of the is to understand the term sensibility and this understanding is facilitated by prominent responses to feminine sensibility by Wollstonecraft, Ian Watts, and Hannah More on feminine sensibility. Such understandings help to explore how it evokes a feminine discourse which gives vent to feminine experience. The feminine in the Victorian context facilitates to understand the portrayal of femininity and the compulsion on the authors to present such an image. Feminine sensibility has its own appeal, a solipsistic or embattled voice to these novelists.

The subdivisions in the chapter –Feminine- a cultural construct, Feminine sensibility, The Passive Feminine Ideal in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, Feminine Receptiveness in *The Woodlanders*, and The Feminine in *Lady Audley’s Secret* evaluate the feminine sensibility displayed by the women characters. Scrutinizing the feminine sensibility in individual novels gives more scope as it responds to the diverse cultural configuration of women’s oppression, passion and resistance. The feminine scheme allows these women to be silent bearers of ideology but this does not mean they are passive or docile. These women present a new set of feminine signs which shows acquiescent notions of femininity but they lack passive adherence to the dominant order hinting at the struggle between the veritable female and the feminine ideal. Hardy, Braddon and Grand give valuable insight into the feminine world, doing something more objective, more astute and independent of political pressures. They like Cixous, are aware that rule of silence must be observed but they are also aware that it is necessary to observe the rule of echo which says it is necessary that adherence to silence may not be observed. Feminine writing in Grand and Braddon is not about demolishing the existing discourses but it is another approach where the writers search for a desire not based on lack but based on love that allows the ‘other’ to live and to
be the ‘other.’ The chosen writers seem to capitulate to normative Victorian standards of morality in making their woman succumb to the social pressures but the resistance described throughout their novels as a whole provides a form of revelation. The novels show women caught between the domestic ethics and the dream of misdemeanor that the inner consciousness aspires, which reflect the thoughts and motives of the woman in the transition. Design of the chapter was essential as it serves to dismantle some of the bias that we may nurture in the current era by focusing on the social situations that led Braddon, Grand and Hardy to show woman as law abiding and moderate. Why was it necessary for women to show signs of femininity? Why can’t women do away with feminine traits? The chapter also illustrates how the feminine sensibility displayed by the heroines is not strange but we recognize how it is acceptable to all irrespective of culture and society because they show how sensibility does not consist in the imaginative enthusiasm and passionate love but in woman’s acceptance and negotiation of the situation they face.

III Chapter - Feminist Sensibility: The chapter shows how patriarchy is the best tool to understand women’s secondary position. Patriarchy is used because within the feminist cultural studies patriarchy is assumed to exist and is used to recognize different instances of oppression and challenge. The understanding of feminism by Victorian, Modern, Post Modern feminists is referred to show that feminism centers on resistance to gender norms and the need to reinvent female identity. The chapter focuses on how rigid distinctions between the oppressed and the oppressor have always been impossible to maintain. The feminist sensibility in the chosen novels is explored in connection with identity, marriage, education, masculinity, femininity and the value of female voice. Feminist sensibility embodies a skeptical sensibility that questions the dominant ideology that excludes them
from inquiry, it lays emphasis on self surveillance, focuses on individualism, choice and empowerment recognises woman’s greater experience. The chapter contains two sections. The first section evaluates the feminist sensibility in Grand, Hardy and Braddon’s women characters and makes a thorough analysis of Ideala, Ethelberta Petherwin, Aurora Floyd, Elizabeth Caldwell (Beth) Eustacia Vye, and Lady Audley. Varied responses to feminist assertion by Victorian feminist and modern and postmodern feminists are brought together to describe and substantiate how feminist rumination centers on comprehending and defying the hierarchical binary opposition between male and female.

The Sub-Headings: Feminist Sensibility, Ideala’s journey to selfhood an evocation of feminist sensibility, Ethelberta Petherwin destabilizes the established boundaries, Aurora Floyd the speaking subject, Eustacia’s Vye’s defiance and transgression, Elizabeth Caldwell empowered by a cause, Lady Audley capable of transgressive proclivities, serve a common purpose in showing how the feminist assertion foreground narrative attempts to satiate or discredit the conservatives of the period.

The focal point of the second section is to show how the chosen novels contradict the sexist ideology by evincing how masculinity and femininity are fluid, such a project emphasize plurality. They like modern critics Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfrane (Dislocating Masculinity :Comparative Ethnographies, 1994) argue that there are male and female descriptions of masculinity and femininity and similarly male and female descriptions of femininity. The subdivisions in the II section ; Feminist Sensibility emphasizes plurality, Lesbian overtones presented as a sign of protest, show how these novels challenge the idea that man and woman do not belong to fixed groups and that biology is no more imperative than lived experience. Post modern feminists scrutiny,
Chinese Ying Yang theory, and mythological speculations on masculinity and femininity (Christian and Hindu) are brought to focus to illustrate how the novelists echo the mythical thought that no individual can display stable, unitary self but is a combination of the masculine and the feminine traits. The section also circulates the discourse of lesbianism which comes closer to feminist theory. Endeavours such as these are made to re-institutionalise our entire comprehension of the complexities of Victorian society where gay and lesbianism existed not as an intermittent singularity but as a social incident. Phallocentric tradition believes in subduing woman’s voice which is shameful. Braddon and Grand apparently find writing as the place where subversive thought can germinate and such a vocation, allows each of the women novelists to uncensor her which permits her to allow her heroines to recover their immense bodily territories that have been sealed.

