WOMEN, CAPITALISM AND PATRIARCHY: 
THE UNIQUE CASE OF AYN RAND

ABSTRACT

THESIS
SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
Doctor of Philosophy
IN
English

BY
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UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF
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ABSTRACT

In the present study an attempt has been made to read Ayn Rand from a Marxist feminist angle. The study is divided into seven chapters.

The first chapter discusses how the last few decades have witnessed the growth of a number of subversive movements in the world of literature. These movements are subversive in intent and purpose but at the same time are emancipatory in spirit. Ideas and views about literature today are not the same as they were in the time of T.S.Eliot or F.R.Leavis.

Of these movements ‘Feminism’ is probably the most pervasive. Though not confined to academics, its impact on the way we read a text has profound implications. Its impact can be gauged from the fact that it has formed a kind of strategic alliance with other subversive movements namely Psychoanalysis, Deconstruction and Marxism.

The appeal of Marxism for feminist critics is the identification of capitalism and the modes of production which support it as the material base of a class system which is the source of oppression for men and more so for women. In the destruction of capitalism according to Marxist feminists, there would be emancipation from all forms of oppression – economic and patriarchal.

The central hypothesis of Marxist feminist critics stresses a kind of unholy alliance of capitalism and patriarchy. In other words Marxist feminists believe that capitalism creates the conditions for the growth of patriarchy and since most of the known writers happen to be men – women writers have been conveniently forgotten by an essentially male view – feminists turn their attention to women writers to ‘find’ the absence of patriarchal values or a critique of patriarchy.
However, Ayn Rand’s is a unique case in the sense that despite being a woman writer of great substance, she appears to be celebrating the idea of patriarchy. In all her fictional works – The Fountainhead, Atlas Shrugged, We The Living, Night of January 16th, and Anthem – there is a female protagonist who is active, independent, professionally successful, and sexually emancipated.

However, a critical analysis of Ayn Rand’s fiction indicates that far from presenting active, assertive, successful and sexually emancipated heroines, her fictional works are no less guilty of feminist charges. Her heroines and plots in fact do more harm than good to women’s cause.

Her novels are all about female servitude – intellectual, political and sexual which has been made amply clear by her views of feminity and the goal of her writing. Implicitly evident in her fiction and explicitly stated by Ayn Rand in her philosophy is the conviction that women should stand in divine awe of the primal force, the superior male.

A feature of Ayn Rand’s stories, and a highly petrifying one at that, is the depiction of the ‘rape-encounters’ between the heroine and hero at their first meetings. Despite their being active, assertive, professionally successful and sexually emancipated, the women characters in her novels are presented as brainwashed victims of patriarchy. They exist for their men and in the process appear masochistic. Thus, the male protagonists rape almost all her women characters but strangely the women seem to enjoy their rapes. These rape scenes completely ‘dehumanize’ women. Readers with a ‘raised consciousness about the nature of rape’, find this symbolism unpalatable. Ayn Rand’s glorification of rapes in a sense entitles men to access and annex women, for in a capitalist patriarchy women are defined by their biological sex and one of the social requirements of its heterosexuality is the institutionalization of male sexual
Thus in her best known work, *The Fountainhead*, the principal female character – Dominique Francon, is subjected to all kinds of insults including rape – unarguably the most heinous crime against a woman – by the male ‘hero’ who is a thinly disguised persona of the writer herself. In her other works also, the mystique of an all powerful male is unmistakably present. Was it all due to the pernicious influence of capitalism of which Ayn Rand was an unabashed or rather aggressive champion?

The present study probed the nexus of capitalism and patriarchy in the works of Ayn Rand. At the same time being aware of the fact that Ayn Rand does not find a place in the established canon of American literature, the study employing poststructuralist insights investigated the politics that goes into the formation of canon and the possible reasons for the neglect of Ayn Rand by literary critics.

The second chapter of the study deals with an introduction of the various literary feminist movements. It traces the ‘women’s movement’ from the eighteenth century, through the 1960s right up to the present day. We observe that feminism is composed of many ‘feminisms’, which abound in national, cultural and linguistic differences. The one denominator common to all the ‘feminisms’ is the dismantling of patriarchal assumptions and enlarging or replacing of the ‘canon’.

The third chapter contains an analysis of the feminist critique of patriarchy with special reference to Marxist feminist perspective. Marxism and feminism are both theories of ‘power’. They both try to explain the inequality in the distribution of power. Marxism equips feminists with insights into understanding their predicament and thereby find a solution to their unfortunate subjugation by patriarchal capitalism. Marxist
feminists focus on the representations of ideology in literature. They believe that texts reveal imaginary reproductions of unequal sexual power. ‘Consciousness-raising’ is one of the prime objectives of these critics, together with evaluation of literary texts and inaugurating oppositional practices of reading, writing and criticism.

The fourth chapter deals with an analysis of the celebration of patriarchy in Ayn Rand’s fictional writings. Employing Marxist feminist viewpoint, we observe in Ayn Rand’s fiction the legitimation of a patriarchal—capitalist social life and culture through her female characters ‘sense of life’ and hero-worship. One also observes how Ayn Rand in her fictional works thoroughly complements patriarchal repression of women and female sexuality by turning women into the raw materials that fuel man’s projects. Ayn Rand’s celebration of patriarchy treats women to be a slave to men’s desires and sexual needs. We also observe how the male sex assumes itself to be the generic civil subject and subordinates women to a hierarchical, patriarchal economy where women are destined to a ‘second class’ existence.

The fifth chapter presents an analysis of Ayn Rand’s non-fictional works. A brief survey is also made of capitalism and other related issues in her works. Through her six non-fiction books, Ayn Rand made an effort to expand her ‘philosophy of Objectivism’. The books far from presenting any systematic philosophy are in reality scattered collections of articles and passages from her novels, either in defense of her views or expanding upon her philosophy. Ayn Rand, through her six non-fiction books, attempted to proclaim the ‘philosophy of Objectivism’ as the only route to a ‘rational life’. Her call to Americans and other people at large was to ‘relearn individualism, have admiration for capitalism and productivity and evince belief in rational self-interest’. This for her was the only authentic ‘sense of life’.
The sixth chapter deals with the question of canon and Ayn Rand's place in it. A close scrutiny of the English literary canon reveals the politics behind the formation of the canon. One observes how the standard canon of great books, has been constructed keeping in view the ideology and political interests and values of an elite and privileged class. Marxist-feminists along with Black, Lesbian and post-colonial feminists have identified this elite and privileged class to be white, male and European, with the result that the canon consists mainly of works that manifest racism, patriarchy and capitalist imperialism. Ayn Rand's heroines are "exchanged and circulated" enforcing the idea of their being 'objects' or 'products' in a capitalist patriarchy. This probably resulted in her being omitted from the 'canon' of Women's Studies; and her 'atheism and libertarianism' ensured her not being part of the traditional literary Canon. Nevertheless, her exclusion from the canon brings to the fore the politics and play of ideology in a writer being included or excluded from it.

Thus a review of Ayn Rand's fictional and non-fictional works reveals that she unashamedly glorifies patriarchal-capitalism. A superficial reading of her works appeals for all the reasons she writes - celebration of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. However, a critical and focused reading reveals an altogether subversive and in particular anti-woman subject matter. It is for this reason that feminists far from invoking her because of her being a woman, actually despise her intellectual premises and thus by implication her works, both fictional and non-fictional. The final chapter is a recapitulation of the major points, which have emerged during the discussion on Ayn Rand and her works.
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This is to certify that Mr. Akbar Joseph Arjun Syed has completed his Ph.D. thesis entitled "Women, Capitalism And Patriarchy: The Unique Case of Ayn Rand" under my supervision. To the best of my knowledge Mr. Syed's dissertation is a fairly satisfactory and original piece of work based on his own study of the subject.

Dr. M. Asim Siddiqui  
(Supervisor)
Dedicated
to my mother
Yasmeen Raza Tahir
and father
Syed Tahir Mian Shah
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Preface

There is little doubt that in the popular mind (University dons and literary critics included), Ayn Rand is considered an entertainer who gave the world two masterpieces, *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*. Rarely a thought is spared to discuss analytically the subliminal impact of these works, as other works written by Ayn Rand, on the readers who innocently devour these works and sometimes even join some popular Ayn Rand clubs. In the present study I have tried to read Ayn Rand in the context of recent developments in theory. A sound theoretical perspective is needed to understand the mystique of Ayn Rand, as also the influence of Ayn Rand on readers.

My foray into theory convinced me that Marxist feminist perspective will equip one with necessary tools to unearth a very blatant celebration of patriarchy in a very important woman writer of twentieth century. However, Marxist feminist view itself cannot be understood properly without a clear and comprehensive understanding of various feminist strands, hence the need of a short introduction outlining developments in theory, and a fairly comprehensive chapter on different feminist movements with special reference to Marxist feminist view.

Ironical though it may sound, in almost all her works, Ayn Rand presents a woman character for whom man is the normative force, to be adored and worshiped. Apart from patriarchy, capitalism is the other force (in fact patriarchy has an unholy alliance with capitalism) which Ayn Rand wholeheartedly supports in her fictional and especially non-fictional writings. A chapter is devoted to studying capitalism and other related issues in Ayn Rand’s non-fictional works.

Finally it is important to determine the place of Ayn Rand in relation to literary canon. Again some contemporary theories have been found very useful to address this ticklish question.
I have consulted the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (fourth edition), for documentation.

During the course of my study I received help and support from various quarters. I have great pleasure in recording my deep sense of gratitude to Dr. M. Asim Siddiqui, Reader, Department of English, under whose supervision I completed this thesis entitled, Women, Capitalism And Patriarchy: The Unique Case of Ayn Rand. His keen insight and amazing perspicacity, not only guided me at various stages of this thesis but also gave me immeasurable moral and intellectual support.

I heartily thank Professor Farhat Ullah Khan, Chairman, Department of English, for his help and advice. My very special thanks are due to Professor S. Wiqar Hussain, who awakened my interest in literature. I am also thankful to the other staff members of the Department of English for encouraging me.

Particular acknowledgement is made to Indo-American Center for International Studies (formerly ASRC) at Hyderabad, and British Council Library at New Delhi, for always being forthcoming with their reading material on Ayn Rand and Contemporary Literary Theories. The libraries at Sahitya Akademi, Jawahar Lal Nehru University and Aligarh Muslim University were also very helpful in providing with the relevant critical material for my study.

Thanks are extended to Shahid Raz, my friend who very neatly typed the manuscript despite his busy schedule. In the end I must thank my friends Fayyaz, Javed and Saif who took personal interest in my study and always supported me. My special gratitude is due to my parents, sisters and all my family members, whose enthusiasm and encouragement kept me at my work.

Akbar Joseph Arjun Syed
Women, Capitalism And Patriarchy:  
The Unique Case of Ayn Rand

The impact of literary theories on English studies has been reportedly ‘cataclysmic’ or ‘redemptive’ depending on which side of the academic debate one positions himself. Nevertheless, the reputation of some writers of the English ‘canon’ is at stake and some lost writers as also literary traditions are being ‘discovered’ by a radical element which questions not only the status of some writers but also the ways of reading a literary work, or simply writing to use a preferred term.

Of these radical voices ‘Feminism’ is probably the most pervasive and persistent. Though not confined to literary studies, its impact on the way we read a text has profound implications. Since feminists see literature as a political act/construction, ‘at its best feminist criticism is also a political act whose aim is not simply to interpret the world but to change it by changing the consciousness of those who read and their relation to what they read’ (Fetterely viii).

A major interest of feminist critics has been to reconstitute all the ways in which we deal with literature. While originally they were more concerned with exposing the inequities of a ‘patriarchal bureaucracy’, their alliance with Psychoanalysis, Deconstruction and Marxism has helped in their intellectual emancipation, regeneration and in the making of their own literature.
By and large the feminist movement has drawn a lot from Marxism and in fact it will be safe to assume that Marxism in general has influenced ‘literary theories’ extensively in the construction of intellectual predications of their discourses. Marxists view literature not as something separate from the world nor do they view literature as reflecting the world in a passive and mirror-like way. For them literature is a part and product of the world as any other ‘signifying process’.

The present study has sought to probe the writings of Ayn Rand from a Marxist-feminist angle. The central hypothesis of Marxist-feminist critics stresses a kind of unholy alliance between capitalism and patriarchy. In other words Marxist feminists believe that capitalism creates the conditions for the growth of patriarchy and since most of the known writers happen to be men (women writers have been conveniently forgotten by an essentially male view) – feminists turn their attention to women writers to ‘find’ the absence of patriarchal values or a critique of patriarchy.

However, Ayn Rand’s is a unique case in the sense that despite being a woman writer of great substance she celebrates the idea of patriarchy. Born Alice Rosenbaum on February 2, 1905 in St. Petersburg, Russia, Ayn Rand is the name she took when she came to USA in 1924. Ayn Rand and her advocacy of egoism and capitalism arouse violent extremes of admiration and antagonism. She originated a philosophical framework of her own, for in her view, man and his existence were in conflict with the existing philosophical theories of the time. She called her creed ‘Objectivism’. The essence of her creed was ‘dogmatic atheism in Religion, objective reality in Metaphysics, reason in Epistemology, self-interest in Ethics and capitalism in Politics’ (O’Neill 18).

She fancied herself a philosopher and she tried to impress the efficacy of her philosophy by presenting it in works of fiction. Her five
fictional works are the compendium of her philosophy, which she expostulated about ad infinitum in her non-fictional works. However, what makes Ayn Rand’s works exceptional is that despite being a woman writer of great eminence, she appears anti-woman in thought and deed. Feminist critics can indict her in general and Marxist- feminists in particular for having an unabashed and unapologetic anti-woman view, and for a malafide celebration of ‘patriarchy’ and ‘capitalism’ in her fiction and philosophy. These two ideologies have systematically brought about the subjugation of women.

The basic philosophy in Ayn Rand’s novels is the presentation and the projection of ‘the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, his productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute’ (For The New Intellectual). For her, novels were a viable instrument for the presentation of her ‘sense of life’, which was the presentation of ‘an ideal man’.

Ayn Rand’s second postulate was ‘capitalism’. For her ‘it is the only economic system based on reason, the most practical and productive moral system known to man. Those who practice it are the brightest, most ethical of men’ (Baker 126-27). In all her fictional works the heroes strive for the ideal of, ‘capitalism’ and the heroines strive for their ideal, ‘hero-worship’.

The mystique of an all-powerful male is unmistakably present in all of Ayn Rand’s five fictional works. Whether this was all due to the pernicious influence of ‘patriarchal capitalism’ of which Ayn Rand was an unabashed or rather aggressive champion is a moot question, and a review of her non-fictional prose will unarguably help. Ayn Rand’s philosophy, which she terms ‘Objectivism’, is perhaps most eloquently expressed in her works of fiction and particularly in her two major novels:
The Fountainhead and Atlas Shrugged. With Atlas Shrugged, she enhanced and completed her portrayal of ‘an ideal man’ in John Galt, who filled in the blanks, which Howard Roark in The Fountainhead left incomplete. After the publication of Atlas Shrugged, Ayn Rand did not write any novel, her destiny metamorphosed from an imaginative writer to a public philosopher. This career change was a natural result of the interest her works of fiction aroused in readers for whom the thought content was as important, if not more, than the plot and characters.

The present study also proposes to study the nexus of capitalism and patriarchy in the works of Ayn Rand. At the same time aware of the fact that Ayn Rand was one of only a handful of successful American female novelists of the twentieth century and one of an even smaller group of successful female philosophers, one may be left wondering as to why she does not find a place in the established ‘canon’ of American literature. The present researcher, employing poststructuralist insights, also plans to probe the politics that goes into the ‘formation of canon’ and the possible reasons for the neglect of Ayn Rand by literary critics. Needless to add that even a cursory reading of certain stands of contemporary literary theory will be of great help to understand the reasons for Ayn Rand’s exclusion from the canon.

As with any research undertaken, this study endeavours to explore ideas, probe issues, solve problems or make an argument that compels us to rethink, rework and reconstitute the premises of our learning.
Chapter II

Feminist Movements: An Introduction

The 'women's movement' of the 1960s was not the start of feminism as is generally held by literary and feminist critics. The 'women's movement' as Julia Kristeva has stated in her article 'Two Generations' actually began in the eighteenth century as the struggle of 'suffragists and existential feminists'. The movement in the 1960s was a renewal of an old tradition of thought and action already having its literature [classic books], which had diagnosed the problems of women's deplorable state in society and in some cases, outlined a course for the removal of these inequities.

Some eminent 'first generation' feminists who took the cause of the emancipation of women include Mary Wollenstonecraft who in her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) analyzed the works of male writers such as Milton, Pope and Rousseau, Olive Schreiner who wrote *Women and Labour* (1911), the novelist Virginia Woolf who in her classic book *A Room of One's Own* (1929) very vividly portrayed the inequalities women face in seeking education and alternatives to marital life, and Simone de Beauvoir whose seminal work *The Second Sex* (1949) is a classic feminist text. The latter told the world that 'throughout history, women have been reduced to objects for men: 'woman' has been constructed as man's Other, denied the right to her own subjectivity and to responsibility for her own actions' (Moi 92). Further, according to Beauvoir, 'women' have been press ganged by a patriarchal ideology that has assumed all 'meaning' to itself, dominating all aspects of social, cultural and political life.

Equally important is how women have 'internalized' this
patriarchal vision which is presented as ‘the natural’ thereby condemning
themselves to live constantly in a state of ‘in authenticity’ or ‘bad faith’
as Toril Moi observes. Simone de Beauvoir is regarded by many as the
greatest feminist theorist of the twentieth century and her criticism of
patriarchy and its assumptions is brought out in her famous statement ‘One
is not born a woman; one becomes one.’ The feminists of today owe a lot
to her in her defining of the woman as a construct. However, a point to be
noted is that there were significant male contributions to this tradition of
feminist writing, and amongst them worthy to be mentioned are John Stuart
Mill and his work The Subjection of Women (1869), and The Origin of
The Family (1884) by Friedrich Engels.

‘The women’s movement’ of the first generation or ‘first phase’
was deeply rooted in the sociopolitical life of nations. Their concerns were
political equality and economic parity with men: equal pay for equal work
and rejecting the feminine or maternal traits which rendered them
incompatible or unequal to men and therefore, ineligible to participate in
the making of history of their nations. Their spirited protests brought about
changes in personal [abortion rights and contraception] and economic lives
of women [equal pay and professional recognition], and according to many
these ‘will soon prove to have even more significant effects than those of
the Industrial Revolution’ (Moi 184).

The ‘second generation’ feminists are those who sought to implement
the programme set out by the founding members of the women’s movement.
Julia Kristeva calls this the ‘second phase’ in her essay ‘Two Generations’,
and Maggie Humm ‘the second wave’ in her book Reader’s Guide to
Contemporary Feminist Criticism. It is associated with women who have come
to the fold of feminism since May 1968, and who have brought their aesthetic
and psychoanalytic experiences and knowledge with them. A chief
characteristic of this phase/wave is the quasi-universal rejection of religion
and a deep distrust of political agitation to achieve goals. The feminist activism (literary and social) of the second generation still has an allegiance to its founding members and still talks of a socio-cultural recognition for women, ‘in a qualitative sense’ (Kristeva 187).

The second phase/wave feminism is primarily interested in the characterizing of feminine psychology and its symbolic manifestations, seeking a language for their material and inter-subjective experiences, ‘which have been silenced by the cultures of the past’ (Kristeva 187) and by a patriarchal ‘logic of identification.’ Julia Kristeva notes that as artists or writers, these feminists have undertaken a veritable exploration of the ‘dynamics of signs’.

The ‘second generation’ feminists were ‘literary’ from the start, and in this sense they realized the significance of ‘the images of women’ promulgated by literature, and saw it as vital to not only question their authority but to combat them head on. In this sense, the women’s movement has always been crucially concerned with books and literature. Therefore, feminist criticism should not be seen as a diversion from feminism but as a continuation of the struggle for socio-politico-cultural reorganization of nations. In a way feminist literary criticism is one of the most practical ways of influencing everyday conduct and attitude.

In the second half of the 1960s, ‘the notion of origin’ as observed by Maggie Humm was a key feature of feminist criticism. The critics worked hard to decipher the significance of authorship of the text. Second wave feminism of the late 1960s marks a break with the ‘traditionalists’ because critics such as Kate Millet, Germaine Greer and Mary Ellmann made revisionary readings of what Ellmann calls ‘phallic’ writing. The focus of critics was in the identification of sexist vocabulary and gender stereotypes in the works of male authors and ascribing of negative features
like ‘hysteria’ and ‘passivity’ to women and not to men.

A crucial theme in second wave criticism was the idea that literary works represent ‘gender discriminations and inequalities’. They are guilty of stabilizing a patriarchal power structure. For second wave/phase feminism this patriarchal culture is all pervasive and sexist in tone. It begins with a psychological conditioning in the family, and incorporates all economic and cultural structures at the micro (family) and macro (society) level. Kate Millett in her seminal work Sexual Politics [1970], calls this ‘ideological indoctrination’ as it works through literature.

These critics observed how in literary works, features of patriarchy like sexual violence, are portrayed not only in character stereotypes but also in symbolic patterns of dominance and subordination. Thus, ‘woman’ is constructed in a stereotype; her social subordination is possible only through association (equating women and passivity). It is further noted that the narrative structures of fiction are conjoined with other cultural structures of patriarchy.

By the 1970s, Ellen Moers and Elaine Showalter had scripted the essentials of ‘gynocriticism’, which celebrated writing by women, for women, with its very own literary expressions and ‘sub-culture’. They also showed women’s literary history as a progressive tradition. They focused on ‘the novel’, which is conventionally regarded as a women’s genre (since novel writing offered the only ‘professional career’ to many nineteenth century women). If literature was to give women a sense of individual and collective significance, then the novel was a likely source of positive images. Further, many feminists, excited at having created a literary genre, began investigating a wider range of styles and conventions. What second wave/phase critics found was these conventions (of literary representations) were as misogynistic as the social conventions on which
literature draws, and they began focusing on these powerful textual affirmations of experiences. Thus, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar built on this retrieval of women’s literary history and, employing psychoanalytic tools, analyzed the themes of ‘the double’ and ‘the domestic’ in nineteenth and twentieth century women’s writings to argue about the ‘existence of the female aesthetic’.

