

William Gibson, Bruce Sterling and in the feature films like *Blade Runner*, *Terminator* etc. Whereas the modernists would call the 9/11 event as immoral; postmodernism would call it 'the greatest work of art there has ever been.'

FEMINIST CRITICISM

Feminist literary criticism is a direct product of the Women's movement of the 1960s. It attempted to establish the importance of women in writing and women characters, which in turn would be a tirade against the prevailing notion of women as inferior to men, women as nothing but womb and women as imperfect men. The books that served these purposes are Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of Rights of Woman* (1792), Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949). Besides the above female writers, male contributions include John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869) and Friederich Engel's *The Origin of the Family* (1884). Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1970), Elaine Showalter's *A Literature Of Their Own* (1977) are also major contributions to the growth of feminist criticism. The term 'gynocriticism' is also a gift of feminist literary criticism. The notion of the *écriture féminine* is found in the writing of Julia Kristeva.

Feminist criticism examines the representation of woman in literature – by men or women. It throws light on women's experience, to show whether men and women are different biologically or socially, to rediscover the texts written by women, to see if there is a female language.

A feminist reading, following Sara Mills' analysis in *Feminist Readings*, of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* shall show what feminist critics want to do. As the novel was made a feature film by Spielberg, it is meant for both men and women, but it is specifically meant for women or female audience. Secondly, it is written by a woman novelist, like Emily Brontë writing *Wuthering Heights*. It is primarily a women text, depicting sexuality and the form and language

of the novel synchronizing with it. The five aspects of the feminist criticism illustrated below are peculiar to this theory.

First of all the novel looks at women's sexuality in a different way. Heterosexual love is presented as negative, whereas lesbian love as positive. Celie is subjected to incest as her stepfather abuses her. She realizes that sex for men is like going to the toilet. Sophia too is bored by Harpo's mechanical love making. 'Heart feeling' is lost in either case. Celie's lesbian relation with shug is somewhat like a freedom from oppressive sexual relation with men. Female sexuality is thus given a new connotation. Secondly, the novel is a 'womanist' text. Relation with man is shown here as incidental and temporary. Celie's relation is with her sister and shug, children and woman friends. Men are here presented as oppressors and deceivers. Women are friends in need and thus friends indeed. The women do all their work even carrying the coffin of the mother to the funeral. By working hard Celie establishes her identity as a woman. The stepfather, Mr. __, Harpo, Grandy are all representatives of patriarchy that the feminist movement wages war against. When Celie's husband comes to sense, the author allows him couple Celie.

Thirdly, the epistolary form of the novel is tuned to the woman psychology. Women take to writing letters for either conspiracy or for friendship. Walker uses Black American as the language of Celie to impart more authenticity. Moreover the letters are in the mode of conversation, full of anecdote and entertaining the words of dialogue in the written form. Fourthly, the novel is related to the woman's experience. It is a book about suffering, humiliation, degradation, joy, love, strength and celebration of woman or rather women.

Fifthly, the author-text relation is here an important factor. It is written by a woman. More than that, Alice Walker was herself Black. Naturally her depiction of (a) woman (b) Black is all the more authentic.

But feminist criticism is not meant for an insular attitude. The novel *The Color Purple* crosses the boundary of individual, color and country and encompasses women in general, East or West.