**Chapters IV and V** focuses on Victorian Sensational Novels and Victorian New Woman Fiction. The necessity arises because these genres mark a new history in the Victorian cultural and literary scene. The chapters focus on cultural and critical ambivalence about the genres and its gendered implications at the time of its production. If social and cultural context give us an idea about the Emergence of the feminist understanding the purpose and the birth of the genres are also important as they serve to give validity to the title of the thesis. Without a fair knowledge about the genre, its themes, features and reason, the research falls flat to explain the arrival of the feminist from the feminine. It’s not a mere explanation or description of the genres that is undertaken but a careful enquiry which serves to confirm and justify the purpose of the study. Analysis of the genres facilitates understanding of the Victorian period’s estimation of the genres and current interpretation to rewrite its dynamics. Finally a critical perspective serves to
incorporate the cultural imaginings and re-characterize the genre to contextualize the sensational and the new woman novels. The novelists’ revolutionary project is the outcome of passionate quest for identity and moral political- veracity against the backdrop of intellectual and emotional isolation. Focus on the two sub genres is necessary as the aim is to struggle against literary fixity (canonical and non canonical) and represent lesser known novelists’ text as one that incorporates issues of sexuality and identity.

Chapter IV - Victorian Sensational novels: a genre that has been subject to critical neglect because of its scandalous and immoral content is taken up to evince the range and scope of the genre. What was perceived as immoral by the Victorian critics is perceived as modern by the modern critics varied interpretations make the enquiry interesting. The subversive qualities such as the proliferation of violence and deviance, its attempt to destabilize the traditional representation of marriage and femininity were issues that were debated then but surprisingly these issues continue to garner the focus of many modern studies. In due consideration of this argument the necessity to define the purpose and features of the genre is essential, as it throws light on many factors such as the novelists choice of the genre, the choice of subject and their rationale in featuring strong and challenging women. Subdivisions of the chapter: The Romantic Poets Relished Sensation, Attempts to Deconstruct the Center, Sensational Realism, Female Insanity- a Compelling Metaphor for Female Malady and The Blend between Popular and High Culture, reveal different aspects of the sensational novels which illustrate the genres adept at encapsulating a number of themes and stylistic characteristics. To begin with it is a sensational story and the ingredients are bigamy, mystery, murder and crime. It is a play of illusions but the objective profile of late Victorian Britain may be traced. The novels reflect the real woman
on an imaginary story breaks the myth of femininity and shows the angel in the house is no longer real. The sensational novels cover wide ranges of topics which give an insight into the 19th century world and also speak of its current relevance. The chapter also aims to show how recent studies on sensational genre show the celebration of the genre and their endeavors to situate the sensational novel within the 19th century critical debate. Analysis of the genre, considering the Victorian critic’s condemnation of the genre and modern critics’ commendation provides fresh insights. Both perspectives affirm that Victorian novels had to interact with new forms of sexual and gender identities. The emergence of the genre marks the re-emergence of the women question which was taken up by Mary Wollstonecraft. Two important events, expansion of the parliamentary franchise in terms of working classmen and the women’s suffragette movement represented the changing landscape of class and gender hierarchies in England. The sensational novels employ such scenarios where transgressions are worked out to hint at the transformations occurring in society.

**Chapter V.- Victorian New Woman Fiction:** the new woman genre is productive in giving voice to the cultural memory of the past. The new woman novels witness what Martha Vicinus, Michel Foucault state about the final decades of the 19th century that it was a crucial period in the modern, sexual and gender identities. Their views stand out as a crucial one where shifts and changes in values and attitudes were experienced. The chapter also suggests how by the feminist’s standard of post feminism the new woman novelists may be termed as moderate and by the standards of 20th century feminism they may be radical. The Subdivisions- The New Woman- a Product of Discourse, The New Woman Fiction, Realism in New Woman Fiction, Gender and Imperialism, New Woman Fiction
perceived as a Popular Fiction, show how the new woman novels interacted with the new forms of social identity. New woman as interpreted by the press and the new woman in fiction are analyzed to show the confusions in the very understanding of the new woman. Their fiction reflects the tension between modernity and traditional values. The chapter also focuses on how Eugenics as a rational reproduction in the 19th century has been ignored but the most sustained expressions are found in the new woman fiction. New woman novelists like modern feminists allow their woman characters to talk for themselves, so that submerged knowledge and hidden alternative can be brought to the surface. The novels may also be seen as the confession novels as it aimed to articulate what women experienced as a woman, giving room for the questioner and the questioned. Grand, Olive Schreiner, Mona Caird defined political activism as an expression of female creativity, each writer with a aim to revise and revolutionize authoritative cultural aesthetic discourse feminized and transformed traditional literary paradigms: (playing with voices, narrative cross-dressing and subversive spirits, ‘speaking of the other’, re-visioning mythologies.) The chapter attempts to show how with the rise of cultural studies popular genres are regarded not as low or vulgar but a fiction that serves a purpose.

**Conclusion** - draws together the various strands of the arguments to sum up the findings and arrive at assured conclusions from the study of the fiction of Thomas Hardy, Mary Braddon, and Sarah Grand about the emergence of the feminist from the feminine in the late Victorian fiction.
Works Cited