In one decade, feminist criticism unearthed that ‘literature’, far from being a collection of great texts was in reality a collection of sexist ideologies, and women’s writing (gynotexts) offered new ways of understanding these ideologies and remaking of new images for women. The decade also saw the celebration of creative writing and criticism and their fusion in the works of some writers like Alice Walker and Adrienne Rich.

The 1980s and 1990s have been concerned with more substantial questions about literary meaning, which the charting out of a women’s tradition did not solve and the feminist movement of the time employed various poststructuralist discourses to make clear the powerful and sexually expressive relation between men and women’s psyche and language. It can be observed that there are obvious connections between poststructuralism and second wave feminism. This connection is both in terms of chronology and challenges they pose to the bases of language. While the first phase of ‘second wave feminism’ has been called the moment of the ‘resisting reader’ (Fetterley, Millett), poststructuralism marks the high point of the ‘second wave feminism’ by sparking off the debate about ‘essentialism’ and ‘difference’.

Poststructuralist insights encouraged feminists to concentrate on ‘difference’ and explore a great variety of forms of feminity and masculinity in cultural texts. Literary identity was shown to be constantly
changing or always in a state of flux. Signifiers of ‘women’ rarely refer to actual women, as second wave/phase feminists had already proved. Feminists argued that all identities are constructed within ‘systems of difference’. Hence, a general feminist attack on the ‘social construction of gender’ and ‘biological difference’ was strengthened with a poststructuralist questioning of values as universal.

Poststructuralist feminists have questioned the literary value of the establishment of ‘the canon’. To them the great books listed in ‘the canon’ are just another class, race and gender based form of control. Since the canon is too powerful a hierarchy to be undone by attacking or adding a few women writers, feminist poststructuralists have attacked the idea of a ‘unitary literary identity’ (Humm 102).

Feminist poststructuralists have highlighted the processes of literary production (discourse) and the examination of differences of gender. They have taken from Michel Foucault this idea of discourse, according to whom ‘we read and speak only what we are allowed to read or speak since institutions control the formation of discourses.’

‘Discourse’ analysis examines the implications of vocabulary (the term ‘hysteria’ frequently given to obstreperous women) for women and thus, challenges ‘essentialism’ and literary misrepresentations. Further, gender and sexual representations change from era to era not because the physical bodies change, but because ‘political’ authorities change the conventions of representation to maintain their hierarchy.

From the mid 1980s, feminists have been focusing on the differences of colour and sexual preference and creating their own ‘aesthetics’ as the black feminists have tried to do. Similarly, lesbian and queer theorists were recovering lost lesbian writers and critiquing the heterosexism of the literary academy. The prevalent racism and
homophobia shaping literary structures is sought to be exposed by them. Gloria Anzaldua and Gayatri Spivak (1987) focused on the issues of ‘place and displacement’ thus bringing a post-colonial and post-modern perspective in the movement.

As can be glimpsed from the preceding discussion that there are a wide range of positions within the second generation feminists. Though it is beyond the scope of this study to talk about all these positions in great detail, an attempt is made in the following part of this chapter to discuss briefly and clearly some of the links between feminism and different theoretical approaches, especially the more recent ones, excluding the Marxist feminist position which is taken up in some detail elsewhere in this study.

Myth and Feminist Literary Criticism: science fiction writing played a major role in feminist thinking of the 1970s. Myths, whether traditional (religious/patriarchal) or classical, often shape the concepts, plots and structures of science fiction novels. Science fiction more than any other kind of literary genre, describes worlds beyond existing politics and history. Literary feminism sees in this a chance to move beyond contemporary political formations in order to transform and humanize society. Like feminism, myths work against the grain of contemporary culture.

At first glance traditional myths seem remarkably ‘anti-woman’. Feminists argue that Greco-Roman myths (European literature abounds with them) are masculine constructs, whose narratives only reflect the anxieties of male psyches. The main project of feminist myth critics is to move away from these ‘constructs’ and find myths that are originally feminine. A case in point is Virginia Woolf’s use of ‘Isis’ from Egyptian mythology to reject the contemporary and patriarchally obsessive Greek
mythology. Further, feminists have argued that mythology can help to reformulate traditional, historical accounts of women’s lives with female centered stories and also redress the huge and distorting impact of many traditional religions on women’s roles.

Myths supposedly speak of human ‘truths’, eternal and even primal, and so they are primarily about power and gender. It is not surprising that feminist thinking in the 1970s was much influenced by myth criticism and science fiction writing, for like them it was also radical, existing beyond time and politics. Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex* brought to the attention of readers new ways of organizing reproduction, contraception and child raising. In describing the future reproductive culture, she detailed the kinds of changes in language and power it would bring. Firestone’s vision was radical and utopian. Those feminists who embraced this utopian impulse came to be called cultural feminists.

Thus, we can say that second wave feminism took shape in a utopian mode and as Maggie Humm’s states in her book *Practicing Feminist Criticism*, ‘cultural feminism’ took shape from this utopian mode. ‘Cultural feminists’ have employed the use of the myth critique more than any other variety of feminists in order to show how women’s identity and literary authority are intertwined.

The aim of feminist myth critics is to attack traditional gender archetypes and reevaluate other mythical representations. Feminist critics focus on *alternative narrative images and conventions*. It is observed that science fiction is dedicated to rethinking conventional representations of consciousness and social roles, and feminist myth critics use this genre to celebrate the making of ‘a new narrative image and convention’ for women with the purpose of subverting the traditional myth which is androcentric.
Psychoanalytic Feminist Criticism: One of the most distinctive themes of second wave feminism is its attention to female consciousness. Consciousness raising has to do with the nature of feminist perception, for women’s thought processes are different from those of men. Both, psychoanalysts and feminists today examine the nature of relationship of the social construction of ‘women’ and ‘men’ with their mutual and exclusive psychic identifications.

Psychoanalytic theory has joined deconstruction and other areas of second wave/phase feminism to explain literary repression of ‘women’. Feminists have utilized psychoanalysis to subvert and destabilize ‘gendered fixities’, a process which could lead to new cultural representations.

The feminists have employed psychoanalytic insights into understanding gender representations in literature. From a Freudian examination of ‘symbolic representation’ through plot and imagery with its subsequent implications for the reader to the Jungian approach to understanding how dreams are representations of the unconscious mind, psycho feminists have covered a big ground.

A third object-relations approach draws on Nancy Chodorow and Melaine Klein’s thesis who have turned away from the unconscious towards the social and the ‘Pre-Oedipal’ intense infant-mother relationship.

Finally, many have turned to Lacan who argued that linguistic features such as metaphors and metonymy reveal greater degree of psychic desires. Lacan’s psychoanalytic thesis rests on his understanding of the workings of the unconscious as Sigmund Freud theorized, to which he added a new dimension. Lacan stated the unconscious to be ‘the nucleus of our being’ (Ecrits, 1960). Juxtaposing Freud’s ‘dream work’ mechanisms of ‘condensation and displacement’ with linguist Roman Jakobson’s
concept of ‘metaphor and metonymy’, Lacan argued that the unconscious is ‘linguistic in structure.’ His contribution was in correlating ‘metonymy’ with ‘displacement’ where one thing represents another by means of the part standing for the whole and ‘metaphor’ with ‘condensation’ where many things may be compressed into a symbol, just like a metaphor. Fully agreeing with Jakobson’s observations that poetry and literary language are deviations from the ‘norm’ or normal language, Lacan used these linguistic means of self-expression as evidence for his thesis of the unconscious being structured like language.

French feminists are greatly influenced by his characterization of an infant’s development through the three stages of ‘Imaginary, mirror-stage and the Symbolic’. They especially owe to his concepts of the ‘Imaginary’ or the realm where there is no distinction between ‘self and Other’ and the ‘Symbolic’ stage where the child enters the language system, which employs linguistic signs as substitutes for language names. Mindful that this stage also marks the beginning of socialization, with its prohibitions and restraints, associated with the image of the father, they see the Symbolic realm represented in a world of patriarchal order and logic. To protest against this obvious bias in language in favour of the male and break away from this Symbolic harassment many feminists led by Helen Cixous have tried to form a language which is oriented towards the female calling it ‘écriture feminine’ (the term is taken from her essay *The Laugh of the Medusa*). ‘For these feminist critics, the literary text is never primarily a representation of reality, or a reproduction of a personal voice expressing the minutiae of personal experience. Indeed the French theorists often deal with concerns other than literature: they write about language, representation, and psychology as such and often travel through detailed treatments of major philosophical issues of this kind before coming to the literary text’ (Barry 125).

Further they use psychoanalysis to discover processes of gender
differences (‘gender perspective and points of view; gender subjectivity [in representations of displacement] and gender absence involving reading’ (Humm 82).), and thereby challenge traditional literary criticism.

Thus, feminism, both as a political movement and as a literary practice, can be said to be analogous to psychoanalysis, for both use a model of repression. Feminists think that ‘women’ are repressed and consciousness-raising of this repressed ‘unconscious’ can be therapeutic as well as instructive into learning about the previously unexpressed effects of patriarchy.

Deconstruction and Feminist Literary Criticism: Amongst the many literary movements of the twentieth century, ‘deconstruction’ has singularly influenced the second wave literary feminism in a most pronounced fashion. Deconstruction calls into question the notion of ‘single meaning’ that a text has, as postulated by the traditional critics. Feminists have employed deconstruction to attack ‘hierarchies of value and single truths’. They have been immensely helped by deconstruction in their project of questioning some forms of knowledge and some claims of objective truths about gender identity. Feminists use deconstructive methodology to subvert patriarchal discourses and knowledge claims.

Employing deconstruction, feminists see ‘Western belief systems’ as totalitarian that privilege ‘the males’ through its dualism or belief in binary oppositions. Finding the logic of these opposing terms (masculine/feminine, rational/intuitive...) is of great interest to the feminists, especially exposing the masculine ‘as a central or transcendent truth’. Since this privileging takes place through a play of ‘signs’ in a text, feminists argue that these ‘literary signs’ can be deconstructed to reveal connections between culture and political beliefs, and how some terms and concepts have been devalued—especially those associated with
the feminine. Patriarchal society, feminist deconstructionists argue, naturalizes values and meanings in culture – which are in turn co-opted and constructed by literature.

Feminism, informed by deconstruction, focuses on linguistic constructions: use of metaphors of gender and binary oppositions (to reinforce a phallocentric masculine perspective), precisely because language is one mechanism by which women have been ‘demeaned’. Since these constructions are quite unrelated to the actual characteristics of women, deconstruction of ‘literary identities and processes’ can make an active contribution to the undermining of social stereotypes. Gayatari Spivak writing in Critical Practice (1980) says that all these concepts are central to feminist deconstructionists and all point to the ways in which women’s representations often throw into relief the hidden patriarchal ideology of a text.

Destabilizing the ‘preferred meanings’ and organized belief systems of literature, looking for ‘slippages’ of meaning, attention to repetition of some ‘master words’ and rhetorical gender statements. Attributing the tendency to privilege speech as part of the Western tradition of logocentrism, feminist deconstructionists have produced not only very sophisticated readings of canonical texts, but also proved the value of many non-canonical texts.

Postmodernism and Feminist Literary Criticism: Postmodernism and its ideas advance existing theories of gender, culture and capitalism. Feminist postmodernists agree that gender constructs are culturally variable and unstable. A major aim of theirs is to explore these cultural constructs both at a ‘high (canonical/classical) and low (popular) levels.’ Since postmodernism per se is against ‘meta narratives’ and their totalizing explanations, feminists inspired by postmodernism pay increased attention
Feminism and postmodernism both challenge the barriers between the dominant and the marginal (masculine/feminine gender constructions) as well as canonic genres. According to them the meaning of culture is derived both from its processes like canon formation, and from the social contexts in which these processes take place. Both undermine modernism's (with its tendency of essentialism) and capitalism's celebration of great artists and 'the universalization' of white, middle class masculine values. For both, gender is a historical and shifting construct. As art is not a separate and superior realm of/from life, literary institutions are as much likely to 'construct' values as they reflect 'truths'. Because, the concept of origin, of masculine individualism is questioned, progressive possibilities for women are offered.

Postmodern feminists question the separation of literature from culture because if the meaning of literature exists in its relations to other works of literature and culture, then literature cannot be understood outside the culture that produces it. This 'textual democracy', according to Maggie Humms, is attractive to feminists. By intermixing high and low art, and refusing to give grand explanations of literary representations, postmodernist feminists breach the divide between 'the domestic zone' (feminine) and the public world of men, so antagonistic to women.

This 'destabilizing' of gender representations and constructions help challenge political certainties and make intelligent contemporary culture. According to Meaghan Morris, as observed by her in her work *The Pirate's Fiancée* (1988), these 'gender representations interact with the arts (in highly complex and contradictory ways) and produce and institutionalize cultural languages' which are derogatory to women.
Demystifying patriarchal reality and institutions is the basic strategy of feminist writers and postmodernism’s greatest contribution to feminism has been the devaluing of great traditions (whether literary or the arts) like the ‘essentializing’ of women by modernism. Feminist postmodernism deliberately undermines principles such as ‘the great masters’, ‘the literary canon’, ‘universal manhood’ in favour of interrelating high with popular culture in terms of gender equality.

**Black Feminist Literary Criticism**: Black feminism arose as an opposition to Eurocentric, ‘universal’ critical modes of feminism at large. Black women are of the opinion that both criticism and fiction are narratives that represent race in particular ways. Right up to the 1980s, black women were misrepresented or marginalized in most critical texts and literary history. It was observed that writings of Afro-American women are simply absent in black literary histories written by men, which record an exclusively masculine literary tradition. Black feminism exposed the way that the gender conventions of black masculinity work together with white bourgeois society.

Black feminists too insist that gender representations cannot be separated from other features of culture. They showed how black women are triply oppressed: suffering racial, class and gender oppressions whose representations necessitate more complex cultural critiques, opening new cultural possibilities. Black feminism problematizes any ‘essentialist construction of black women’.

Whereas white Western feminists see the institution of patriarchy as their primary oppressor, black feminists see patriarchy together with race, as their oppressors. Black feminists see the making of the case for linking literature and political change far more imperative to their cause.
Barbara Smith gave shape to ‘black aesthetic’ when in her pioneering essay, Towards a Black Feminist Criticism (1977), she saw black feminism as autonomous rather than separatist. Further, its criticism would build on ‘simultaneity of discourse’ (Smith). This entailed reading of texts, which focused on the inter-relation of discourses – of race, gender and sexuality.

As black literature interacts with traditional oral stories, as well as with writings and criticism, black feminist criticism is opposed to examining only oral traditional genres. Resisting the temptation of changing or replacing ‘the canon’, black feminists aim to offer new reading practices based on new assumptions about writing. Employing ‘reclamation’ criticism, they widen ‘the canon’ to include black women writers. A second task observed is the eradication of stereotypes attached to ‘black feminity’ by calling attention to cultural history. A far more pressing concern is to address the question of audience and relations between black writers and readers, black or white.

Black feminism offers a multiplicity of responses, cultural and literary, to move beyond a colonial system: whether they are economic or cultural. Black feminist texts organize writing and reading resistances to colonial dominations and misrepresentations and can therefore subvert a white racist history and literature.

Lesbian Feminist Literary Criticism: In feminism, ‘lesbian aesthetic’ is marked as the ‘coming out’ story. Lesbian feminism arose out of a response to a sense of anxiety at being silenced by a patriarchal culture and a largely heterosexual feminist discourse. Drawing on the work of over two decades of feminist research, lesbian feminists have made major and crucial contributions to feminist theory by investigating ‘cultural constructions of sex and gender’.
Arguing that since all criticism is ideological and reflects a particular cultural construction of historical values, lesbian feminists who were much influenced by black feminism, saw racism in literary and much feminist discourse as indefensible intellectually and thereby decided to expose the double standards. For lesbians as for Afro-American women, inequalities of race and class are sexualized, drawing together the emotional with the political. They dwell on the notion that ‘difference of sexuality’ must surely shape the ‘representation of sexuality’.

Lesbian feminists have devoted themselves to studying how ‘lesbian representations’ and ‘feminine representations’ are different; what part historical construction, self and social censorship, and language have played in the subjection of lesbians. They are of the view that representations of sexuality are constrained by rules of masculine and feminine behaviour, and their principal task is to decode what a dominant heterosexual culture has silenced. For lesbian feminists, ‘lesbian’ is an alternative model of female identity and ‘lesbian feminism’ opposes the constructions imposed by heterosexuality and represents an alternative sexual discourse.

Michel Foucault’s History of Sexuality was a landmark study, which offered many suggestive insights into the historical construction of sexuality in the West. He enunciated the discourse, which the lesbian feminists adopted, that any exploration of sexual constructions depends very much on literary critical concerns: on the forms, concepts and vocabulary of texts. Making clear that since there is no one experience and no one language of sexuality, the current definitions of sexuality rest upon culturally specific oppositions (intellect/passion) which do not acknowledge the experiences of lesbians because they are constructed by a heterosexual patriarchy.
The main aim of lesbian feminists is to clarify the ways in which critics can discover a ‘lesbian aesthetic’, incorporate lesbian texts into the new literary history and appreciate lesbian critical principles in feminism and in literary criticism. Another feature of lesbian feminism is an opposition to gender hierarchy: there are no binaries of superior/inferior, male/female.

Lesbian feminism shows that ‘difference’ is both a concept, and something that can be staged in positive alternatives to heterosexual patterns. Literature’s support can be invaluable in transforming ‘sexual politics’ and displacing heterosexist/masculine patterns of meaning making. Lesbian feminist criticism provides the critical strategies, which subvert the traditional literary theory and everyday sexual stereotypes.

*Third World Feminist Literary Criticism*: Third world feminism questions the construction of a colonial female identity and subjectivity, patriarchal imperialism and domination, the sexual/racial constructions of imperialism and the impact of all of these on literary conventions and forms. The influence of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* and post-colonialist discourse has had a major influence in the inauguration and development of ‘third world feminisms’.

A major feature of third world feminism is the unearthing of the link between patriarchal and imperialist ideas. At the heart of the patriarchal–imperialist project is what third world feminists see as the fundamental hostility to, and fear of, ‘others’, particularly ‘female others’. Further, the third world feminist’s exploration of binary oppositions between colonized people and white exploiters, and the literary representations of that opposition in the form of black/white, static/progressive time, are seen to be crucially dependent on the repression of women.
Third world feminism draws on a wide spread of discipline and techniques (psychoanalysis, deconstruction, semiotics, cultural history) and start from the assumption that the sign ‘woman’ is a key feature of colonial writing. It is noticed that the unequal relations between the European colonialists and the non-European colonized are represented discursively in gendered terms. Employing deconstruction, third world feminists reveal how a Eurocentric perspective narrates women as ‘others’ through (breaks and absences) gender representations, exposing racist and misogynist constructions. A study of this process of signification reveals the construction of ‘race’ as an oppressing system.

Another specific, major focus of third world feminists is to analyze how ‘vocabulary’ is employed to further ‘textual repression’ and construct ‘colonized (third world) women’ in terms of monolithic images. Imperialism imposes homogeneity through means of ‘repetition, gender stereotyping and constructing myths’. Native women are shown to be ‘outside’ the progressive time and history of the colonizers, and therefore ‘primitive’. Moreover, native women encapsulate all that is ‘exotic as against a natural order’, which the white colonizers contain in their values.

This ‘fetishism of the other’ argues Chandra Talpade Mohanty in *Under Western eyes: feminist scholarship and colonial discourse*, is transparent when the imperialist substitutes natural or generic categories (of emotion or primitivism) for those that are socially constructed. The colonized Asians and Africans are seen to be ‘emotional’ while the white European colonizers are shown as ‘rational’ showing an extreme imperial/colonial gender stereotypification. In the colonial male psyche a colonized/colonizer female opposition is expressed in terms of black/coloured or she devil versus white goddess. Everything non-white is ‘mysterious’.

By showing how patriarchy, gender stereotyping, and imperialism
are instrumental in what third world feminists affirm as ‘imperial patriarchy’, a major task of third world feminists is to create a discourse which exposes this valorization of patriarchal and imperial values of the west. They show how this imperial patriarchy is established in the world of literature through its literary conventions. They try to replace these with unbiased constructions of gender, ethnicity and writings.

This overview of the ‘second phase of the women’s movement’ is instructive as well as indicative of the Herculean task feminism has undertaken. From exorcising humanity of the maleficient patriarchal machinations to constructing a gender-neutral discourse and literary convention, the ‘second generation feminists’ have had their hands occupied with the ideal of intellectual reformation. Their academic sophistication while deriving nourishment and strength from various eclectic discourses has got divided into two schools of complimentary but often competing feminist scholarship — Anglo-American and French.

The American and English critics have for the most part been engaged in empirical and thematic studies of writings by and about women. Maintaining interests in traditional concepts like theme, motif and characterization, they seem to accept the conventions of ‘literary realism’ and consequently see in literature representations of women, their lives and experiences, which must be evaluated against reality. The English feminists are slightly different from their American counterparts, for they tend to be ‘socialistic’ in orientation, aligning with Marxism.

However, Anglo-American feminist scholars are engaged in the development of a political position because they feel that political power is needed to challenge the forms of male domination in the institutions of literature and literary study: particularly the ‘literary canon’. Myth feminist criticism and Marxist/socialist feminist criticism are the major approaches of the Anglo-American tradition.
The French feminists, in contrast, deal with concerns other than literature ‘per se’. They are occupied with the machinations of language, gender representation and psychology, and their philosophical predications, before analyzing literary texts themselves. When the French stress on the ‘text’, their emphasis is very much on ‘writing’, the pleasures of reading and writing, and using the two notions they subvert the patriarchal discourse through ‘play rather than by confrontation or exclusion’ (Webster 80). Psychoanalysis, deconstruction and postmodernism are major philosophical approaches of interest to the French feminist scholars.

French feminists focus on re-inscribing the ‘maternal moment’ in literature. Their return to, or revision of, the mother and maternal tones, and of the semiotic element in language could be a mechanism for feminists to subvert the traditional literary representations.

French feminists see language as determining our perception of gender and ourselves as gendered beings. They probe the ways in which society perceive gender and creates gendered subjects. The ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ are constructed binaries, and in order to change society we need to change representations and deconstruct the established formulations.

In recent years a number of French feminists have used poststructuralist positions and techniques to question the founding concepts of ‘feminism’ itself. These feminists have identified differences in race, class, sexual preference, nationality and historical situation. They attack the largely white, Eurocentric, heterosexual feminist approaches of the Anglo-American and French schools of literary criticism. Black feminism, Lesbian feminism and third world feminism provide insights into the understanding of the international ramifications of patriarchal capitalism and women’s oppression.
Thus feminism is composed of many ‘feminisms’, which abound with cultural differences between nationalities, minority (black, lesbian, third world) and majority (white, Eurocentric, heterosexual) feminist criticisms and between languages. However, it has been noted that ‘second wave feminism’, with its academic eclecticism, finds ‘strength in diversity’. Literary feminism provides a penetrating examination of the cultural and economic conditions of women’s oppression. The one denominator common to all the ‘feminisms’ is the dismantling of patriarchal assumptions and enlarging or replacing of the ‘canon’. Another common concern is to offer new reading practices based on new assumptions and thereby equal status for women vis-à-vis men. Feminism believes that only a non-patriarchal, non-racist, gender-neutral feminine construction and representations of ‘women’ in literature can bring about a positive cultural, and political reformation and reconciliation between the sexes.

Literature and popular culture are viewed by feminists ‘to be discursive instruments of future power’. A literary work for them is a powerful tool of change (and of perpetuation), and so we see feminist literary criticism incorporating several areas: from reclamation to resisting, from widening traditional literary history to creating an écriteur feminine and a female aesthetic.

Since literature is a political act, literary feminism has to politically engage in subverting and appropriating all available forms of expression, whether these are everyday or institutional like ‘the canon’. Feminism’s engagement with subversive and destabilizing movements is not degenerative to the cultural ethos but rather regenerative, for it yearns to include women as ‘equals’. Significantly feminists, whether of the ‘first or second generation’, have been occupied with presenting ‘an alternate reality’ against the all-pervasive and oppressive patriarchal ideology.
Chapter III

Feminist critique of patriarchy with special reference to Marxian feminist perspective

The main thrust of feminist literary criticism of the second wave women’s movement is its critique of patriarchy or androcentricism. For feminists the modes of representations in literature are ‘androcentric’ because they are centered around men and partly ‘phallocentric’, because in most systems of sexual differentiation ‘the phallus’ is taken to be the principle signifier (Ruthven).

Since possession of a phallus entails power in a phallocentric society, feminists describe ‘this symbolic order of representation’ with its androcentric bias and phallogocentric signification as patriarchy. Feminists have been tirelessly battling against the oppressive effects of a patriarchal domination in all spheres of our society, polity and culture.

Judith Fetterley writing in the preface of her seminal work The Resisting Reader, quotes two stanzas from Emily Dickinson’s poem and so very consummately describes the angst and suffering of women under patriarchy:

“A loss of something ever felt I –
The first that I could recollect
Bereft I was – of what I knew not
Too young that any should suspect

A mournrner walked among the children
I notwithstanding went about
As one bemoaning a Dominion
Itself the only prince cast out –
'In the first two stanzas of this poem Dickinson has defined the condition of woman in a patriarchal culture. Her primal act of consciousness is the sense of loss, a phenomenon that Freud in his massive phallocentrism arrogantly analyzed as a lament for a specific bit of flesh rather than for the possibilities of personhood, which it represents. Bereft, disinherited, cast out, woman is the Other, the Outsider, a mourner among children; never really child because never allowed to be fully self-indulgent; never really adult because never permitted to be fully responsible; forever a 'young mourner,' a 'little woman'; super human, subhuman but never simply human. ...Her condition is isolation; conviction of being 'itself the only Prince cast out'; and her self-image is monstrous because that is the consequence of isolation. And because that is the consequence of the patriarchal predication that to be human is to be male. The condition of woman under patriarchy is precisely that of a prince cast out. Forced in every way to identify with men, yet incessantly reminded of being woman, she undergoes a transformation into an 'it', the dominion of personhood lost indeed' (Fetterley ix [preface]).

For feminists civilization is pervasively patriarchal (male centered and controlled), organized and conducted in such a way as to subordinate women to men in all domains: social, economic, political and cultural. All knowledge systems, they allege, perpetuate a patriarchal superiority in society. Because of her lack of the identifying male organ and hence male powers, woman is defined in negative reference to the male, against the human norm, as an 'Other'. Feminists feel that the prevailing concepts of gender are 'cultural constructs' of an omnipresent patriarchal civilization.

Further, this patriarchal ideology permeated works of literature and writings with its androcentric prejudice and a 'phallocentric signification' (Ruthven). A patriarchal culture to a considerable extent is predicated, on the argument that men and women are made for each other
Feminists believe that women in the process of their being ‘socialized’, are taught to internalize the reigning patriarchal ideology, and so are conditioned to look down upon their own sex and thereby cooperate in their own subordination. Another feature of how this patriarchal bureaucracy perpetuates itself is through construction and propagation of ‘images of women’, which are complicit in patriarchy’s primary predication of value. In this way ‘the masculine’ in our culture has come to be identified as active, dominating, adventurous, rational, creative: the primary value. The ‘feminine’ on the other hand is equated with the very opposites of the primary value and is thus understood as passive, acquiescent, timid, emotional, conventional: the secondary.

This hierarchy is clearly indicative of man’s privileged position at woman’s expense. Jeniffer Hansen in her introduction to Luce Irigaray’s essay There Are Two Sexes, Not One, writes that ‘the opposites man and woman are not symmetrical, but clearly hierarchal. For example, woman is not the opposite of man, but the negation of man. Man ‘alone’ is the paradigmatic metaphysical concept of human beings, and women are merely inferior instances of this concept. The operation of binary oppositions in culture works insidiously to shape our psyches so that we learn that ‘man’ is the Universal, while ‘woman’ is contingent, particular and deficient’ (Oliver ed. 202).

This patriarchal ideology pervades those writings, which have been considered great literature (Oedipus, Ulysses, Hamlet, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, For Whom The Bell Tolls). It is observed that while the male characters pursue masculine interests in a masculine field of action, the female characters when they play any role, are marginal and
subordinate. Their ‘functional value’ is either complimentary to or in opposition to the heroes’ desire and enterprises.

Lacking autonomous female role models and implicitly addressed to male readers, feminist literary critics have unearthed how these literary works alienate the woman by either leaving her out or soliciting her to identify against her self by taking up the position of male subject and thus assuming male values and perception, feeling and acting.

All this implies that literature is a political construction and the women’s movement, political as it is, concerned itself from its very beginning, as noted elsewhere in this study, with literature. Power is the issue in the politics of literature as it is in the politics of anything else. This manifestation of power is often disguised and presented as objective reality through aesthetic and literary works and is, according to Judith Fetterley, ‘all the more potent in its effect because they (patriarchal designs) are impalpable’ (xi). The one way women are unconscious of this patriarchal design, is through the posture of the apolitical, through the specious argument that literature speaks objective truths through forms and images thereby reflecting reality.

The feminists realized the significance of the ‘images of women’, promulgated and perpetuated by literature, and saw it as vital to identify them, combat them and question their authority and coherence. Thus, Lee Edwards has identified three major stereotypical images of women in literature as ‘insipid heroines, sexy survivors or demonic destroyers’ in her article ‘Women, Energy and Middlemarch’.

Literary feminists observe that the representation of women in literature is one of the most important forms of ‘socialization’, since it provides the role models, which indicated to women and men, what
constitutes acceptable versions of the ‘feminine’ and legitimate feminine goals and aspirations. For feminists a major objective became the unmasking of what is termed by many as ‘the mechanisms of patriarchy, i.e., the cultural mindset in men and women which perpetuate sexual inequality’ (Barry 122). Cultural reality is not the emasculation of men by women, but the emasculation of women by men. Women are ‘socialized’ and ‘conditioned’ to identify with the male point of view and to accept as normal and legitimate a male system of values and mechanisms perpetuated through religious and mythical significations one of whose central principles is misogyny.

Since language is widely regarded as the primary signifying practice, which aids in the socialization and conditioning of society, feminists see an unequivocal case for supposing that language encodes androcentric attitudes in a patriarchal society. The ‘materiality of language’ as complicit in the oppression of women has been sought to be ascertained by empirical investigations into how language through its usage discriminates against women and imprisons them. In so doing the duplicity of language has been exposed.

Feminists found that language, far from reflecting reality, actually constituted it by structuring it according to its arbitrary signification. Thus, women were doubly jeopardized: prisoners in a patriarchy and prisoners in the prison house of language. They were the subjects of this arbitrariness as well as students trying to master its skill and thereby willfully subjecting themselves to the arbitrariness of its semantics. Asserting that androcentrism is inscribed in language, feminists began employing socio-linguistic knowledge into deciphering how masculine and feminine subject-positions are produced and reinforced in literature. For feminists, there was no pre-linguistic and ‘essential’ masculinity that got ‘reflected’ in language to the detriment of women. They saw language used as a medium to mediate gender distinctions in
society thereby revealing its corporeality or social utility and thus making sense of language as a cultural phenomenon with obvious polemical advantages to patriarchy (Ruthven).

Adrienne Rich was the first amongst the many feminists who saw language as oppressive to women. Many agreed with Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar when they claimed that ‘language itself was almost literally alien to the female tongue.’ It was argued that the ‘female self’’s alienation from language is in the pronoun system, and specifically in conventions governing first-person and third-person usage, the pronominal forms most immediately affected by the problematization of speaking and of being spoken about’ (Ruthven 62).

Many Anglophone feminists turned to Jacques Lacan’s interpretation of Freud’s theories of psychosexual development, infancy and early childhood. Feminists saw a resolution of the pronominal enigma in Lacan’s account of what he calls ‘an Imaginary order’ which is the unconscious, and a ‘Symbolic order’ which is the conscious, with a child perceiving ‘the illusion of integral identity between the self and (m)other’ (Ruthven 63).

However, when the father intervenes through his presence between the self and mother, the child registers this act of perception and becomes aware of the Symbolic system through language. The price asked for acquiring skills in the Symbolic according to feminists, is mastery of the pronominal system that multiplies distinctions between self and (m)other. According to Ruthven this loss and separation for Lacan is symbolized by the phallus (not to be identified with the penis), which privileges the psychosexual development of boys at the expense of girls. If the phallus is taken to be the prime signifier of the ‘Symbolic’ and all it contains including language, then domiciling themselves in the Symbolic
is much more problematic for girls than for boys, who possess the organ which symbolically rules the Symbolic, and under whose sceptre a phallic world is organized. Hence, many feminists like Julia Kristeva and Helene Cixous have attempted to re-theorize feminine sexuality in such a manner that the phallus does not control the entry in the Symbolic order of language and girls/women are not subject to the law of the father (patriarchy).

As noticed above, feminists are especially critical of the third person pronouns. The use of the word ‘man’ to denote not only members of the male sex but also human beings of both sexes, encourages men to see themselves as representative of the species. This ‘generic masculine’ makes its presence felt pronominally in instances where women are effaced altogether. We see that all universal, divine and scientific phenomena with positive attributes are addressed as ‘he’ or with masculine pronoun. All negative or enigmatic connotations are addressed in the feminine pronominal system: the sun because it gives warmth and light is ‘he’ while the moon and stars are referred to with the ‘she/her’ pronoun.

Feminists see this pronominal system of language as instrumental in the preservation of male supremacy and reiteration of that supremacy in the Symbolic order of language. Men, therefore, see their own subjectivity in terms of being non-gendered because the masculine is identified with the universal. Further, uncovering of androcentric bias in linguistic usage shows that many things pertaining to women have been named in terms of their relation to men, like poet-poetess, author-authoress, implying that women at best are a special case and at worst a substitute of the real thing. Many feminists detect in this the working of ‘sexual politics’ (Millett), a system through which men gain power over women, the power to create and kill, to ‘mar’, ‘mend’ and ‘make’, but always retaining their superior normative value.
Anglo-American feminists realized that language is not inherently sexist, but can be put to sexist use. Words are merely signs for things and their relationship to reality is arbitrary. It was felt that women’s oppression lies outside language, in the social stereotypes embedded in language and disseminated through stereotypical representations of women in literature and the ideology of patriarchal capitalism.

*   *   *

Marxism/socialism’s interaction with women’s movements and issues is as old as the movements themselves. During the 1960s, the women’s movement of the second generation reacquainted itself with Marxism/socialism’s emancipatory insights into understanding their predicament and thereby finding a solution to their unfortunate wanton subjugation by patriarchal capitalism, (Friedrich Engels: The Origin of The Family [1884]).

For Marxists literature is not something separate from the world or to put it in other words it simply does not reflect the world in a passive and mirror-like way. Marxists have devoted themselves to exposing the hidden historical and socio-cultural assumptions in written works. Employing the concepts of class, ideology and hegemony, they have unveiled the politics and sub-humanism of so called emancipatory intellectual narratives (novel). For Marxists, the literary institutions (texts/criticism) by appearing to be oblivious to questions of class, presuppose a literary work as transcending social and historical formation.

Further, they view that literary works of classic realism (novels), by neglecting or subordinating the question of ‘class’ while propounding values as universal truth only perpetuate a ‘status quo’ and reinforce social prejudices, which are inimical or demeaning to women. Theories of ‘class’ originate with Karl Marx and ‘culture and class’, for him are very closely linked. Culture, far from being divine, is seen as a product of social and
economic forces prevailing at the moment. It is a ‘materially’ influenced construction.

Hence, new class formations bring forth new cultural forms to establish their sense of realism. Drawing on Louis Althusser’s view that texts reveal imaginary reproductions of the relations of unequal sexual power and social relationships (1971). Marxist/socialist feminists focus on the representations of ideology in literature believing that texts reveal these imaginary reproductions of unequal sexual power. The British Marxist/socialist feminist Juliet Mitchell in her key essay ‘Women: the longest revolution’ (1966) uses Althusser’s thesis to describe how literature and culture are material forces in a patriarchal tyranny. The four structures of capitalist patriarchy identified by Marxists/socialist feminists are – reproduction, production, the socialization of children and, sexuality as being interdependent. The Marxist/socialist feminists believe that women’s liberation can only be achieved by challenging this capitalist patriarchal ideology and thus, a cultural and social revolution is needed.

Antonio Gramsci argued that historically the ruling classes have been able to exercise leadership not through direct coercion but by indirect means, through what he described as the concept of ‘hegemony’. Under hegemonic control, people actively work towards their own subordination. Gramsci stressed in particular the role of culture as central to hegemony so that a whole range of communications from literature to the mass media, together with activities such as leisure, contribute to this effect of allowing people to ‘make sense’ of themselves and the world in ways which reinforce and perpetuate the dominant power relations of society.

Marxism’s appeal for feminists is that it shows them how to analyze a social system with a view to getting it changed. Marxism identifies ‘capitalism’ and the modes of production, which support it
(patriarchy), as the material base of the class system, which is the source of all oppression. Friedrich Engels writing in *The Origin of The Family* argues that ‘the first class oppression coincides with that of the female sex by the male’ (69), thus equating husbands with the bourgeoisie and wives with the proletariat. Marxist feminists see the oppression of women as ‘class oppression’ for women are a class oppressed by men—the ruling class. According to them this oppression takes place through the ‘patriarchal capitalist ideology’, which men employ as the normative. It is experienced through the ‘cultural hegemony’ of literary institutions amongst the many other ‘lived systems of meanings and values’ (Raymond Williams).

For Marxist/socialist feminists the subjection of women under a patriarchal capitalist ideology can end only when capitalism collapses. They view the oppression of women as the material base of a patriarchal class system on which the sexist super structure (culture and all its hegemonic manifestations) of society stands. A change in the woman’s condition can only be brought about ‘at the price of a revolution in production’ (192), as Simone de Beauvoir has stated in *Force of Circumstance*.

The works of Luce Irigaray is of seminal importance in giving shape to Marxist feminist perspective in literature. She argues how women and nature are turned into the raw materials that fuel men’s projects. Further, women and nature contribute greatly to satiate man’s desires and sexual needs. The society as we know it and the prevailing culture is based upon the exchange of women. The entry into the ‘social order’ or the ‘Symbolic order’, is only possible by the fact that men or groups of men circulate women among themselves as in matrimony, and thus make women’s bodies—through ‘their use, consumption and circulation into an unknown infrastructure’ (Irigaray) which makes social life and culture possible. A woman is reduced to ‘sexualized female’, which is an
exploitable matter.

It is further noted that in patriarchal societies all systems of exchange as well as all modes of productive work that are cognizable, valuable and rewardable are identified with men. Conversely all objects of production namely ‘women’, ‘signs’ and ‘commodities’ are ‘products’ and thus objects to be used, to be transacted amongst men, their exchange as goods stimulating ‘wealth’. The use and ‘traffic’ of women is seen to subtend and uphold the reign of patriarchy and the ‘economy’. In fact economy becomes a patriarchal socio-political construction, where this trade takes place and it requires that women make themselves available for consumption, exchange and circulation like ‘commodities’ for the smooth functioning of the patriarchal socio-cultural life.

Karl Marx’s analysis of ‘commodities’ as the elementary form of capitalist wealth can best be understood as an interpretation of the status of women in patriarchal societies. Marxist feminists have identified the organization of such societies and their symbolic systems as based on the ideology of ‘patriarchal capitalism’. The development of such an ideology is characterized by the basics of a capitalist regime: the submission of ‘nature’ to ‘labor’ (Marx) on the part of men who constitute ‘nature’ and women who constitute ‘labor’. What Marxist feminists have analyzed is how men have signified themselves with ‘nature’ and value while ‘labor’ is women, a commodity to be possessed, exploited and exchanged amongst them to generate wealth. The genesis of social exploitation of women as a ‘labor class’ and the origin of private property is attributed by them to the father-man, who assured of his reproductive-products marks them with his name. Thus, we observe the origination of the patriarchal and also what Marxists see as the producer-nature, product-labor signification.

In other words, Marxist feminists see all social regimes as based
upon the exploitation of one ‘class’ of producers, namely women by another
‘class’, namely men. Women are seen in terms of a double system of
exchange and value, firstly as ‘reproductive’ value (reproduction of
children resulting in the augmentation of the labor force), and secondly
as commodities or products in themselves whose constitution as ‘exchange
value’ underwrites the Symbolic order as such.

(‘As commodities, women are thus two things at once: utilitarian
objects and bearers of value’ (Irigaray 214). They are commodities because
they have a reproductive value form and their ‘bodies constitute a material
value form’ for men through their possession or accumulation.) Their value
on the market is by virtue of their being a product of men’s ‘labor’,
exchanged not as women but as ‘material objects’ (producers of human
labor force, exchange value). It is felt that the only value a woman has is
her exchangibility.

Since commodities and their relative value cannot be measured
in terms of its own kind, we notice a fabricated measure for the character
of the commodity-woman through its transformation by man’s social/
symbolic signification of ‘labor’. Since women-commodities cannot mirror
one another because of their relative value, their natural and social value
can only be approximated ‘when they are compared by and for man’
(Irigaray 215). Their purpose is to serve and yield, give up their bodies to
men.

Another Marxist feminist observation is how women as
commodities imitate the paternal authority and draw their value for men.
As commodities they share in the cult of the father, always striving to
copy, and imitate the one who is the representative of ‘nature’ and from
this resemblance draw their value. Her body is divided into two: her
‘natural’ body and her socially valued, ‘exchangeable body’, which is tuned
and toned with masculine values and assumptions. Marxist feminists have
exposed this metaphysical characterization of social operations by showing how ‘women’ through this dual entity possess a ‘phenomenal value form’ (Irigaray), which is distinct from its natural form.

They are of the view that there is no mysticism in their ‘use value’ per se, for however useful the varied kinds of labor may be, they are physiological facts, and as such the functions of the human organism. It is when women are enveloped in the form of a commodity, exchanged and bartered for the needs and desires of men among men and transformed into ‘value-invested objects’ and reduced to ‘products’ of man’s labor and desire that they become ‘fetish objects’ (Irigaray) in a patriarchy. With their value/worth doubled: as social exchange commodities and as signs of the manifestations and circulation of power of the phallus, women are thereby subjugated to the male hierarchy.

The Marxist feminists have observed that this operation of social exchanges has developed its own logic and theory where ‘man’ is the concept and ‘woman’ the product or object (which is visible and material correlative) of that concept. Man’s ‘sexual pleasure’ corresponds to such a social state where appropriation of nature, desire to (re)produce and exchange these products: ‘...the needs/wishes of this masculine sexuality have presided over the evolution of a certain social order, from its primitive form – private property to its developed form – capitalism’ as observed by Luce Irigaray in Women on The Market.

The circulation of women among men is what establishes the operations of society in a patriarchal dispensation where men appropriate all levers of control and meaning to themselves. Women thus in such a social order represent a natural value and a social value. Their ‘development’ lies in the passage from one to the other.

‘Mother’, ‘virgin’ and ‘prostitute’ are the social roles imposed
on women in a patriarchal society according to the feminists. As mother, woman remains on the side of (reproductive) nature, her reproductive instruments marked with the name of the father and a subject of his house, his private property, and therefore excluded from exchange. As they are (re)productive of children and of the labor force, their responsibility is to maintain the social order.

The virginal woman, on the other hand is pure exchange value, full of possibilities and enterprise. Till she is married she has social exchange value. The prostitute, though explicitly condemned is implicitly tolerated, her 'value' more in physical terms than social. Thus, we see the characteristics of feminine sexuality from faithfulnes, modesty, to ignorance of and lack of interest in sexual pleasure, a mere object or tool for masculine sexuality in a patriarchal society. These normal, female sexual characteristics give an idea of the status of women as 'commodities'.

This economy of desire and economy of exchange, subject women into two schisms' that are necessary to the 'symbolic' operations: (re)productive nature and fabricated or gendered feminity. Women are not even conscious of it because 'socially' they are 'objects' of desire and exchange, mimicking a 'language' they have not produced and 'naturally' they are shapeless, without any representatives or representations.

The practical realization of this meta-physical is through the appropriation of woman's body by the father as in a patriarchy. She must submit herself to his power because of his monopoly of power that he has constructed through patriarchal capitalism and its socio-economic significations. Her body, materially and physically with the social values and exchange values attached and ascribed to it, inaugurates the 'Symbolic order'.

Marxist feminists focus on the woman as a 'commodity' or object
of transaction among men, exploited through sexual, economic, social and cultural exchange, which is made possible through the Symbolic order and social system, constructed through an ideology of political economy: patriarchal capitalism.

Without the exploitation of women, the social order will collapse. With women no longer as a commodity—produced, consumed, appreciated and circulated, and their refusing to identify themselves with ‘the cult of the father’ (Irigaray 216) and the economic and cultural ‘mechanisms of patriarchy’ (Barry). Marxist feminists see a chance to reinterpret the symbolic social order and system to improve women’s relations to this system of production. Thus a change in woman’s condition can only be achieved at ‘the price of a revolution in production’ (Beauvoir).

Another major project of empirical Marxist/socialist feminism and its critique of a patriarchal culture is to expose the stereotypical representations of women in literary works. It is observed that androcentric biases in a patriarchal culture are best seen in the representations of women in literary works and other institutions of communication like the visual arts and the media. Second wave feminism focused on the ‘images of women’ in literary texts. Mary Ellman writing in her seminal work Thinking About Women (1968) noted that while the opinions about women were numerous, it was ‘not the plausibility or implausibility that intrigued her but rather their reiteration’ (preface xii). What enthuses Marxist second wave feminists is their interest ‘in women as words’ (Ellman).

Feminists see in the construction of stereotypes a subliminal patriarchal machination to encage women in male defined roles and thus control them and their destinies. Another instance of ‘sexual politics’ is unearthed. Feminist research of the ‘images of women’ in literature and literary conventions reveals how these ‘stereotypes’ categorise women into
‘types’, manipulated by a patriarchal ideology for maintaining its own representative signification.

Thus, these man-made literary taxonomies use binary categories to classify women as ‘sensuous roses or virginal lilies, pedestalled goddesses or downtrodden slaves, Eves or Mary’s, Madonna’s or Magdalene’s, damned whores or God’s police’ as illustrated by K.K. Ruthven in his Feminist Literary Studies: An Introduction, (p. 72). The basic function of these literary character stereotypes is to reinforce the notion of the patriarchal patronizing of women and of its perverse ‘sexual politics’ where men are happy to idealize women, provided they stay in their proper sphere and do not threaten the world of men at large. This classification with its angelic and demonic binaries is employed by patriarchy to save the women from their inherent dark constitution and present them with alternative benign paradigms.

While sociologists view White supremacist violence against Negroes and other dark skinned races as the sum and result of ‘cultural stereotypes’ produced during European colonization. Marxist feminists view ‘cultural stereotypes’ to be far more subversive to women. These ‘cultural stereotypes’ are in the main ‘sexual and gender stereotypes’ that attempt to encode transhistorical and immutable human experiences as only worth having. In Thinking About Women, Mary Ellman elucidates how women are repeatedly associated with the prosaic, the naïve, her value only in sexual gratification and reproduction. Even child-birth is seen as ‘the most natural and least self-conscious of human experiences’ (61-62) whereas ‘careful differences, instead of similarities, will be described between the production of the child and the production, say, of rhymed verse’ (62).

Further, women are seen to be what men are not, and hence we
observe their being stereotyped as passive, thoughtless, pacific, and if they speak their mind then as shrews, virago’s and harridan’s; all feminine traits. The resultant implication is that women can only achieve ‘their ideal condition’ by rising above themselves (Ellman).}

In addition, Cultural images of women are thus sought to be realized only in terms of their relation to men and their reiteration in literature helps to valorize them as the ‘norm’. Mary Carruthers in her *Imagining Women: notes towards a feminist poetic* (1979) states that traditionally women’s lives have been imagined in relations to men’s lives, as daughters, mothers, mistresses and wives of men. They have in consequence been imagined either in terms of a single role psychologically relevant to men (virgin, temptress, bitch, goddess,) or in terms of their single social and biological function in male society (preparing for marriage, or married)...’ (20). Either way the main function is to reinforce the sexist view. According to D. B. Schmidt, the only way true happiness is possible for women is by finding the essence of true womanhood, wherein feminine subordination supports a male domination (Ruthven).

(Feminist critics of patriarchy find a lot of stereotypical conceptions of women, particularly about the topic of feminity. Ordinarily, not only sexual terms but also sexual opinions are imposed upon the external world. It is observed that all forms are subsumed by our concepts of male and female temperaments. In fact, the association of women with nature and of men with art is repeatedly stressed. It is generally suspected that women infect their nature not with art but with artifice.

Mary Ellman notes that every feminine virtue implies a feminine vice: chaste or frigid; intuition or irrationality; motherhood or domination (65). This duality in women is sought to be ascribed to their physical bodies, in which light and dark spirits co-exist. Women are sought to be
Presently feminists are more interested in a semiotic approach to the ‘images of women’. They view the ‘eternal feminine’ (Ruthven 74) entity, with an unchanging and transhistorical essence to be an ideological construction. They concentrate on the ‘stereotypical representations’ of women rather than ‘images of women’. Since feminism is premised on the notion that ‘everything is politics’, women’s representations in literary works are a good case to unearth sexual politics.

These representations are invested with social and cultural currency through literary conventions. Ernst Robert Curtins in *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, traces the convention of ‘topoi’ or commonplaces which get transmitted from generation to generation under the influence of ‘rhetorical tradition’. According to K.K. Ruthven, these ‘topoi’ enter literature as conventional images and he takes Shakespeare’s comedy *As You Like It* as an example, quoting, ‘All the world’s a stage’ (scene II, line vii) to stress his point. Feminists have discovered how these conventional topois very subtly metamorphose themselves into sexism. E.R. Curtis has investigated and evidenced the sexual politics of topoi ‘in the imagery of marriage poems, known as epithalamy’. Curtis explains how the ‘elm and vine’ topois, represent the two sexes as complementary, with the ‘elm’ representing the stronger husband supporting the weaker ‘vine’, while she produces the fruits of her womb. It is also noticed that these conventions serve social and political purpose like when in plays, comedies end with a marriage and tragedies with a victory for the king. ‘The device of ending stage comedies with a marriage is an economical way of tying up loose narrative ends; ...a device for bringing women legally under the control of men...’ (Ruthven 76), furthering patriarchal phallocracy.
Similarly does Jean E. Kennard describe the convention of ‘two suitors’ where the heroine is obliged to choose between two male suitors, both opposites of each other in every way. A good instance of this convention may be observed in the novels of such eminent novelists as Jane Austen, Bronte sisters, Margaret Mitchell and Dame Barbara Cartland to name a few. The pulp Mills and Boon series of novelettes written exclusively for the reading enjoyment of adolescent and young women is dedicated it seems to perpetuating this convention under the innocuous title of ‘romances’. The ideology at function here is that women need husbands to sustain their lives. As our social and political lives are culturally coded, our cultural practices are reaffirmed as literary conventions, and give the illusion of justifying their existence by imitating life, observes Ruthven in Feminist Literary Studies: An Introduction.

A feminist critique of women’s status, images and representations in a patriarchal society is to unmask the oppressive nature of ‘patriarchy’. It helps them in understanding about themselves and resist this oppression. One of the aims of feminism is to break this patriarchal ideology and hegemony, expose all channels of its perpetuation and manifestation that makes women feel inferior to men, and at odds with ‘reality’ to which they are forced to conform.

According to Judith Fetterey in The Resisting Reader, Feminist literary criticism aims to give ‘a voice to a different reality and different vision’, and thus ‘bring a different subjectivity to bear on the old universality’ (xi). Further she states how ‘when only one reality is encouraged, legitimized, and transmitted... then we have the conditions necessary for that confusion of consciousness in which impalpability flourishes’ (xi). Hence, bringing forth attitudes towards women involves ‘to make available consciousness that has been largely left unconscious and thus to change our understanding of these fictions, our relation to
them, and their effect on us (xi). To conclude we may say that ‘Consciousness-raising’ through evaluation of literary texts and inaugurating oppositional practices of reading, writing and criticism is one of the practices and objectives of feminist literary criticism.
Chapter IV
Celebration of Patriarchy in Ayn Rand’s Fictional writings

Ayn Rand published four novels and one play. Her fictional works follow similar plot and thematic patterns. We observe in each work an exceptionally able individualistic protagonist battling against what Ayn Rand saw as evil: ‘the idea of mediocrity and collectivism’. Notably, of Ayn Rand’s five protagonists, three are women. Her fictional works should ideally have ended the anticipation for a balanced representation of the various images of women, because in American literature, images of liberated and successful women were few and far between.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Ayn Rand’s female heroines because of their active, independent, professionally successful and sexually emancipated character profiles should have brought cheer to the feminists. At last, here was a woman novelist who had put a stop to ‘the neurotic, manipulated and exploited female’ (Gladstein 681) image, which had become the mainstay of American literary fiction. Margaret Mitchell’s epic novel Gone With The Wind is an apt example, where Scarlet O’Hara is portrayed as a conceited, neurotic, possessive egomaniac, out to manipulate and ensnare the male protagonist Rhet Butler in her web. Washington Irving’s Rip Van Winkle is another novel where his harridan wife Dame Winkle harries about the amiable Rip Van Winkle to the point where he prefers to chance the dangers of the woods and wild beasts in order to take a nap rather than sleep in his bed at home.

Her theme and plots were also a far cry from the traditional plot and theme pot-pourri of frontier life, slave trade, American war of Independence, the Civil War and the heroism of America during the two World Wars and America’s valorization of it. The female characters in these tiresome theme novels were given routine marginal, domestic and
servile image profiles. Tolerable independence and success was righteously bestowed at times, but the overall picture was one of obsequiousness and intellectual hollowness.

However, a critical analysis of Ayn Rand’s fiction indicates that far from presenting active, assertive, successful and sexually emancipated heroines with a revolutionary and novel theme instead of the jaded themes and plots of American fiction, Ayn Rand’s fictional works are no less guilty of feminist charges. Her heroines and plots in fact do more harm than good to feminist cause.

As pointed out earlier, this study, employing a feminist viewpoint to analyze the works of Ayn Rand, reveals that Ayn Rand despite being a woman reinforces stereotypical images of women in her fiction, making her works all the more distressing to a gender conscious reader. This chapter will focus on the contradictory crosscurrents of meaning in her works and attempt to show that her fictional works are really about what they appear ‘not’ to be about. Her novels are all about female servitude—intellectual, political and sexual which has been made amply clear by her views of feminity and the goal of her writing. Implicitly evident in her fiction and explicitly stated by Ayn Rand in her philosophy is the conviction that women should stand in divine awe of the primal force, the superior male. Speaking to Edwin Newman, she said that ‘I am a man-worshipper,’ and ‘women who do not accept the superiority of men are really not feminine’ (Baker118).

Marxist feminists are of the view that women are a ‘class’ in themselves just as the working class and are a subject of the ruling class, which happens to be bourgeois as well as male. This ruling patriarchal capitalist class subjugates women two-fold — gender wise and economically. In some countries the subjugation is made even more complete by the factors of race and caste.
Employing Marxist feminist viewpoint, which has been discussed in detail in chapter II of this research study, it can be said that in Ayn Rand’s fiction her female protagonists, despite their being assertive, active, independent, successful and sexually emancipated have through their women’s bodies – through ‘their use, consumption and circulation’ (Irigaray 212), provided for the legitimation of a patriarchal-capitalist social life and culture. This production and commodification of women as signs and exchange value of man’s desire (masculine sexuality), according to Marxist feminists, ‘presides over a social order’ that dehumanizes women.

A second characteristic feature of Ayn Rand’s heroines is their willingness to be mistresses to more than one man. James T. Baker calls this the ‘Tosca theme’, with Marxist feminists seeing in this another instance of the idea of woman as a commodity, that of a woman who gives herself sexually to one man to save another. Marxist feminists see in this a confirmation of their assessment of the status of women in a patriarchal capitalist social order, where, based on their ‘natural value’ and ‘social value’, women are assigned the roles of mother, virgin and prostitute. However, Ayn Rand explains this particular intentional/contrived promiscuity in reference to her philosophy of ‘Objectivism’, where the goal is important and not the means to achieve it. For Ayn Rand, what others called ‘crass promiscuity’ or ‘infidelity’ was what she saw as the sexual emancipation of her heroines.

She was indifferent to legal or moral concerns. For her ‘sex’ just like any other asset in life was ‘material’, which should be used or exploited when need arises. To many readers and critics such ‘an ethics would lead to hedonism’ (Robbins 12). This franchising of sex is common to all of Ayn Rand’s heroines – Kira Argounova in We The Living, Dominique Francon in The Fountainhead, Dagny Taggart in Atlas Shrugged and Karen Andre in Night of January 16th.
We may also understand this ‘Tosca theme’ with reference to Simone de Beauvoir’s classic exposition of the duality of ‘self’ and ‘other’ as a fundamental category of human thought, as played out in Ayn Rand’s fiction. For Beauvoir, societies are organized on the assumption that man is ‘self’ and woman ‘other’. We notice that Ayn Rand was unapologetic about man being the normative value in nature. Thus, man is defined by his relationship to reality, whereas woman finds meaning by her relationship to man, implying she is the ‘other’.

The implications of such a duality are calamitous to women, for the ‘self’ treats ‘other’ either as a supplement or a threat. If a woman is conceived of as a supplement to man, she becomes the recipient either of his phobias (weak, emotional) or a complement to his personality. K. K. Ruthven notes that ‘the supplementary woman may find herself set on a pedestal as the object of chivalric attentions, worshipped, in return for surrendering her autonomy and serving the man’s interests (as mistress, muse, wife, or power behind the throne). If however, the ‘other’ cannot be cajoled into supplementarity... she becomes the victim of the ‘self’s’ misogyny... and rape and murder are the unsublimated practice’ (42).

A third feature of Ayn Rand’s stories and a highly petrifying one is the depiction of the ‘rape-encounters’ between the heroine and hero at their first meetings. Howard Roark in The Fountainhead rapes Dominique Francon at least twice in the novel, B’jorn Faulkner in Night of January 16th rapes Karen Andre when she comes for a job interview and she remains his business partner and mistress for the rest of his life. In Atlas Shrugged John Galt’s first sexual experience with Dagny Taggart is a ritualized rape in the tunnels of Taggart Transcontinental. For Ayn Rand these were not rapes, but the ‘magnetic drawing’ of two like or strong personalities. In Atlas Shrugged Francisco D’ Anconia tells Hank Rearden about his theory of sex:

‘But, in fact, a man’s sexual choice is the result
and the sum of his fundamental convictions. Tell me what a man finds sexually attractive and I will tell you his entire philosophy of life. Show me the woman he sleeps with and I will tell you his valuation of himself. ...He will always be attracted to the woman who reflects his deepest vision of himself, the woman whose surrender permits him to experience—or to fake—a sense of self-esteem. The man who is proudly certain of his value, will want the highest type of woman he can find, the woman he admires, the strongest, the hardest to conquer—because only the possession of a heroine will give him the sense of an achievement, not the possession of a brainless slut. ...Love is our response to our highest values—and can be nothing else. ...just as an idea unexpressed in physical action is a contemptible hypocrisy, so is platonic love—and just as physical action unguided by an idea is a fool’s self-fraud, so is sex when cut off from one’s code of values....sex is the physical expression of a tribute to personal values’ (460-461).

In For The New Intellectual, the first non-fictional publication of Ayn Rand, composed of passages from her four major fictional works, she tries to give coherence to her philosophy of Objectivism by taking passages from the novels and explaining their philosophic contents. To the intelligent reader they may appear very pat and prescriptive, but one also senses her trying to emphasize moral unity in her fiction and Objectivist sense of life. One of the essays titled ‘The Meaning of sex’ (99-101) is a verbatim copy of the conversation between Hank Rearden and Francisco D’Anconia in Atlas Shrugged.
For Ayn Rand, ‘sex is the effect and expression of a man’s sense of his own value... the woman whose surrender permits him to experience—or to fake—a sense of self-esteem’ (FTNI 99). A superficial reading of the passages may not raise alarm, but a focused and critical reading of the text reveals how Ayn Rand is sanctioning the violence in her sexual encounters by arguing how the ‘possession of a heroine (woman) will give him (man) the sense of an achievement’ (FTNI 99). With reference to this predication we can see how the ‘rape scenes’ for Ayn Rand are ‘romanticized, symbolic, head on clash of two strong personalities. The rapist is conquered just as the victim is...’(Gladstein 23). Ayn Rand considered these to be very ‘glorious scenes’ and years later, when during a radio interview she was asked about these rape scenes in her novels, she replied, ‘If it’s rape – its rape by engraved invitation’ (Branden 134).

However, many critics and readers with a ‘raised consciousness about the nature of rape’, find this symbolism unpalatable. James T Baker finds in Rand’s ‘theory of sex’ strong hints of sadism and masochism which eloquently, if not mysteriously, reveal the personal perversions of Rand’s heroines. Her equation of lovemaking with violent sex—Dominique Francon in The Fountainhead considers sex best when the rapist holds his victim in utter contempt (119) and also the fact that Dominique preferred extramarital rape to conjugal lovemaking—appears very strange, almost perverse. In fact the ‘personal perversions’ of Ayn Rand’s heroines, by implication, speak of women everywhere (Baker). For feminists these ‘rapes’ reinforce women’s degradation in a patriarchal power structure where men (self) in their misogyny ‘rape’ women (other) in order to force women to surrender their autonomy and serve man’s interests. For Marxist feminists these ‘ritualized rapes’ only confirm how in a patriarchal capitalist society, women are ‘commodities’, to be used, consumed and circulated for their value, enhancing the ‘wealth’ among men. As ‘products’ the exploitation of women in patriarchal society is justified by Ayn Rand when she says how ‘only the possession of a heroine (woman)
will give him (man) the sense of an achievement...’ (FTNI 99), and also how her possession stimulates ‘wealth’ when she is circulated in society.

It is to be noted how in Ayn Rand’s novels, the female protagonists are ‘circulated’ from one man to another, which from a Marxist feminist angle is the validation of ‘woman as commodity’: a utilitarian object with a value index. The ‘rape scenes’ by Ayn Rand also explain her valorization of ‘man’ as the normative value to which all ‘other’ beings must look up and derive their meaning from. Thus, her anti-feminism takes anti-female direction, where Ayn Rand produces her heroines as objects for sadistic humiliation, and their ‘rape’ is an expression of this humiliation. In Ayn Rand’s novels, this sado-masochistic construction of woman construes male-female as a master-slave relationship, and thus presents us with a heroine who is raped and humiliated.

Ayn Rand unmistakably reinforces the macho myth argument that violent sex and rape far from being criminal and abrasive behavior are actually every woman’s secret desire. This is made clear through Dominique Francon’s talk of ‘sex’ being best when it is accompanied with violence. These rape scenes completely ‘dehumanize’ women as an object or commodity at the mercy of what Beatrix Campbell calls ‘phallic imperialisms’ where women are oppressed economically as well as physically, for in ‘patriarchal capitalism’ that is their destiny.

Although Ayn Rand metamorphosed later into a philosopher whose ideas always ignited her readers, either for or against her, she was initially a fiction writer. It was through her works of fiction that the majority of readers are introduced to her essential concepts. Most people familiar with Ayn Rand know her specifically for her two major novels – The Fountainhead (1943) and Atlas Shrugged (1957) and as the author of the play, Night of January 16th (1934).
Ayn Rand’s fiction is her foremost achievement and all of Ayn Rand’s major literary works follow similar plot patterns, protagonist profiles and thematic content. Leonard Peikoff, the inheritor and executor of Ayn Rand’s intellectual work, has collected in The Early Ayn Rand, her unpublished works, from the period of her arrival in USA in 1926, to the time she was writing Night of January 16th and We The Living six years later. These stories provide an interesting window through which to view the development and of her ideas on different subjects under discussion.

The first of these stories, written in 1926 is The Husband I Bought. The story’s protagonist is Irene Wilmer, who very closely follows Kira Argounova of We The Living while her husband Henry Stafford is an early version of Leo from the same novel or perhaps Howard Roark of The Fountainhead.

In this short story we notice what was to become the raison d’etre of Ayn Rand’s fictional works: ‘hero-worshiping’. Henry Stafford loses his wealth and Irene marries him, pays off his debts, thus ‘buying’ herself a husband. She loves, rather worships Henry so much that when he falls in love with another woman, she fakes infidelity and is granted a divorce. The end of the short story is rankling from a feminist perspective for we see Irene, kneeling before Henry’s photograph in tribute to this ideal man.

We see here a strong, intelligent, assertive and active woman who was definitely like a breath of fresh air, against the stale, traditional, stereotypical images of women circulated and reproduced in literature. However, the ebullience was short lived, for the heroine was a ‘hero-worshipper’, worshipping the man who brings out the best in her, with the Ayn Rand supposition of ‘a woman is defined by her relationship to a man…’ being applied. The element of sado-masochism, which later was to become the hallmark of Ayn Rand’s works, is already evident.
Between 1927 and 1929 Ayn Rand wrote two more short stories ‘Good Copy’ and ‘Escort’, which were full of the prosaic basic ingredients (romance, murder, etc.) with virtually no philosophic content. However, a marked characteristic of Ayn Rand’s writing by now was ‘the thrill of trying to buy a man’. One of Ayn Rand’s most instructive short stories from which we get the heroine who will franchise herself for the happiness of her hero is ‘Red Pawn’ which was published in 1932. ‘Red Pawn’ is the story of a young woman who sets out to free her husband from prison by any means necessary. She assumes an identity, and becomes a mistress to the prison’s commandant, Comrade Kareyev. This was to become a familiar theme in Ayn Rand’s later fiction, what some would call her ‘Tosca theme’ (Baker 33), that of a woman who gives herself sexually to one man to save another.

In her major fictional works, these ideas, plots and themes are to be repeated. We will now take an overview of Ayn Rand’s fictional works and tried to see how she almost unashamedly celebrates the institution of patriarchy in her writings. For the sake of coherence, will take her works according to their year of publication and not popularity.

* * *

Night of January 16th (1936): is Ayn Rand’s first professional writing. She originally titled it as the ‘Penthouse Legend’, but its Broadway presentation was titled Night of January 16th and the name has remained. It is a gripping drama about the mysterious death or disappearance of Bjorn Faulkner and the trial of Karen Andre, the protagonist, who is his secretary and mistress and is accused of his murder.

For Ayn Rand, this was to be a ‘sense of life’ play. Bjorn Faulkner is presented as a free-wheeling, world-class entrepreneur whose financial kingdom was in dire straits at the time of his death. Two versions of his mysterious death are presented in court. The prosecution blames Karen
Andre and her lover ‘Guts’ Reaga have blackmailed and murdered Faulkner when he refused to give them the money they were asking for. The defense contends that Faulkner’s marriage to Nancy Whitfield was a sham as he never liked or loved her and he used himself as a collateral so that John Graham Whitfield, Nancy’s father, would extend a ten million dollar loan to him.

At the end of Act II, in a dramatic reversal, ‘Guts’ Regan, the gangster and alleged lover of Karen Andre, shows up to announce that Bjorn is really dead. He explains that he, Bjorn and Karen had planned a fake suicide so that Bjorn and Karen could disappear with Whitfield’s money. Regan contends but Faulkner’s bookkeeper verifies that fact that Whitfield found out about the money being embezzled. Regan accuses Whitfield of murdering Faulkner. The jury is left to decide whether a respected banker and his socialite daughter or a secretary-mistress and her gangster lover are telling the truth.

Karen Andre, the female protagonist is a typical Ayn Rand heroine, for whom Bjorn Faulkner is a ‘god-like hero’ to be served with her mind, soul and body. For Ayn Rand, the play was a presentation of the ‘sense of life’ which she defined as a person’s ‘emotional, subconsciously integrated appraisal of man’s relationship to existence’ (Baker 39) and in Night of January 16th, this ‘sense of life’ is Karen Andre’s feelings for her ideal man.

We may note that the ‘sense of life’ presented in this play is consistent with those presented in her novels. Karen Andre like all of Ayn Rand’s heroines is active, independent, sure of herself and her ideas, clear with the direction she wants her life to take and sexually emancipated. However, a close analysis of Karen Andre’s character and personality reinforces the feminist argument that Ayn Rand demeans and diminishes women and femininity morally and intellectually through the offensive
images she projects upon them. This celebration of patriarchy by Ayn Rand demeans and dehumanizes women at large. In scene I of Act I, Karen’s character profile is thus described: ‘One’s first impression of her is that to handle her would require the services of an animal trainer, not an attorney...’(NJ16th 22).

During her questioning in Act II, Karen’s masochistic perverseness is evident when she narrates her ‘rape’ at the hands of B’jorn Faulkner: ‘he seemed to take a delight in giving me orders. He acted as if he were cracking a whip over an animal...I liked it ... then he asked me suddenly if I had ever belonged to a man. I said, no, I hadn’t...(NJ 16th 82-83). When Karen refused his offer of a thousand kroner’s to have sex with him, he threatens forcing himself on her, ‘he said if I didn’t, he’d take me...he did’ (NJ 16th 83).

This continual reference to Karen as if she is an animal and not a human being, tantamounts to refusing to attribute to women any spiritual and intellectual profundity. She is ‘an ‘object’ at the hands of man’s mercy, to be used, consumed and exploited. Since man in an androcentric patriarchal dispensation is the ‘meaning’ and ‘signifier’, women’s feelings are inconsequential and Ayn Rand celebrates this patriarchal subversion. For Karen Andre, B’jorn Faulkner is ‘an ideal man’ whom she served as a secretary, mistress and confidant.

The character of Nancy Lee Faulkner, the other female character in the novel, brings back what the feminists should call the ‘neurotic, manipulated’ stereotypical image of women into focus. She is presented as a cold, manipulating nymphomaniac, determined to get Bjorn Faulkner at any cost. She offers herself, her sexuality to be precise, for his agreeing to marry her and in return he would get ‘the extension of a certain ten million dollar loan...’(NJ 16th 85).
Nancy Lee Faulkner’s commodification may be understood better with reference to the ‘use, consumption and circulation’ theory where her body is used as a bartering object between Bjorn Faulkner and her father John Graham Whitfield. Nancy Lee Faulkner demeans herself by asking Bjorn to marry her and thus provide their marriage as a collateral to her father for extending the loan. This incident may be seen in terms of women’s ‘conditioning and socialization’ in a patriarchal setup where a woman’s primary function is to facilitate and make the conditions of a social and cultural life possible. Patriarchal societies function on the basis of ‘systems of exchange’, where according to Luce Irigaray, ‘women’s bodies- through their use, consumption and conditions- provide for the conditions making social life and culture possible’ (Oliver 212). In the process they become an unknown ‘infrastructure’ and thus are instrumental in stimulating wealth among men. We observe Karen Andre’s use of and traffic between her husband and father in a similar vein. The exploitation of Nancy Lee by Bjorn Faulkner is more in economic terms for as a commodity, she is two things at once: a utilitarian object and a bearer of values (economic exchange value).

We thus see in *Night of January 16th*, how Karen Andre and Nancy Lee Faulkner, through their ‘sense of life’, contribute in lending support to the forces of patriarchy. We may add that the ‘sense of life’ presented in this play is consistent with those of the novels. The novels, in fact, deal with more than a ‘sense of life’, they involve a ‘conscious philosophy’ i.e. a conceptually defined view of man and of existence.

* * *

*We The Living* (1936) : is Ayn Rand’s first novel. Written between 1931 and 1933 and published in 1936, the plot of *We The Living* concerns a young woman’s struggle to fulfill her desires under the stultifying structures of the Soviet system. The central figure of Kira Argounova in this novel was to become the arch model for her later fictional works. Andrei Taganov and Leo Kovalensky, the two male protagonists, can be
viewed as the prototypes of Howard Roark and John Galt.

The story of *We The Living* revolves around Kira Argounova, and her family’s exile and return to Petrograd after the revolution. The small industries run by her family are confiscated by the government under a nationalizing scheme and this gives Ayn Rand a chance to introduce her ‘state versus the individual’, pattern here. As soon as she enters the technological Institute she meets a young communist leader named Andrei Taganov. She spends the college hours with him, while her nights are spent with an unregenerate aristocrat named Leo Kovalensky.

Andrei likes and loves Kira while her amorous feelings are heavily titled towards Leo Kovalensky. Kira’s relationships with Andrei is platonic, but when Leo contracts consumption and must go away to the Crimea, if he is to live. Kira is determined to save him. She pretends to love Andrei to secure money from him and thereby forces Leo to go to a sanatorium in the south. This was to become a familiar theme in Ayn Rand’s later fiction, where a woman gives herself sexually to one man to save another and as pointed out earlier James T. Baker terms this peculiarity of the Ayn Rand theme as the ‘Tosca theme’. The second half of *We The Living* deals with the corruption of Leo and the heroism of Andrei. Leo’s return from the Crimea shows his spiritual and intellectual graph falling while Andrei’s faith in the Soviet system is seen shaking. Oddly enough, Kira is attracted to Leo in his ‘fallen’ state even more than she was earlier. Glimpses of Ayn Rand’s feminine masochism are evident here. Andrei sets out to expose the corruption in the Soviet system and during his investigations he discovers that Kira is living with Leo and she only pretended to love him (Andrei), rather she used him to help another man. Andrei far from feeling bitter or remorse promises to save Leo from the net he (Andrei) has cast to apprehend the bourgeois saboteurs and their patrons in government. At a communist party gathering he delivers a speech that sounds more like Howard Roark’s. In the later novels Howard Roark
and John Galt were to represent his idealism.

Kira Argounova is Ayn Rand’s first fully developed heroine and she was to be the model for later Ayn Rand heroines: active, assertive, fiercely independent, career conscious and sexually emancipated. Unmindful of her material surroundings, she wants only to be allowed to fulfill the best that is in her. Such focus and determination was to be the attribute of all of Ayn Rand’s heroines. However, despite creating such a positive image of a heroine Ayn Rand taints this image with Kira’s ‘hero-worshiping’ of Leo and forcing her (like all her other heroines) to bow to masochistic impulses.

As observed earlier, while superficial readings of Ayn Rand’s works may not reveal her ‘celebration of patriarchy’, a closer reading exposes just that. In the novel We The Living violence accompanies sex, ‘… but he tore her off the ground, and then she arched limply in space… her breast at his mouth’ (WTL113). For Leo, Kira is nothing more than ‘an object’. She deifies him and is always ready to please him, ‘Leo threw his coat in a corner… it was torture. Waiting. Three days – and three nights’ (WL121). For Leo, Kira is a product, which he ‘consumes and uses’, and when he gets a better proposition, he leaves her. Leo shifts into Tonia’s apartment after Citizen Morozov leaves town. Morozov has left Tonia a nice little sum of money and she is going for a rest and vacation in the Caucasus’s. Tonia asks Leo to go with her to which he agrees:

‘He’s left Tonia…he’s left her a nice little sum of money… she’s going for a rest and vacation in the Caucasus. She has asked me to go with her. I have accepted the job… the great gigolo of the U.S.S.R.!… She’s an old bitch…she has the money and she wants me…’(WTL423-424).

Kira worshipped Leo, and for him she became a mistress to Andrei. When Leo had to be sent to the Crimea for recuperation and there was no money with them, Kira went to Andrei. She saved the money he gave her, because
'she thought of someone at home who needed it. She took the money' (WTL179). For all her worshipping and sacrifice when Leo gets to know about her liaison with Andrei and wants to go away with Tonia he arrogantly and contemptuously calls her, ‘you little bitch!’ (WTL422). We observe here how Kira’s body is nothing more than a commodity, which is two things at once, a ‘utilitarian object’ for Leo and Andrei to use, consume and circulate between them and a ‘bearer of value’, for as a mistress to Andrei, she receives money in return. In fact she gives herself sexually to Andrei only for the money she will get.

We further observe that Kira and Leo’s relationship is akin to a slave and masters: ‘he approached her and his hand closed over her throat and he jerked her head back to hold her lips to his. There was a contemptuous tenderness in his movement, and a command, and hunger; he was not a lover, but a slave owner...’(WTL312). With Andrei too her relationship has a similar refrain, ‘you won’t miss me... I’ve made you happy, haven’t I?’ (WTL237) and when she tells Andrei, ‘Andrei when you told me you loved me, for the first time, you were hungry. I wanted to satisfy that hunger’ (WTL265).

Kira Argounova’s worshiping of Leo and becoming a mistress to Andrei and sexually bowing to both of them is a fine example of ‘celebration of patriarchy’ in the novel. Kira’s sexuality is exploited by the two male heroes and Kira’s compliance just like the other heroines in Ayn Rand’s fiction, is founded on the notion ‘that whether premarital or extramarital: the man’s inner life is a privilege to share...’(Ellman119).

* * *

**Anthem (1938):** was Ayn Rand’s second novel of only seventy seven pages, published in England in 1938 and it was only in 1946 that an American edition was published when Pamphleteers, a right wing publishing house,
brought out an abridged paperback edition. Originally conceived of as a play while Ayn Rand was at university in Petrograd. **Anthem** has retained a theatrical quality unto itself. We observe in this novel the economic and political ideology of capitalism for which she would become famous later through *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*.

While all of Ayn Rand’s works are famous today, one may agree with Mimi R. Gladstein writing in *The Ayn Rand Companion* when she says that ‘If any of Rand’s works becomes a staple on high school reading lists, it will be this book’ (34). *Anthem* is a brief novel about a dystopia, a collectivist state where conformity and drudgery are the norm. Ayn Rand’s utopia was to be a place where men will hunt and women admire them, where men will be the life force and women its worshippers. *Anthem* was the beginning for the opera to come, composed of *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*.

The story is written in the form of a journal kept by a man of the future, living in a collectivist state; a state where people do not have names but numbers. His is equality 7-2521 and viewed suspiciously by the elders of his society. Much of the pleasure of the story is derived from the reader’s use of their imaginations as they fill in the gaps in the hero’s knowledge of the ‘unmentionable times’ before the ascendance of the collectivist state. Equality 7-2521 wants to be a scholar and this desire of his brings him on a collision course with the Council of Vocations. For his impudence he is punished to become a street sweeper.

However, Equality 7-2521 manages to hoodwink the elders and quench his thirst for knowledge when he discovers a tunnel, a remnant of structures from unmentionable times. He goes there to study manuscripts, stolen from the clerks, in his bid to tinker with the chemicals and dissect animals.
Committing another ‘sin of preference’, he falls in love with Liberty 5-300 whom he sees in the fields. He is twenty-one and she only seventeen and before this he has known women only during the ‘Time of Mating’. She returns his love for like any Ayn Rand heroine she knows her ‘hero-man’ when she sees him. Out of his passionate love for her comes a desire to say the Unspeakable Word ‘I’ for which the punishment is burning at the stakes.

When Equality 7-2521 escapes from the city she follows him into the Unchartered Forest. Liberty 5-3000, who is now called the Golden One, says: ‘we have followed you...Do as you please with us, but do not send us away from you. Then they knelt, and bowed their golden head before us’ (A 82-83). For Ayn Rand servility and submissiveness of her female protagonists was actually ‘woman trying to find meaning’ for after all ‘woman is defined by her relationship to man’. Equality 7-2521 learns to hunt like a man, while Liberty 5-300 learns the pleasures of looking into a mirror, presumably like a woman, bringing to the fore the stereotype of women being vain and dependant on the man for protection and provision. When they find a place and Equality 7-2521 tells her that this is their place, she says to her Lord and master: ‘Your will be done’ (A 19).

From a manuscript he has found in the house he takes the name Prometheus and gives to Golden One the name Gaea, for he is to be the source of light, while she is to be the Mother Earth: ‘her name was Gaea... for you are to be the mother of a new kind of gods’ (A 99). Luce Irigaray the eminent feminist critic writes that in a patriarchal social order which is founded on the exchange of women, ‘as mother’, woman’s value is in the reproduction of children (and of the labor force). Her reproductive value underwrites her exchange value in the social order. As mothers their responsibility is to maintain the social order by ‘reproducing children’ and thus ‘the labor force’.
In *Anthem*, ‘the compliant stereotype’ is also once again visible, where the man’s inner life is a privilege to share. As a servant to her lord and mother to his children, Liberty 5-3000 fulfills two sub-divisions of this stereotype.

* * *

**The Fountainhead (1942)**: By 1932, Ayn Rand had committed herself to leading a crusade against collectivism, which she viewed as anti-life. *The Fountainhead*, the third novel Ayn Rand wrote, started in 1937, finished in 1942 and became her first bestseller. *The Fountainhead* narrated the tale of ‘the individual’ against ‘a state run by men without taste’. By 1945 *The Fountainhead* was on the bestseller list. In 1949 a film version of the story was released. Though the story was born in the 1930s, *The Fountainhead* does not deal with politics or economics or world affairs.

It is the tale of Howard Roark, an architect, and his fight against the system, which is devoid of taste (socio-culturally and politically). The story begins with Howard Roark being expelled from the Architecture Institute and his telling the dean how he should have left the place years before, for he cares not what others think of him or his work. Peter Keating, his senior and best student of the Institute comes to him for advice that very day, which also happens to be the graduation day.

From the first pages we see ‘the individualist’ and ‘the second-hander’, the man who thinks for himself and the man who does not, and Ayn Rand plays them off against each other. In New York City, Roark and Keating seek employment in firms, which could not be any further apart. Keating is working with Francon and Heyer, a formidable corporate name in architecture, while Roark works as job assistant to Henry Cameron, the first man to have built a skyscraper, but now unemployed and destitute. Keating outmaneuvers other architects to become Francon’s chief designer, while Roark sinks lower in destitution.
Gail Wynand, Ayn Rand’s only truly classical tragic figure, is a man with qualities like Roark mixed with those of Keating. He is a self-made man and owns a financial empire and a newspaper named ‘Banner’. Ellsworth Toohey writes a feature column on architecture called ‘One Small Voice’ in Wynand’s ‘Banner’ and Ayn Rand presents him as ‘the altruist’, the humanist who really covets for power. For Toohey arts should reflect the will of the people whereas Dominique Francon, another columnist, who writes on interior decoration, and is Guy Francon’s daughter, is in a perpetual snit against the shallow tastes and conventions of her society.

Roark is not known to either of them and after Cameron is forced to retire, Keating hires the former. Roark refuses to work on a joint project and leaves. He gets a commission to build a private home and his isolation is broken.

Meanwhile Keating meets and falls in love with Dominique despite the fact that he has promised to marry Catherine, Toohey’s niece. However, later he decides not to marry her because she is simple and homely and unlike Dominique will be unable to help him rise and grow in his career. This is the first instance in the novel where the ‘social value’ between Dominique and Catherine is exploited and consumed by a male character in the novel. Keating’s decision of marriage is a very good example of how, from a Marxist feminists angle, ‘as commodities, women are thus two things at once: utilitarian objects and bearers of value’ (Oliver 214). Catherine was ready to give up everything for Peter Keating — her career, her simple ways to marry him. Peter demands of her to: ‘Quit your damn job tomorrow... you must be ready to start then’ (TF 368) and Catherine replies ‘yes Peter’ (TF 368).

Ayn Rand maintained that true femininity is ‘hero-worship’ and ‘man is defined by his relationship to reality, woman by her relationship
to man’ (Branden 18). In the character portrayal of Catherine Ayn Rand’s belief is given practical bearings and it is not difficult to see how she demeans woman as ‘products’ or ‘commodities’ to be used by men. Devoid of any profound intelligent essence, their only true essence is in finding meaning through their ‘man-worshiping’. We shall observe more instances of this celebration of patriarchy when we discuss the character of Dominique Francon. To continue with a brief sketch of the novel, Roark gets commissions now and then. Meanwhile Toohey gains a lot of power in the world of architecture and Roark is commissioned to build the Stoddard Temple for Hopton Stoddard.

Dominique, out of contempt for Peter, marries him and not before long leaves him to marry Gail Wynand. Peter’s franchising of his wife and Dominique’s willingness to put herself at Gail’s service, were he to give Peter Keating the commission to build Stoneridge, appears morally petrifying. This barter of ‘commission’ for ‘woman’ is one of the most unsavory episodes in the entire novel. It implies complete dehumanizing of woman.

Dominique marries Gail because of some sado-masochistic, pleasure-contempt she feels for him. Roark meets Gail when Gail wants him to build a temple to house and enshrine Dominique and a beautiful friendship develops between Roark and Gail. Baker views this as ‘a strange non-physical homoerotic relationship between Roark and Wynand, a love affair that dwarfs any hetero-sexual affairs in Ayn Rand’s fiction’ (55).

Peter Keating, whose stars are in eclipse, tries to make a comeback. He bids for and gets to build a low-cost housing project called Cortlandt. Roark is the architect, while Peter has to execute the designs without any change in them. However, Peter is unable to keep his part of the bargain and Roark sets explosives and destroys the buildings. Wynand throws the entire weight of his newspaper and financial empire behind
Roark in his defense. The jury gives its judgment in favour of Roark and he is ready to build Cortlandt according to the original plan. Dominique leaves Wynand and marries Roark. The end of the story is supposed to be Ayn Rand’s celebration of ‘the individual’. It is very beautifully suggested by the identification of Howard Roark with sky and sea – traditionally the symbols of vastness, depth and eternity. “She saw, on the fence surrounding New York’s greatest building, a small tin plate bearing the words:

Howard Roark, Architect...She saw him standing above her, on the top platform of the Wynand Building. He waved to her. The line of the ocean cut the sky. The ocean mounted as the city descended. She passed the crowns of courthouses. She rose above the spires of churches. Then there was only the ocean and the sky and the figure of Howard Roark’ (TF 679-680).

The Fountainhead is perhaps the best novel Ayn Rand wrote. It is not as simple as it first appears. One cannot fail to view Ayn Rand’s celebration of ‘individualism’ as a celebration of patriarchy. Dominique Francon, the female protagonist in the novel is far from being active, assertive, independent, professionally successful and sexually emancipated. She rather has overtones of the ‘neurotic, manipulated or exploited female’. We observe how through the dialogues and actions of Francon, Ayn Rand ‘celebrates patriarchy’.

Thus when Dominique asks Howard Roark to come and set the marble slab at the fireplace of her bedroom, he sends another man to fix the marble to which Dominique refuses permission. Later Roark meets Dominique and annoys her with his indifference towards her. Three days after the episode, Dominique is sitting in her bedroom when Roark comes into her room unannounced. The following description follows:
'He came in. He wore dark clothes... then he walked to her. He held her... her legs jerked tight against his, his mouth on hers... she tried to tear herself away from him... her fists beat against his shoulders... she felt his lips on her breast... she fell back against the dressing table... He had thrown her down on the bed and she felt his hands moving over her body... then the sudden pain shot up, through her body, to her throat, and she screamed. Then she lay still’ (TF 217-218).

This rape of Dominique Francon is painful; but Ayn Rand’s valorization of it is unpardonable.

‘But the act of a master taking a shameful, contemptuous possession of her was the kind of rapture she had wanted... that she had found pleasure in the thing which had happened... that was the degradation she had wanted...’ (220).

Further, rather than expressing outrage at this forced violation of herself, Dominique gloats:

‘I’ve been raped... I’ve been raped by a red headed hoodlum from a stone quarry... Through the fierce sense of humiliation, the words gave her the same kind of pleasure she had felt in his arms’ (TF 220).

Later in the novel Dominique goes to Roark and pleads to him, ‘I want to sleep with you... (273). ...Then he got up, he walked to her, her mouth on his, in a surrender more violent than her struggle had been’ (TF 274). Dominique gets some sort of a masochistic pleasure from the rapes and she sleeps with Roark whenever she hurts him. She becomes his mistress.
Towards the middle of the story we observe Dominique Francon Keating being used by her husband in a most shameless fashion. Peter Keating wants the Stoneridge commission and he asks Dominique to take a proposition to Wynand, ‘I should like you to give that commission to my husband. I understand...unless I agree to sleep with you in exchange. If you consider that a sufficient reason– I am willing to do it’ (TF 437). Gail Wynand buys Dominique from Peter Keating for $250,000 and gives him the commission to build Stoneridge.

Ayn Rand’s ‘sense-of-life’ and the women’s place in it is revealed when Dominique says:

‘... she felt the answer in her body... she thought that it was not a matter of desire, not even a matter of the sexual act, but only that man was the life force and woman could respond to nothing else... and she was responding not to the act nor to the man, but to that force within him’ (TF 483-484).

Through the character of Dominique Francon, Ayn Rand very forcefully presents her idea of feminity and tries to show how ‘man is defined by his relationship to nature, woman by her relationship to man’. Apart from her philosophical treatises, The Fountainhead is the only novel in which Ayn Rand has unequivocally showed her contempt towards women. For Mimi R. Gladstein, Dominique Francon, ‘is an interesting case study in perverseness’ (36). ‘Rape’ is not only forceful physical violation of women and their bodies but also a political act of male supremacy. As Simone de Beauvoir talks of ‘self’ and ‘other’ we see how man conceives of himself as the ‘self’ or ‘natural’ and women as the ‘other’ or ‘unnatural’. The ‘self’ treats ‘other’ as a ‘supplement’ or a ‘threat’. Her ‘supplementary role is of a mistress, wife or goddess.
In this case ironically it is not only the ‘self’ i.e., Howard Roark, which treats the ‘other’ i.e., Dominique Francon as a mistress, and consequently as supplementary to the ‘self’, but also the ‘other’ i.e., Dominique who gleefully accepts that supplementary position. A feminist reading will see Dominique’s response as a result of patriarchal brainwashing of not only a woman’s mind but also of her ideas and reactions to her own sexuality.

Ayn Rand celebrates this characteristic feature of the patriarchal predication. Dominique is mistress to Roark and her rape at his hands is celebrated as ‘humiliations which are pleasure giving’ for man is after all ‘the life force’. Dominique Francon’s commodification can also be understood along Marx’s analysis of commodities as the elementary form of capitalist wealth, which can thus be understood as an interpretation of the status of women in a patriarchal society.

Moreover, the feminist argument and specifically the Marxist feminists for whom society and culture are based upon the exchange of women — where their bodies through their use, consumption and circulation make the socio-cultural life of a patriarchal capitalist society possible — is also proved correct. Dominique Francon’s being a mistress and specifically how Peter Keating exploits her when he puts her on the market in order to obtain the Stone ridge commission is striking. This traffic of Dominique’s sexuality by the male characters as an ‘economic issue’ whose exchange produces wealth (commissions or plain carnal pleasures) amongst them is best understood as Dominique’s commodification, her being a ‘product’ or ‘object’ for Roark, Keating and Wynand. She has become ‘an object’ or commodity’ whose possession is in the nature of ‘wealth’ for the male characters.

* * *
**Atlas Shrugged (1957)**: is a novel which narrates the tale of 'the individual' against 'a collectivist state. Published in 1957, this is Ayn Rand's last novel and also the most voluminous, and the one she and her followers considered her best. It has since become the holy text of the Objectivist movement. Ayn Rand was fond of quoting it and considered *The Fountainhead* to be a preview to the main feature.

*Atlas Shrugged* is the story of four heroes and one heroine. The men are three former college classmates, Francisco D'Anconia, Ragnar Danneskjold, John Galt and Henry Rearden (Hank), who is in many ways like Howard Roark. The woman is the irrepressible and unforgettable Dagny Taggart.

The story takes place in a vaguely defined future, as America follows Europe and the world down the long, hopeless path towards socialism. While *The Fountainhead* did not deal with economic or political issues, in *Atlas Shrugged* they are central to the plot and theme. For Ayn Rand, capitalism celebrates life while collectivism negates life. In *Atlas Shrugged*, the four heroes and Dagny Taggart join forces with hundreds of other intelligent, freedom-loving capitalists and workers to halt and reverse this slide towards socialism. To do this they go on strike, withdraw their services and walk away from duty. Their action may also be viewed as ‘Robinhood’ in reverse, for they are against altruism, sacrifice and humanism. Their purpose is to make the world safe for capitalism.

Henry Rearden is an industrialist and inventor of a new form of metal, stronger and more durable than any before it. Like Howard Roark, he is despised and ridiculed for his originality. When he refuses to share the new metals formula with the state, he is put on trial. He refuses to speak and defend himself. As the story progresses his presence fades. Though he is married, Dagny Taggart is his mistress.
Francisco D’Anconia and Ragnar Danneskjold, two fascinating male character’s, have been given very marginal roles. Francisco’s job is to take gifted men out of industry in order to destroy socialism. He and Rearden develop a friendship and passion for the same girl, Dagny Taggart, which is reminiscent of the Wynand-Roark friendship in *The Fountainhead*. Francisco is also Dagny’s lover.

John Galt, the technological genius, who broke the chains of servitude and inspired all the Atlases to shrug, is the hero of the novel. For two-thirds of the novel John Galt remains a shadowy figure, almost mythical figure. His name is a household question ‘who is John Galt?’ He is only found when he wants to; his hiding place is of the ultimate importance to the future of mankind. Through an extremely long speech at the end of the novel, Ayn Rand spells out the tenets of her philosophy of ‘Objectivism’: the necessity of choice, virtue of selfishness, and the importance of individualism. She also talks about capitalism, mysticism, altruism and the concept of Original Sin.

Dagny Taggart, Ayn Rand’s most dynamic heroine is also one of the most heroic female protagonists in American fiction. She comes out as an active, independent, professionally successful and sexually emancipated female character. On account of Dagny Taggart and her character, many critics have described *Atlas Shrugged* as ‘a female fantasy novel’. She is intelligent, and strong of spirit and action, independent and according to many critics she brings a completely new perspective to the image of women in American literature.

Dagny runs Taggart Transcontinental railroad in the face of ineptness and corruption that the socialist system throws her way. As institutions and industries fall by the wayside of ‘the collectivist march’, Dagny sets about to rebuild one of Taggart’s old and by now defunct line. It is during this task that she contacts Hank Rearden, the steel tycoon.
They become lovers and in unison battle to keep the economy from collapsing.

Dagny’s quest to find the inventor of an abandoned motor she finds in an old factory occupies her and the plot of the story to the very end. The answer to where all the capable people are going and ‘who is John Galt?’ is revealed to us.

The plot and Dagny’s personality does have the potential to make the feminists ecstatic, but Atlas Shrugged, can not be considered to help out the feminist cause. Despite the success, assertiveness and independent spirit of Dagny, and the sexual attention she receives from three male protagonists in the novel, a feminist reading will view the book suspiciously. There are attitudes towards women and feminity in the novel that are offensive. It is not only Ayn Rand’s criticism of collectivism that is offensive, it is the implication of Dagny’s freelance sex and her ‘rape’ by John Galt in the tunnels of Taggart Transcontinental Railroad that is truly shocking.

Dagny Taggart’s associations with Francisco D’Anconia, Hank Rearden and John Galt, far from illustrating her sexual emancipation are in fact disconcerting to the ordinary woman. Moreover Dagny’s attitude towards her associations is not very ennobling from a feminist angle. While Dagny’s ‘sex life’ may substantiate Ayn Rand’s ‘theory of sex’ about which Francisco D’Anconia lectures to Hank Rearden (460-461), the implications of Dagny’s attitude are far from being positive for women.

We observe the ‘commodification’ of Dagny Taggart and her ‘rape’ by John Galt, which is indicative of masochistic perverseness. Despite her strong and positive personality, the mask keeps falling from Dagny. The apotheosis of a liberated and successful woman makes a sorry reading. In fact all of Dagny Taggart’s first lovemaking instances with
John, Francisco and Hank have resonances of a rape like situation than consensual sex between two individuals.

For Ayn Rand, after all, ‘sex is best when accompanied with violence’ and ‘when the rapist holds his victim in utter contempt’ as Dominique explains in The Fountainhead. Dagny submits to Francisco D’Anconia on their first sexual experience as:

‘she knew that fear was useless, that he would do what he wished, that the decision is his, that he left nothing possible to her except the thing she wanted most – to submit’ (AS 107).

Dagny’s asserts that she just wanted to submit to him because:

‘...of his power to reduce her to helplessness by the pleasure he had the power to give her.’(AS108).

This submitting to his power for the pleasure he ‘gets’ and her feeling of pride when Francisco calls her his mistress is far more than:

‘the pride a woman is supposed to experience at being granted the title of a wife ’(AS108).

It confirms the feminist predication of how women are supplementary ‘to men’, ‘objects’ of their desire.

Later she becomes a mistress to Hank Rearden and surrenders to him only to become ’an instrument of his pleasure’. She takes pride in being ‘the railroad executive who was a woman he owned’ (AS 266), and when he clasps the bracelet on her wrist, ‘she bent her head down to them and kissed his hand’ (AS 266) invoking images of a master–servant binary of feminist criticism where man is the centre of all things. For Dagny, Hank Rearden was ‘in the manners of an owner...’(AS 348) and all her assertiveness and independence is exposed as a sham when she submits to Hank Rearden saying, ‘Hank, I ...I’d give up any thing I’ve ever had in my life, except my being a...a luxury object of your amusement’ (AS 352).
Dagny’s assertion of only wanting to be ‘a luxury object’ for Rearden’s amusement provides strength to the Marxist feminist assumption of how women as ‘commodities’ are thus two things at once: utilitarian objects and bearers of value. Dagny Taggart is an object of amusement for Rearden and for Francisco a bearer of pleasure.

Atlas Shrugged also has the ‘glorious rape’ where John Galt rapes Dagny Taggart on their first encounter:

‘then she was conscious of nothing but the sensations of her body… that she knew nothing but the motion of his body and the driving greed that went reaching on and on, as if she were not a person any longer… and she gasped and lay still…’ (AS 888).

The rape of Dagny for Ayn Rand is ‘a sensation of physical pleasure’ and it ‘contained her worship of him, of everything that was his person and his life-…’ (AS 888). These glorified rapes can best be understood as Ayn Rand’s misogyny, for her male aggression is always played in terms of women becoming objects of sadistic humiliation. What is more perverse is the masochistic pleasure her heroines take in this humiliation. This coupling of sex and violence ‘reinforces the macho myth that every woman secretly wants to be raped’ (Innes 23-30) and Justifies the feminist opposition to such misogynistic fiction.

In Atlas Shrugged we observe Ayn Rand’s celebration of patriarchy through her female protagonist’s submission as mistress to three men and her valorization of the situation: ‘I am proud that he had chosen me to give him pleasure…’ (AS172). To conclude the discussion on Atlas Shrugged, we may say that a Marxist-feminist reading reveals disturbing attitudes towards women and feminity in the novel.

*    *    *
The discussion of her different works very clearly suggested that for Ayn Rand, man was the normative force, the center of all things and ‘woman’ gets meaning through her relationship with man. This relationship is not one of equals but a master-servant relationship and Dominique Francon in The Fountainhead, eloquently puts Ayn Rand’s ‘sense of life’ when after her marriage to Gail Wynand she muses to herself how she will be unable to hold this barrier of indifference and asexuality towards him because:

‘...she knew that this barrier would not be held between them, and that she had no power to hold it. She felt the answer in her body, an answer of hunger, of acceptance, of pleasure. She thought that it was not a matter of desire, not even a matter of sexual act, but only that man was the life force and woman could respond to nothing else; that this man had the will of life, the prime power, and this act was only its simplest statement, and she was responding not to the act nor to the man, but to that force within him’ (TF469).

From a feminist angle, the implications of such a ‘sense of life’ present woman as a ‘negation of man’, where ‘man alone is the paradigmatic metaphysical concept and women are merely inferior instances of this concept’ (Irigaray202). One observes how Ayn Rand in her fictional works thoroughly complements patriarchal repression of women and female sexuality by turning women into the raw materials that fuel man’s projects. Ayn Rand’s celebration of patriarchy treats women to be a slave to men’s desires and sexual needs. We also observe how the male sex assumes itself to be the generic civil subject and subordinates women to a hierarchical, patriarchal economy where women are destined to a ‘second class’ existence.
Chapter V

Capitalism and other related issues:
An Analysis of Ayn Rand’s non-fictional works

Ayn Rand’s fiction brought her to the attention of many young intellectuals starved for alternative philosophies other than the prevailing existential, relativistic and Marxist philosophies. As her fame grew, she moved from being a novelist to being a philosopher. She began to see herself not just ‘as a philosopher of aesthetics or personal ethics but of public reality’ (65), as stated by James Baker.

Ayn Rand’s career as a philosopher began with Atlas Shrugged, as she wrote, rewrote, and condensed to 30,000 words John Galt’s radio address. Ayn Rand considered it her duty to provide a philosophic platform for a generation of ‘new intellectuals’, at a time when, as she thought, the world was facing a ‘moral crisis’ and had to choose between freedom (capitalism) and collectivism (communism/socialism). For her the new intellectuals must ‘volunteer to live the rational life’, and this was only to be found in her philosophy of ‘Objectivism’, narrated in the Atlas Shrugged and delivered by John Galt in his radio message.

Atlas Shrugged brought Ayn Rand widespread and large-scale publicity which none of her other works had brought. Its philosophic contents were reviewed and were either praised or damned for their literary merits and demerits. From the late 1950s to the mid 1970s, Ayn Rand was much in demand as a public speaker, publishing and editing her own journal and she turned collections of her articles and speeches into best selling paperback books. These books are For The New Intellectual, The Virtue of Selfishness, Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal, Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology, The Romantic Manifesto and The New Left: An Anti Industrial Revolution.
The books far from presenting any systematic philosophy were in reality scattered collections of articles which she wrote for her journal The Objectivist and passages from her novels, either in defense of her views or expanding upon her ‘philosophy of Objectivism’. Her philosophy contained many themes and theories other than her anti-feminism which she unambiguously and in unequivocal terms declared to Edwin Newman: ‘women who want to be equal or superior to men go against women’s true nature, which is to look up to man’ (Baker 79) and which this study has endeavored to analyze. In this chapter we will have a brief discussion on other themes and theories in her works, which will be followed by a brief analysis of her fictional books.

Ayn Rand called her philosophy ‘Objectivism’, as she considered ‘objective reality’ to be the central theme of her thought. In a more definitive statement on the foundations of Objectivism in Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology, she explained that her school of thought alone in modern times considered universal concepts to be neither received by mystical revelation nor invented by the mind of man. For Ayn Rand, man’s mind is supreme and capable of perceiving and interpreting these universal concepts of objective reality.

In an interview to Alvin Tofler of Playboy in 1964, Ayn Rand explained the relationship of man’s rational interpretation of reality to the objective ethic of rational self-interest. For Ayn Rand ‘man exists for his own sake’, and that ‘the pursuit of his own happiness is his highest moral purpose, and a rational man should not sacrifice himself to others, nor sacrifice others to himself’ (Ibid Tofler). Ayn Rand believed that a rational man knows that the politico-economic system that offers him the best chance to realize his potential is laissez-faire capitalism. Feminists were outraged at the implications of her philosophy and the treatment of her female protagonists in her fictional works at the hands of Ayn Rand’s rational hero-men. In the pages that follow is attempted a caption-wise...
discussion of some of the important philosophical concepts with which Ayn Rand occupied herself.

**Capitalism** : It may sound commonplace that Ayn Rand was an unashamed votary of capitalism. Ayn Rand viewed capitalism as the creation and in turn the creator of heroic individualism. It was for her the only economic and social system under which an individualist, the Ayn Rand ideal–hero, thrives. Ayn Rand’s watchword was the French merchant’s request to Louis XIV’s finance minister Colbert, ‘Laissez nous faire’ – the resounding ‘Leave us alone’. Ayn Rand prided herself as ‘a radical for capitalism’, the only rational philosophy of economics.

Ayn Rand believed capitalism to be the only economic system ‘geared to the life of a rational being’. It is not only history’s most practical system but the most moral as well (Capt.. vii-viii). For Ayn Rand capitalism gave the American North in the nineteenth century, progress, equality, and economic and political liberty in contrast to the feudal South where ignorance, poverty, and racism dominated. Capitalism was the difference (TVS 129-30).

Ayn Rand has her own version of the history of Western Civilization where Aristotle and his descendants, chose reason over mysticism, freedom and opportunity over religious and political controls, which ultimately led the way toward capitalism and progress. Plato on the other hand according to Ayn Rand, preached mysticism and controlling of the individual, if need be through force, and thus was anti-capitalist and anti-progress. She saw ‘the Middle Ages as a time of Platonic mysticism and the Renaissance and industrial revolution times of Aristotelian rationalism, when intellectuals and businessmen combined to create a climate for progress’ (FNI 23-30).

Ayn Rand was particularly incensed by the unreasonable notion
that love of money is the root of all evil. In *Atlas Shrugged* Francisco d’Anconia insists that ‘money is the barometer of a society’s virtue’ (FNI 108) and the paradise in the novel is a place where men of rational self-interest stay calling it Utopia of Greed and its symbol is a gold dollar sign.

Ayn Rand conceived as impossible the idea that capitalism dehumanizes workers. For, according to her, the great capitalists are men of rational self-interest and because of their profits, will never harm their workers. It was not the capitalists but government controls and socialism with its concessions, subsidies and mixed economy, that rendered the capitalists ineffective.

The good guys of history, for her, were the capitalists while the bad guys were the second-handers who looted in the name of ‘the common good.’ For Ayn Rand capitalism was the ‘symbol of a free society...’(Cap. 62) and money its health, which capitalists bring to a nation.

**Collectivism**: For Ayn Rand collectivism was the blackest vice and in all her fictional works the main theme was the conflict between ‘individualism (capitalism) and collectivism’. Ayn Rand viewed collectivism, irrationality and lethargy as related ideas. Thus in *Anthem*, she speaks that in a collectivist system, ‘what is not done collectively cannot be good (A 81). In *Atlas Shrugged*, she captured what in her views was the essence of collectivist philosophy: ‘From Each According to His Ability – To Each According to His Need’ (AS 668).

This altruistic, ‘collectivist statism’, which makes man dependent, inactive, and inefficient and forbids enterprise, was, for Ayn Rand, not only impractical and ineffective but also patently evil. Ayn Rand never missed an opportunity to run down collectivism. *We The Living* describes the collectivist Soviet state, while *Anthem* describes a collectivist state of the future where men have been stripped of all identity. *The*
Fountainhead is the tale of an individual against the collectivist tastes and values of a society unafraid to think for itself. Atlas Shrugged describes how the men of rational self-interest refuse to collaborate with the collectivist economic planners and thereby defeat the system. For Ayn Rand collectivism is the exact opposite of ‘rational capitalist individualism’.

Rationalism: Ayn Rand fancied herself as some sort of intellectual inheritor and literary executor of Aristotle in the twentieth century and called herself ‘an Aristotelian’ in her Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology. She credited Aristotle with establishing the value of rationalism. For a man to be rational, he must utilize his faculty of reason, which for Ayn Rand stood as the foundation of all human achievement. A man of reason is egoistically individualistic, which fosters productivity and which creates and sustains capitalism for the benefit of all.

One of her most intriguing metaphors for rationality and irrationality is to be found in her essay ‘Apollo and Dionysus’ where she compares the Apollo II moon voyage to the Woodstock rock festival, both coming in the sultry summer of 1969. ‘The man of reason reaches to the stars through technology while the man without reason descends to the mud in a drunken mystical stupor, choking on his own irrationality. The choice is Apollo, god of light, or Dionysus, god of wine (TNL 57-81).

Thus, we observe in all of Ayn Rand’s writings, fictional and philosophical, how the theme of rationalism is closely linked with that of individualism. The man of reason is always an individualist, shunning society and its values following only the urging of his own mind, a supreme egoist like Equality 7-2521 in Anthem, Howard Roark in The Foundationhead, John Galt, Francisco D’ Anconia and Ragnar Danneskjold in Atlas Shrugged.
The Hero: The man of rational self-interest, the man who refused to live for the sake of another man, was a hero for Ayn Rand. The first ideal man Ayn Rand created was Equality 7-2521: ‘I am a man, this miracle of me is mine to own and keep, and mine to guard, and mine to use, and mine to kneel before’ (A110). This spirit was later to be found in all her male protagonists.

For some critics, the hero is probably Ayn Rand’s central theme and theory. The Ayn Rand hero was ‘the active man’ who is independent, individualistic, selfish, rational and all of this in order to be creative and productive. Her rational individual, the man of ego, is by nature a selfish being, a man of supreme self-confidence and ruthlessly pursuing self-interest. The negative connotations of selfishness, Ayn blamed, were due to altruism. Selfishness was not only a virtue, but also the foundation for a code of ethics which she called ‘the morality of rational self-interest’ (Cap.150).

The selfish person, she believed, is concerned with his own productive labor and his hard work is like entrepreneurs and captains of industry. The ‘altruist’s’ are ‘metaphysical killers’ waiting for a chance to be physical ones (TVS, 50-56).

Ayn Rand believed that altruism entails self – sacrifice, self-immolation, self-abnegation, which the man of reason must avoid. For Ayn Rand, altruism was a primitive phenomenon in modern currency through the ‘second-handers’ who cannot compete with an individualist. This may explain why Ayn Rand called the valley where all the capitalists and men of reason have escaped to in Atlas Shrugged as a ‘Utopia of Greed’. Out here the men of undiluted selfishness lived with gold as their currency and the dollar sign as the symbol of their society. Ayn Rand would continue to delineate the principles of this utopia in her non-fictional works.
It is easy to see that Ayn Rand’s heroes are all in business of one type or another — creating buildings, establishing factories, founding banks; making capital through entrepreneurship.

Her heroes suffer at the hands of jealous enemies, who are all ‘second-handers’. In the beginning the heroes temporarily suffer defeat by the machinations of lesser men, only to rise to the occasion at the end. Her hero’s victory at the end vindicates her philosophy of objectivism to be truly rational and practical.

**Libertarianism, Atheism and Mysticism** : Ayn Rand has been called a libertarian though she was never a member of any party or political movement. As a writer-philosopher, her task was only to formulate a philosophic base on which capitalists and individualists could reestablish a golden age, just as they had in eighteenth century Europe and nineteenth century American North.

It can be observed that among her ‘libertarian’ themes and theories was the idea that all taxes should be voluntary. In her interview to Alvin Toffler of Playboy in 1964, published as ‘A Candid Interview’, Ayn Rand observed that taxes were illegal and the government should raise revenues through a lottery, which she considered a self-imposed tax and in case further revenues were needed, then citizens should be persuaded to give taxes voluntarily.

In the same interview, Ayn Rand considered the military draft of the 1960s unconstitutional and opposed public ownership of radio frequencies and television channels. For her capitalism only flourished in a free atmosphere and any loss of individualism would materially affect the progress and prosperity of society.

Essential to her philosophic base of ‘Objectivism’ was atheism and for Ayn Rand a mystic was anyone who places another being or cause
above the self or man. Religion to her was simply incompatible with self-interest, the keystone of individualism and capitalism. In her Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology, Ayn Rand observed the affinity between communism and Judeo-Christian mysticism, for ‘both listed selflessness, not selfishness as the highest virtue’ (IOE 108).

Objectivism demanded atheism and Ayn Rand’s major complaint against American conservatism was its ties with religion. The colonization of North America was a direct consequence of the religious conflict between the Puritans and the monarchists in England. After the collapse of the Protectorate of Cromwell in 1666 and the reinstallation of Charles I, the Puritans fearing persecution immigrated to North America with the intention of establishing a country under God’s law. The American Declaration of Independence and the national anthem stand testimony to this religious fervor with ‘God Save America’ encrypted in them. The Founding Fathers also brought along with them, apart from their religiosity, the famed Protestant work ethic. According to this work ethic six days were meant for the pursuit of their happiness and other worldly engagements while the seventh, the Sabbath, for remembering and praising God. Ayn Rand being a Russian émigré, with Jewish heritage, seems to have failed to appreciate this raison d’etre of the American psyche.

Thus Ayn Rand’s natural allies in America were estranged from her for they viewed capitalism and religious belief as mutually complementary to each another.

Philosophy and Fiction: one will be justified in saying that her ‘sense of life’ took time to mature. Her second phase of writing, where she expostulates what her fictional works were all about, is her philosophic phase. For Ayn Rand, all novelists are philosophers because their fiction inevitably reflects their interpretation of human existence or ‘sense of life’. While some borrow this ‘sense of life’, Ayn Rand created her own out of
personal convictions and she boasted of it in the preface to her *For The New Intellectual*.

We notice that in Ayn Rand's fictional works her characters are born out of this 'sense of life' where heroes are without flaws and villains without redeeming virtues. Her characters do not appear real life because they are abstract who capture the essence of moral virtue and vice and their purpose is to narrate the conflict between good and evil, just like in a sixteenth century morality play. Her characters were personifications of evil or truth, each following his particular sense of life.

* * *

These various themes and theories listed above are always to be found in the works of Ayn Rand. Her 'sense of life' was Objectivism and an objectivist was dedicated to the restoration of individualism and the reconstruction of capitalism which communism had taken away.

By 1957, with the publication of *Atlas Shrugged*, her first phase as a fiction writer came to an end. In her second phase as a philosopher she dedicated herself to save America and the world from 'collectivist statism' and for this the New Intellectuals had to be provided with a philosophic base to subscribe to. As noted earlier John Galt's speech in *Atlas Shrugged* provided for this philosophic platform of Objectivism and in the rest of her writing career she would explain this message and its philosophy through six books. These books, far from presenting any 'systematic philosophy', are composed of articles, public addresses and passages from her novels. We shall very briefly try to gather the central meaning of each of these six books in the following part of the chapter.

*For The New Intellectual* (1961): Ayn Rand's debut as a public philosopher was with the publication in 1961 of her book *For The New Intellectual*: 
The Philosophy of Ayn Rand. The book is a good place to start with for all those who are interested in ‘capsualized versions’ (Gladstein 73) of the major themes in her fiction. *Atlas Shrugged* soaks up a major portion of the book and it is in this book that Ayn Rand first publicly names her philosophy ‘Objectivism’.

The long opening essay of the book explains the background for Ayn Rand’s urgency to create a new group of intellectuals and it represents her first step from fiction to public philosophy. Her major premises are that the historical culprits – spiritual in the forms of the church or other institutions of faith and whom she calls ‘the witch-doctor’ (FNI 15), along with the physical culprits in the forms of chiefs, kings or Governments and whom she calls ‘the Attila’s’ (FNI 15) have combined to undermine the progress of individuals.

As against these two forces, she identifies a third force in the person of ‘the producer’, the thinker. She views this third force as representative of the best in humanity, both having been born of the industrial revolution and nourished by capitalism.

In Ayn Rand’s reading of Western civilization, there are two golden periods. The first was the Renaissance, when Thomas Aquinas rediscovered Aristotle, and that ended the reign of ‘the witch-doctor’. The second golden period was the industrial revolution; produced by man’s liberated ‘renaissance mind’ and this ended the tyranny of ‘Attila’. The Founding Fathers of America were both intellectuals and businessmen and they established the first truly capitalist state. In a capitalist society the key figures are the intellectual and the businessmen and she concludes:

‘intellectual freedom cannot exist without political freedom; political freedom cannot exist with economic freedom; a free mind and a free market are corollaries’ (FNI 23).
However, this golden age was tragically brief and Ayn Rand indicts philosophers who veered away from Aristotelian epistemology and reintroduced new modes and creeds: the witch-doctor’s fatal ethic of self-sacrifice, medieval altruism and moral uncertainty. Ayn Rand begins with René’ Descartes and journeys through David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Hegel, Comte and Marx. These philosophers legitimized ‘altruistic morality’ which was to result in ‘communist humanism’ what according to her was essentially detrimental to the ‘rational man’.

Ayn Rand ends this essay by calling for the rise of a ‘new intellectual’. This new intellectual will be guided by reason and reason alone, will be an individual valuing his ‘self’ and never surrender to mystics and brutes. He must be ‘an atheist’. She calls upon the new intellectuals to supply capitalism with a firm ethical foundation, which she identifies as her philosophy of ‘Objectivism’, the most practical and moral system on earth. She ends her essay with, ‘The intellectuals are dead – long live the intellectuals!’ (FNI 67).

The Virtue of Selfishness (1964) : By 1961, Ayn Rand decided to publish a journal dedicated to the propagation of Objectivism. The journal was to be called: Objectivist Newsletter, Objectivist and finally the Ayn Rand Letter. In 1964 Ayn Rand published a compilation of her essays in a book form, which was provocatively titled, The Virtue of Selfishness. Ayn Rand wrote these essays with the purpose of clarifying from a variety of perspectives the basic standards and values of Objectivism.

The introductory essay delivered at the University of Wisconsin symposium on ‘Ethics in our Time’ (1961), outlines the rationale of Ayn Rand’s ethics. Explaining that life is the standard by which good is judged, therefore one’s own life should be one’s ethical purpose. Ayn Rand tries to connect ‘objectivism’ and its ethics of reason, purpose, self-esteem, rationality, productivity and pride as corresponding to one’s ethical values and purpose.
‘Objectivism can save modern man from the altruists’ (TVS 14-33).

The composition of her essays is very heterogeneous and at least three articles in this book deal with government policies and human rights. Ayn Rand was drawn increasingly to questions of man as a political and social being. In the article ‘Man’s Rights’, Ayn Rand asserts that only a free, capitalist society, built on individual rights can guarantee human rights to its citizens. States who guarantee a job, a home, and a decent standard of living are actually calling for a ‘collective right’ (TVS 92-109).

The greater part of these essays first appeared in the Objectivist Newsletter under the section called ‘Intellectual Ammunition Department’ where Ayn Rand answered questions sent in by readers. The early 1960s was a time of racial unrest and Ayn Rand dedicated several articles to racism. Her position failed to enthuse either liberals or conservatives. For her the panacea to all problems was a capitalist system, where all are treated as ‘individuals’ and not members of a race. Condemning the segregationists and the champions of affirmative action in the government alike, Ayn Rand pleased none with her views on racism (TVS 126-134).

The book concludes with an article entitled ‘The Argument from Intimidation’ (TVS 139-43), which clearly shows her frustration with not being understood. Critical of the education system and academic ethics, this essay is tense and defensive, showing ‘the kind of determination born of numerous battles on college campuses’ (Baker 78). For many observers and critics The Virtue of Selfishness has been one of Ayn Rand’s best selling non-fiction works.

Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal (1966) : In this, the third of Ayn Rand’s nonfiction books, Ayn Rand devoted herself to the current state of affairs of the nation. The book is dedicated to the memory of that brief shining moment, when America came close to establishing a true capitalist society.
The book is a collection of essays ‘on the moral aspects of capitalism’.

Ayn Rand sees capitalism as the only moral politico-economic system in history, which has been a great boon to mankind. She views capitalism as the only social system based on the recognition of human rights and particularly property rights. Ayn Rand had set much of her novel Atlas Shrugged along capitalism’s interest of property and intellectual rights which ‘altruistic socialism’ tried to subvert. She uses the term ‘legal piracy’ to dismiss the interference of the government in the means of production.

Ayn Rand calls businessmen ‘the symbol of a free society...’ (Cap. 44), and she blames on tribal instinct any attempt to destroy these capitalists. Criticizing mystical notions of ‘common good’ or ‘public interest’, both of which for her are rooted in primitive tribal notions, Ayn Rand lays the blame for wars at the doorstep of altruists. ‘Wars’, Ayn Rand says, ‘are rooted in the tribal notions of nationalism, and in a world of capitalistic systems would disappear’ (Cap. 35-40). However, history does not justify Ayn Rand’s basic supposition. The two World Wars and the centuries of conflict Europe faced can be blamed on capitalism and the profit motive that inspired the savagery that followed.

Some other essays in this book are on the gold standard, the airwaves, and the student’s rebellion of the day. For her, students are rebelling without any moral ground and only Objectivist inspired capitalism will save them and the country (Cap. 214-46).

Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology (1967): A theory of knowledge is basic to philosophy and this thin volume represented her first and only concerted attempt to begin a systematic presentation of Objectivism. This book is in the form of a series of essays and Ayn Rand begins with the definition of ‘universal concepts and their epistemological premises’. She
summarizes the four schools of epistemology from which one may choose his epistemology: extreme realism as represented by Plato, moderate realism as represented by Aristotle, nominalism and conceptualism.

Ayn Rand explains that Objectivism accepts Aristotle’s moderate realism and she begins with the axiom: ‘Existence Exists’. She explains by saying that there is a reality independent of anyone’s ability to perceive it and which cannot be broken down into smaller parts. Existence, identity and consciousness are concepts, which identify a primary fact of life and therefore need no proof. Hence, ‘Existence exists’. Since Objectivism is founded upon ‘universal concepts’, which are neither revealed nor invented, ‘America must learn Objectivism or be lost in confusion’ (IOE 27-33).

For Ayn Rand, recognition and description is the work of man, which a rational creature produces by his ‘consciousness in accordance with the facts of reality’, and which helps him work in accordance with ‘the dictates of objective reality’ (IOE 71). The solution to every human problem can be solved through the parameters of objective reality, which according to her can only be accessed through Objectivism.

The Romantic Manifesto (1971): Published in 1971, this book is composed of articles dealing with aesthetics, the connection between art and a ‘sense of life’, the basic principles of literature, Ayn Rand’s definition of Romanticism and the goal of her writing. The title ‘The Romantic Manifesto’ was probably a conscious challenge to Karl Marx and his seminal work ‘The Communist Manifesto’. A fiery, aggressive and at times challenging book, it represents the essence of Objectivist aesthetics.

Ayn Rand considers herself the champion of ‘romanticism’, and the future for her is that of ‘Objective romanticism’. She sees herself as ‘the bridge of that kind— between the aesthetic achievements of the
For Ayn Rand the essence of ‘romanticism’ is its recognition of man’s faculty of volition as against ‘naturalism’, which portrayed man as incapable of individualism, happiness and virtue. While the Romantics fought for a heroic vision of man, larger than life figures, ‘naturalism’ made literature pessimistic by writing about perverts, addicts and psychotics; art primitive, and music as irrational as the jungle (TRM 123-128). Ayn Rand indicts Zola, Balzac and Tolstoy on this count.

Ayn Rand sees this surrender of romanticism to naturalism due to the resurgence of mysticism in the nineteenth century. The Romantics, according to her, surrendered their belief in reason and free will to the naturalists who saw all life as ‘tragedy’. While they defended instinct, condemned industrialism, admired mysticism, despised capitalism and rejected reality, ‘the romantics’ thereby fully incorporated ‘altruistic morality’ and fell prey to naturalism (TRM 103-20).

For Ayn Rand, ‘naturalism’ is the antithesis of ‘romanticism’. Contemporary readers have been made so skeptical of heroism, according to her, that they cannot understand heroes, calling them simplistic, unrealistic, and escapist. Ayn Rand advocates a repeal of this ‘Joyce–Kafka amendment’ to literature (TRM 133-41).

At the end of the book is a short story, ‘The Simplest Thing in the World’, which was originally written in 1940, and which narrates a story of artistic integrity. For Henry Dorn, the protagonist, ‘the simplest thing in the world’ would be to give the public what it wants. However, he cannot compromise on his ideals just like any other Ayn Rand hero. The message Ayn Rand is trying to convey here is that art, which includes literature, is ‘the indispensable medium for the communication of a moral ideal’. ‘It reflects the artist’s ‘sense of life’ and Ayn Rand would always
make heroes who will demonstrate man’s true nature: rational self-interest, his view of himself as an end in itself and thereby a projection of ‘the ideal man’ (TRM 162).

**The New Left: The anti-Industrial Revolution (1971):** This book primarily attacks the American education system and the anti-intellectual biases that Ayn Rand saw in the system.

The New Left was intended for college students in the heydays of the ‘student revolutions’ and her basic argument is that the students are restive because they have not been taught to think rationally (TNL 21-25).

Ayn Rand lays the blame for this ignorance at the doorstep of the American education policy and she applauds the students for rejecting this ‘smorgasbord education’ (Gladstein 77) they have been forced to swallow.

However, she also mourns how the students are rejecting the positive accomplishments of their fathers: modern technology. Taking the Apollo mission to the moon and the Woodstock rock festival as analogies, both of which took place in the summer of 1969, she explains how Apollo demonstrated the accomplishment of rational men, contrasting with the ‘tribal mysticism ‘of the rock festival. It is man’s irrational emotions that bring him down to the mud; it is man’s reason that lifts him to the stars’ (TNL 57-81).

Everywhere she looks she sees evidence of ‘a new anti-industrial conspiracy’ among the young. ‘The ecology movement’ to save the environment is to her a part of an anti-industrial movement that is out to destroy industry and capitalism, the economic hope of the world (TNL 127-51). She sees these anti-industrial protests as envious leitmotivs of our age, propounded by people who hate progress and individualism and
capitalism (TNL 152-186).

Her most vitriolic words are reserved for the educators and the American education system. Reading Victor Hugo’s story ‘The Man Who Laughs’ for allegorical purpose, where children are monstrously stunted and deformed for the amusement of others, she contends that the education system in America is also a process where the emphasis on ‘conformity and socialization’ has produced ‘misfits’ and ‘maladjusted’ children, bereft of the capacity to be individualists and rational human beings (TNL 187-239).

An intriguing feature of this book is the fact that she begins by condemning the student unrest of the late 1960s and early 1970s by calling them a ‘Dionysian rabble’ but concludes by saying that in their capacity to rebel lies America’s hope.

To conclude this chapter it can be said that Ayn Rand, through her six non-fiction books, attempted to proclaim the ‘philosophy of Objectivism’ as the only route to a ‘rational life’. Her call to Americans and other people at large was to ‘relearn individualism, have admiration for capitalism and productivity and evince belief in rational self-interest’. This for her was the only authentic ‘sense of life’.
Chapter VI
Ayn Rand and the question of canon

One of the important aspects observed in the relationship between feminist discourse and literature during the second wave feminism of the 1960s was whether feminism can or should be contained within the institution of academic studies. By the 1970s, feminist literary criticism was firmly established in the academic curricula and the major effort of feminist criticism went into exposing what might be called the ‘mechanisms of the patriarchy’ in literary works which Peter Barry in his Beginning Theory has defined as a ‘cultural mind-set in men and women which perpetuate sexual inequality’ (122). The growing eclecticism meant that the feminist discourse drew upon other approaches and sources to mature and validate this point of view.

From attacking male versions of the world to exploring the substance and nature of a female worldview, many feminists undertook the arduous task of unraveling the ‘canon of literature’ and changing it. The Anglo – American feminists have been overwhelmingly concerned with the question of canon: the politics behind its creation, its modification in such a way as to alleviate the grievances of feminists and thereby doing justice to women. Radical feminists argued for a complete abandonment of the standard canon, which they perceived as complicit in ‘patriarchal subordination of women’. and as Elaine Showalter pioneered, the construction of a parallel women’s canon called ‘gynocriticism’.

The Greek word “kanon”, means a measuring rod or a rule, which was later extended to denote a list or catalogue of genuine Holy Scriptures designated by the church as ‘major’ or important for praise and study. Church authorities vested with the power to make such a decision, and enforced by authorities with the power to impose religious sanctions
established the Biblical canon; whose hermeneutics were based on creed or sect.

The use of the term ‘canon’ in a literary application arose with the emergence of a bourgeois – patriarchal - capitalist paradigm in Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. They designated in world literature or in particular European literature - those authors who by a ‘cumulative consensus’ of critics came to be considered ‘major’ and to serve as the chief subjects of literary history, criticism, scholarship, teaching and their works hailed as literary classics. It was very loose-boundaried, and subject to changes in its inclusions. Texts in ‘the literary canon’ are open to, and constantly subjected to, diverse and often conflicting interpretations and evaluations, which feminists view to be unobjective and dismissive of women’s experiences and concerns because of the pervasive patriarchal predication of society.

On closer scrutiny it will become clear that T.S. Eliot, F.R. Leavis and the American New Critics of the 1930s were largely responsible for assembling a collection of literary works, which came to form what has become known as the ‘canon’, that is, a body of works selected and elevated to canonical status which formed the backbone of literary culture or tradition of England and the rest of the English speaking world in the twentieth century. While forming the canon of English literature F.R.Leavis, Q.D.Roth, I.A.Richards, L.C.Knights, William Empson, T.S.Eliot and Ezra Pound no longer saw the pre-war assumptions of the upper class generation with regards to the imparting of ‘English literature’ as valid. They strove to fashion English studies into a serious discipline because according to Leavisian criticism, literature made one into a better person as against the Arnoldian paradigm of constructing English as a subject to heal ‘the failure of religion’ to keep the peace in society, which under the twin impacts of scientific discoveries and industrialization was fracturing into mutually hostile classes.
Matthew Arnold saw the urgent need to ‘Hellenize’ or cultivate the middle classes and transfuse into them something of the traditional aristocratic class thereby lessening the social tensions that had arisen. For Arnold the imparting of literature was essential to reduce political bigotry and ideological extremism, since literature deals in universal human values rather than ‘the demands’ of the working class for equality and with luck may make them see their hostility towards the upper classes as ridiculous in ‘in the high-minded contemplation of eternal truths and beauties’. Thus, literature was invested with an ideological purpose to provide social cement between the classes, which religion had ceased to provide. Not only was ‘it to delight and instruct us, but also, and above all, to save our souls and heal the state’ is how Professor George Gordon, early Professor of English literature at Oxford saw (Eagleton 23).

It will be interesting to know that the politics behind the formation of the canon remained undetected for well over a century. The Marxist critic Terry Eagleton writing in Literary Theory, states that from an unclear status in the 1920s, by the 1930s literature was the only subject worth studying. Not only was assimilating English literature worth the effort, but it was the supremely civilizing pursuit, the spiritual essence of the social formation. Far from constituting some amateur or impressionistic enterprise, literary studies inaugurated an arena in which the most fundamental questions of human existence – what it meant to be a person, to engage in significant relationship with others, to live from the vital center of the most essential values – were thrown into vivid relief and made the object of the most intensive scrutiny (31). Feminists in particular, as well as other theoretical movements since the 1960s, see in this ‘preamble of the canon’ a patronizing and conceited tone.

In a short but very influential essay entitled Tradition and the Individual Talent (1919), T. S. Eliot argued that literature embodies timeless qualities and values, which can be seen as a form of cultural
heritage. For Eliot the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer to
the present day makes a historical sense, which is timeless and temporal
together and thus a writer who adheres to this historical sense is
‘traditional’. This sense of a single, unified ‘tradition’ became central to
the way in which literature came to be viewed.

F.R. Leavis saw popular literature as a form of cultural pollution
and the only hope of keeping the insidious effects of ‘mass civilization’
at bay was through a cultivated minority. For Leavis ‘literature was in a
sense an organic society all its own; it was important because it was,
nothing less than a whole social ideology’ (Eagleton 37).

What the critics about the canon framers have noted is the lower
middle-class origins of these architects of English literary studies. Non­
conformists, from humble and quasi-rural backgrounds, hardworking and
morally conscientious, these framers of the canon of literature had no
difficulty in identifying the works and texts which would constitute the
‘canon’. Further there was a definite ideological, social, cultural
subjectivity in the choosing of authors and leaving out others who just
did not manifest the essence of literature in the New Critical sense.

T.S. Eliot best symbolizes the methodology of the framers of
the canon by his wholesale salvage and demolition job of Europe’s literary
traditions. We see an upgradation in the rights and value of the
Metaphysical poets and Jacobean dramatists, and a rude downgrading of
Milton and the Romantics coupled with a selected importing of European
products- the French Symbolists.

What Eliot is seen to be attacking was the whole ideology of
middle – class liberalism, the official ruling ideology of an industrial
capitalist society which as seen by him was bereft of an organic whole.
He visualized Liberalism, Romanticism, Protestantism to be aberrative
influences and any influence they have on literary works must be expunged.

Another very important feature noted is the social process of ‘canon formation’, by which an author is tacitly and durably recognized as canonical. The factors that go into this formative process are complex and suspect. It does seem, however, that this process involves very ‘subjective’ factors, like the wide consensus of critics, scholars, and authors with different viewpoints and understanding. The persistent influence of, and reference to, of an author in the work of other authors, the frequent reference to an author within the discourse of a cultural community, and the widespread assignment of an author or text in school and college curricula was another device employed by these ‘canon framers’ to raise the social acceptance value of an author.

D. H. Lawrence because of his rightwing views found favour with Eliot and Pound. He was reconstructed as a liberal humanist with his raging contempt for liberal and democratic values more or less edited out. He became the inheritor of the ‘great tradition’ of English fiction from Jane Austen to George Eliot and Henry James to Joseph Conrad.

Another instructive analogy is the attempt by T.S. Eliot, Cleanth Brooks and other New Critics in the 1930s to discredit Milton and Shelly, and praise and elevate John Donne and George Herbert whom they admired and helped raise to prominence in the English canon.

However, discussions regarding the process of canon formation, and opposition to established literary canons, are noted to have recently become a leading concern of critics with very diverse sensibilities – deconstructive, feminist, Marxist, or new – historicist. The debate within these discourses often focuses on the practical issue of what books to prescribe in college curriculums especially in “core courses” in the humanities and in western civilization.
A widespread charge is that the standard canon of great books, not only in literature but also in all of humanities, has been constructed keeping in view the ideology and political interests and values of an elite and privileged class.

Marxist feminists along with Black, Lesbian and post-colonial feminists have identified this elite and privileged class to be white, male and European, with the result that the canon consists mainly of works that manifest racism, patriarchy and capitalist imperialism. The perfidy according to these discourses doesn’t stop here but goes on to either marginalize or exclude the interests and accomplishments of Blacks, Hispanics and other ethnic minorities. It very conveniently excludes the concerns and interests of women, the working class, homosexuals and of the non-European civilizations. Not only this, popular culture, which represents the interests, tastes and beliefs of the non-elite is very arrogantly put on the periphery.

A frequent demand of these discourses led by feminists is to open the canon so as to make it more objective, multiethnic and de-Europeanized. A key feature of this demand is to have a canon that is representative of the anxieties and literary achievements of women and of other minority groups like non-heterosexuals.

Post-modern critics demand that the standard canon be stripped of its middle-class elitism and its hierarchism so as to include everyday cultural products such as films, television serials, popular songs and fiction written for masses, which high-brow critics have derisively termed ‘pulp’. There is also a radical wing of revisionist theorists who, with a political aim to transforming the prevailing power structures, demand the complete abolition of the standard canon and its replacement with non-canonical, marginalized and excluded groups and texts.
By the revolutionary year of 1968, women began to see themselves as ‘feminist critics’, approaching literature with a political awareness coming from the women’s liberation movement, and enlarging their perspective and knowledge from the contemporary institutions of literary/critical study.

Feminist critics view gender as socially constructed differences which operate in most societies and which lead to forms of inequality, oppression and exploitation between the sexes. Masculinity and femininity are socially constructed and invested with various qualities, values, images and narratives, which constantly circulate in society, shaping and determining people’s attitudes and lives. Just as other communication devices, literature plays a very significant role in the area of upholding gender positions of male power and female subordination. We see how literature and the discourse of literary criticism can work as both agents of reinforcement and of subversion in the ways that they construct or represent gender relations.

The main issue, which has become increasingly significant is, to what extent are the experiences and voices of women represented in literature, which till the first half of the twentieth century was dominated by male writers and their works. Feminists argue that historically, literature has played no mean role in subordinating or marginalizing the position of women. Since the literary works were in a major way penned by male writers, feminists point to the fact that in the cultural institution of literature as studied on academic syllabuses and the selection of works, which form the ‘canon’, male writers and the male points of view have been glorified. One will agree with Roland Barthes when he says that ‘literature is what gets taught’ because this institutionalization of literature has been responsible for defining literature in the twentieth century and feminist critics have argued that the canon is a reflection of the dominant power group in society, which is male as well as middle- or upper class and white (Webster 75).
Thus, we see how literature and the discourse of literary criticism as forms of knowledge have reinforced a patriarchal order in various ways. The construction of a male dominant canon is one aspect of this ‘mechanism of patriarchy’ and various feminist approaches have challenged ‘the canon’ for its manifest and more often latent exclusion of female points of view.

Luce Irigaray, has very aptly presented the feminist case against a male constructed and dominated ‘canon’ in her monumental work Speculum of the Other Woman (1974). Though her work is primarily a critique of the western philosophical canon, Marxist feminists have incorporated her findings to shore up their argument keeping in mind the interdisciplinary and intertextual nature of subjects in poststructuralism. Jennifer Hansen writing the introduction to Luce Irigaray’s essay There are Two Sexes, Not One in French Feminism Reader, ed, Kelly Oliver, writes ‘in speculum, Irigaray challenged the philosophical canon: Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Freud and implicitly Jacques Lacan, as solely privileging and elaborating the masculine subject. She shows that the western canon functions like a mirror (speculum mundi in Latin), which reflects back man as the master of the universe, and the universe and God in the image of man, while distorting the image of woman as imperfect, lacking or a hysterical subject. Irigaray also plays upon another meaning of speculum in her text, namely the instrument used by the gynecologist to reveal the interior sex of a woman. Using such a metaphor, she attempts to use this tool or mirror to open or reflect sexual difference and the feminine so as to interrupt the disfiguring images of women in western culture.

In her close reading of the western canon, Irigaray reveals that at the core of each thinkers/writer’s texts is a fundamental matricide and a continued repression of sexual difference. For example, in the myths of origin, it is not the mother who brings forward life, but rather a self-
originating male principle or life force. Woman, in this scenario, is derived from man and then serves merely to reproduce the species. She is the ‘envelope’, as Irigaray often calls her; she is merely a womb in which male subjects gestate. And finally, woman’s purpose is to nurture men, both nutritionally and spiritually, to enable them to one day leave her behind and participate in the social realm’ (203).

Feminist critics began to note the limited and secondary roles allotted to fictional heroines, women writers and women critics. More serious and explosive questions regarding women’s relation to literary study, their representation in men’s texts and how the ‘canon’ functions to bypass and unrecognize their contributions also now occupy the feminists. In particular the Marxist feminists question the relationship between the textual harassment of women and the oppression of women in society, how and why are women absent from literary history?

Feminist critics began searching for a disciplined way of defining the specificity of woman’s texts and constructing a female literary tradition. Elaine Showalter in 1978 coined the term ‘gynocriticism’ to describe and examine women’s writings in all its possible dimensions ranging from discovering the lost women writers and literary traditions to highlighting the contentious issue of the different nature of the creativity of women in using language. A seminal text of gynocriticism was Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s The Madwoman in the Attic (1979) where employing Harold Bloom’s concept of ‘the anxiety of influence’** they talked of a feminist theory of influence, describing the nineteenth century woman writer’s anxieties within a patriarchal literary culture.

** (It has been observed that critics and historians of literature have mainly been employed in analyzing the influence of one author upon later authors, and examining how much the present author has adopted and incorporated in his work from the predecessor. However, the influential contemporary critic Harold Bloom reverses this process with his radical revision of the standard theory of literary evaluation and uses the phrase ‘anxiety of influence’ to conceptualize it. He insists that while influence is inescapable, however the influence involves a drastic distortion of the original due to an authors ‘defensively’ trying to produce a work which is as different and seminal from the predecessors original. The end product is the author in trying to exceed the greatness and minimize the influence of the predecessor actually distorts the original beyond its own conscious recognition, and embodies the malformed reading into his own work, feeling his work to be absolutely autonomous and original.)
Gynocriticism assumes that all writing is marked by gender as Alicia Ostriker notes in her book *Stealing the Language* (1986), ‘writers necessarily articulate gendered experience, just as they necessarily articulate the spirit of nationality, an age, a language’ (9). As Sandra Gilbert feels women writers cannot renounce or go beyond their gender entirely because of centuries of denigration of women’s art. For gynocritics, every insight and discovery about women’s writings and its relationship to a dominant male tradition is seen to have transformative personal implications to their own discourse and study. Gynocriticism’s rejection of the ‘patriarchal aesthetics’ (Showalter) of universality, linear interest in a narrative and ‘critical blindness’ (Showalter) to the verbal and linguistic interpretations of literature has given birth to a radical history.

A second assumption of gynocriticism is that women’s writing is eclectic and in reading women’s texts, gynocriticism has freely experimented with a wide variety of interpretative tools. Gynocriticism emphasizes the spurious nature of one-sided male claims to universality and emphasizes the impossibility of separating women’s writing from its contexts in a masculine tradition. Despite its many detractors, gynocriticism has spawned a vast literature on individual women writers, constructed a coherent study of the female literary tradition from the middle ages to the present in all national literatures and important books on ‘gender and genre’ (Ostriker 6). In relation to the Leavisite literary mainstream and tradition, women’s writing has moved through several evolutionary phases of subordination, protest and autonomy.

As gynocriticism matured and defined itself, an alternative canon of women’s texts took shape. Canon-formation, best described as the emergence of certain writers and texts as central to the understanding of a particular literary history and tradition, is now accepted as historically constructed, rather than as an assertion of aesthetic value. John Guillory has best described the gynocritical canon-formation as ‘strong revaluations

Thirdly, the gynocritics uncovered intertextual affinities between women writers that had previously gone unnoticed. Far from abolishing canons, gynocriticism demystifies their pretenses to be absolute and permanent monuments of excellence. It reveals their corporeality and the relative nature of aesthetic standards. For gynocritics, canon formation is an aspect of the power of critical discourses in the poststructuralist paradigm and to be against them would be akin to leaving the power of canon-formation to someone else.

Finally, gynocriticism has expanded the canon to include neglected genres of women’s writings, such as diaries, letters, science fiction and romance, thus, constructing a canon stripped of the elitism and hierarchism found in the standard canon.

*   *   *

As discussed above in a field as new as Women’s Studies, to transform the traditional reading canon is almost impossible. Many feminists have settled for the less polemical task of reevaluation. However, the task of choosing texts for ‘women’s studies’ courses in literature far from being an exciting experience because of the enthusiasm of introducing to students, posits the difficulty of finding women novelists with a balanced representation of the various images of women. Mimi R. Gladstein writing in the periodical College English (vol.39, 1978), in her essay entitled Ayn Rand and Feminism: An Unlikely Alliance, points the particular difficulty to ‘finding sufficient representations for that section of the course that should be entitled ‘The Liberated Woman’ or ‘She Who Succeeds’,’(680).

In American literature, it is observed that the problem is acute
and the discovery and resurrection by feminist criticism of neglected women writers or of already acclaimed writers, does little to resolve the problem. The neurotic, manipulated, or exploited female continues to be the mainstay of American fiction. For some, the choice of a novelist whose novels produced positive opinions about women — a female protagonist who is active, independent, professionally successful, sexually emancipated and doesn’t pay for it by dying in childbirth or going mad or compromising or giving it all up for the man she loves, turned out to be the philosopher-novelist Ayn Rand. In all her novels, the protagonist is a woman who is active, assertive and successful. She arouses and retains the love and sexual admiration of at least two -three heroic men and emerges triumphant in the end.

Nevertheless, Ayn Rand failed to become the sibyl for the feminists whether of the left, right or liberal hue and apart from a few admirers in the academy who recommended her works to their students for extensive reading, Ayn Rand never made to the Women’s Studies canon. Her exclusion from the traditional literary canon is already a case in point. It will be quite enlightening to analyze the reasons for Ayn Rand’s exclusion from the canon despite her raging admiration amongst college going students.

Barbara Branden, student, friend, advocate and ‘fallen angel’ writing in the Epilogue of her work The Passion of Ayn Rand best sums up the angst by Rand herself and her admirers at the short shrift given to her. She details individuals academics, industrialists, critics, politicians, executives, entrepreneurs and members of interest groups who admire and live by Ayn Rand’s values and philosophy. But nonetheless, Ayn Rand’s major source of conflict with society according to Barbara Branden ‘was her belief that she was being ignored by the academic world, ...’ (428).

William O’Neill in his With Charity toward None states that ‘she
(Ayn) will continue to be read, at least on college campuses, for as far into the future as we can now see... She has all the earmarks of a subdivision of a chapter in every text book on American literature and philosophy to be written and of a half period in every lecture class on American literature and philosophy to be offered ...

Ayn Rand was one of only a handful of successful American female novelists of the twentieth century. She was one of an even smaller group of successful female philosophers. The feminists of the second wave/phase should ideally have adopted her but on the contrary they refuse to even acknowledge her in passing, for her views were completely at variance with their objectives. Initially the liberal humanist feminists were drawn towards her because her novels as discussed elsewhere in this study presented a positive perspective to female readers in an otherwise male dominated American fiction where, ‘... American heroines are destined to lives of dependency and servitude, they have dared to disregard authority or tradition in search of wisdom or happiness...’(680), as concluded by Wendy Martin in *Seduced and Abandoned in the New World*, (quoted by Mimi R. Gladstein for her article, - *Ayn Rand and Feminism: An unlikely Alliance*, printed in *College English* [periodical, vol. 39, No 6. – February 1978]).

On a close reading of Ayn Rand’s five fictional works, feminist were appalled at ‘the narcissism, low self-esteem, and the appeal of selfishness and a lifetime of traditionally feminine sacrificial behavior that account for Rand’s appeal to the female psyche’ (34), according to Barbara Grizzuti Harrison in *Psyching out Ayn Rand*, (Ms. September 1978). Furthermore, Ayn Rand’s frank statements about her contempt for feminism and feminists did not help her. Mimi R. Gladstien writes in her book *The Ayn Rand Companion* (8), that on numerous occasions Ayn Rand reiterated that ‘the motive and purpose of my writing is the projection of an ideal man.’ Ayn Rand’s attitude towards women is best understood in the utterances she made both in her fictional works and later philosophical
treatises. A particular instance is Ayn Rand’s *An Answer to Readers About a Woman President* (The Objectivist VII, 12 [December 1968]), where she states the reasons for not voting for a woman as the President of the United States on psychological grounds. As she explains, ‘the essence of feminity is hero worship—the desire to look up to a man... such worship is an abstract emotion for the metaphysical concept of masculinity as such—which [the woman] experiences fully and completely only for the man she loves, — to act as the superior, the leader, virtually the ruler of the all men she deals with, would be an excruciating psychological torture’ (Ibid, 2).

The basic philosophy in her novels as observed is the presentation and projection of ‘the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, his productive achievement as his noblest activity and reason as his only absolute’ (Rand, *For the new Intellectual*).

For Ayn Rand her novels were viable instruments for the presentation of her ‘sense of life’, which was the presentation of ‘an ideal man’ (Rand). James T. Baker in his book, *Ayn Rand* quotes her, ‘man is a word that has no plural’ (*We The Living*, -229) on his title page. Barbara Branden in her book *The Passion of Ayn Rand* states that Ayn Rand reserved the most intense scorn for women. She was what she later called ‘an anti-feminist. I regard man as a superior value...the purpose of my writing fiction is to create a conflict for a hero, a conflict aimed at the achievement of some serious purpose, ...’(Branden 17).

In her stories it was the man, not the woman who represented the qualities of struggle and purpose though her heroines apparently come out as very liberated and self-assured individuals. The human qualities she cared for were specifically masculine attributes: purposefulness and strength. Later, Ayn Rand would define feminity as ‘hero-worship’. ‘Man’ according to her ‘is defined by his relationship to reality, woman by her relationship to man’ (Branden 20).
It is easy to see, through the works of Ayn Rand what she thought of the feminine character. Implicitly evident in her fiction and explicitly stated in her philosophy is the belief of the superiority of the male and woman’s awe of it. ‘I am a man–worshipper,’ she told Edwin Newman. She said she wanted to look up to men, for to her this was an important part of being feminine. Women who do not accept the natural superiority of men are not really feminine’ (Baker 118).

Mimi Gladstein thinks that Rand’s heroines ‘make interesting case studies of perversion’ (The Ayn Rand Companion, 36). Randian heroines are verisimilitudes of what Ayn Rand actually postulated they were supposed to be. Dagny Taggart, Kira Argounova and Dominique Francon are women whose life is full of action, independence, professional success and sexual emancipation, but all this is only to complement the heroes – man, who is endowed with the purpose of action.

A sensitive reader, especially a woman will feel appalled at Ayn Rand’s ‘romanticizing’ of rapes where in her two major fictional works, The Fountainhead, Atlas Shrugged and in her only play Night of January 16th, the heroines are physically violated at the first encounter by the male protagonists. In The Fountainhead, Dominique is sitting in her bedroom when Roark comes into her room unannounced. The following description follows:

‘He came in. He wore dark clothes… then he walked to her. He held her… her legs jerked tight against his, his mouth on hers… she tried to tear herself away from him… her fists beat against his shoulders… she felt his lips on her breast… she fell back against the dressing table… He had thrown her down on the bed and she felt his hands moving over her body… then the sudden pain shot up, through her body, to her throat, and
she screamed. Then she lay still’ (TF 217-218).

Further, rather than expressing outrage at this forced violation of herself, Dominique gloats, ‘I’ve been raped… I’ve been raped by a red headed hoodlum from a stone quarry… Through the fierce sense of humiliation, the words gave her the same kind of pleasure she had felt in his arms’ (TF 220).

In *Atlas Shrugged* Dagny’s submission to Francisco D’Anconia on their first sexual experience is similar, ‘she knew that fear was useless, that he would do what he wished, that the decision is his, that he left nothing possible to her except the thing she wanted most – to submit’ (AS 107). Dagny’s asserts that she just wanted to submit to him because ‘…of his power to reduce her to helplessness by the pleasure he had the power to give her,’ (AS108). In the same novel John Galt rapes Dagny Taggart on their first encounter, ‘then she was conscious of nothing but the sensations of her body… that she knew nothing but the motion of his body and the driving greed that went reaching on and on, as if she were not a person any longer… and she gasped and lay still…” (AS 888). The rape of Dagny for Ayn Rand is ‘a sensation of physical pleasure’ and it ‘contained her worship of him, of everything that was his person and his life-…” (AS 888).

In *Night of January 16th*, Karen’s masochistic perverseness is evident when she narrates her ‘rape’ at the hands of B’jorn Faulkner, ‘he seemed to take a delight in giving me orders. He acted as if he were cracking a whip over an animal…I liked it … then he asked me suddenly if I had ever belonged to a man. I said, no, I hadn’t…” (NJ 16th 82-83). When Karen refused his offer of a thousand kroner’s to have sex with him, he threatens forcing himself on her, ‘ he said if I didn’t, he’d take me…he did’ (NJ 16th 83).

‘Rand tries to portray these ‘glorious rape scenes’ as symbolic head-on clashes between two strong personalities whereas a readership with a raised consciousness about the nature of rape might find this symbolism unpalatable.
While rape is an act of aggression demonstrated through sexual activity, Ruthven defines it as ‘a passion for mastery... for whatever it subordinates, it is a phallic activity... patriarchal system of education’ (2). The violence and accompanying hatred the act involves is the highest degree of subordination, humiliation and dehumanizing a woman is subjected to. For feminists the issue of rape must first be understood in terms of ‘politics’ in the act and then as morally, psychologically, traditionally, spiritually and biologically. According to Catherine A. MacKinnon in Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State: An Agenda for Theory, rape is ‘the defining theme’ of the whole ideology of androcentrism, in that it signifies ‘the male pursuit of control over women’s sexuality—men not as individuals nor as biological beings, but as a gender group characterized by maleness as socially constructed, of which this pursuit is definitive (18). Feminists thus see sexuality as a form of power, of which rape is its definitive act and consequently the obliteration of distinctions between ‘abuse of women and the social definition of what a woman is’ (18).

Another familiar theme in Rand’s fiction is what James T Baker has called the ‘Tosca theme’ (33), where the heroine prostitutes herself to other men so as to save her ‘ideal man’ from the clutches of an immoral and degenerate society. In all her fictional works the men exchange the heroines amongst themselves and thus far from being sexually emancipated they seem to be sexually emasculated.

In We The Living we observe how Kira Argounova goes to Andrei Taganov for the money she will get and invest what she gets in Leo Kovalensky’s medication thus saving him from death by consumption. All the time Leo is in the Crimea recuperating, Kira is a mistress to Andrei and the money he gives her for her expenses she sends to Leo. In The Fountainhead we see how Dominique Francon who is passionately in love with Howard Roark, derives sado-masochistic pleasure through the violent
sex she has with him. In order to save the hero-man from the depredations of ‘an immoral and mooching society’ Dominique tries to protect Howard by first marrying Peter Keating and later Gail Wynand, while continuing to be Howard’s mistress. In Atlas Shrugged we have Dagny Taggart, Ayn Rand’s ‘ideal’ female character who is mistress to three of the four male protagonists in the novel—Francisco D’Anconia, Hank Rearden and John Galt.

It is not very difficult for one to surmise as to why Ayn Rand failed to make it to the gynocritical canon of Women’s Studies. Mary Ellman writing in Thinking About Women states that, ‘while men and women employ the same feminine stereotypes, the woman writer seems the more offensive in doing so’ (188). In her novels, far from presenting a balanced or new representation of the images of women, Ayn Rand ended up doing just the opposite it seems: neurotic, manipulated and exploited heroines is what she produced in her fictions.

Ayn Rand loathed feminists and the feminist movements as is abundantly clear through her many statements. Her non-entry in the woman’s canon was a foregone conclusion because she lacked the ideological and political commitment of the feminist movement. With her stated loathing of feminists and the movement at large, and presentation of female characters that demeaned ‘womanhood’, women critics never took her cause. Ideological and political factors restrained the feminists from including her texts for the Women’s Studies courses but what intrigues one is why the traditional reading list or literary canon did not incorporate her name and works into theirs. Richard Ohmann in his essay The Shaping of a Canon: U.S. Fiction, 1960-1975, writes that the process of canon-formation ‘has been a process saturated with class values and interests, a process inseparable from the broader struggle of position and power in our society...’(Critical Inquiry; Canons 378).

It is felt that reading novels is a social act and people are more
responsive to novels where they find values in which they believe and
where they can find moral guidance when their own beliefs are shaken or
uncertain. Further the values and beliefs of a small group of critics and
academics were found to disproportionately influence the outcome of
whether a writer will be discussed, referred to and talked within the
discourse of a cultural community. Academic journals took their cue from
the commercial journals. Whether the writer will be assigned in school
and college curricula, giving it de facto recognition as literature was found
to be a very subjective exercise.

Ayn Rand was a bourgeois–patriarchal capitalist for many and
she proclaimed this for all to see and hear. In all her fictional works this
is the implicit idea whereas in her philosophical tomes she explicitly
explains it. She should have been included in the American literary canon
without much ado, but she wasn’t, despite her belonging to the same
‘Professor-Managerial class of reviewers, critics, scholars, intellectuals
who had emerged and grown up with monopoly capitalism’ (Ohmann 387).

Ayn Rand’s anti-feminism and anti-communism was much
appreciated by patriarchal capitalists and in fact in 1946 a conservative
publishing house Pamphleteers was the first to publish her novelette
Anthem. The cold war had begun and Ayn Rand’s anti-collectivist/
communist rhetoric was welcome. Her novel We The Living that is part
autobiographical, with Kira Argounova’s and Leo Kovalensky’s attempts
to escape from the Soviet Union endeared her to the American public.
Another conservative Christian publishing house Caxton (1953) bought
the rights to publish her.

However, by 1957 Ayn Rand became a public philosopher. With
the publication of Atlas Shrugged she gave up fiction writing and involved
herself fully in developing, writing and lecturing about her philosophy of
‘Objectivism’, which was the only ‘rational’ way for her to live. Though
her political and economic interests found favour with patriarchal capitalists, it was the ideology of her creed, its values and belief systems, which were not in accordance with those of the elite and privileged class. This class of monopoly capitalists along with the critics, other writers and scholars were factors in the process of canon formation which work in unison and Ayn Rand fell foul of them.

Politically Ayn Rand was a maverick; she alienated both the liberals and the conservatives. With all the rancour against religion, loathing of all forms of altruism, her outspoken atheism, her bitterest critics were the religious writers. These men were in basic agreement with her defense of capitalism and might have become associates of the Objectivist movement, had it not been militantly atheistic. Joel Rosenbloom reviewing Ayn Rand’s For the New Intellectual, for the New Republic predicted how her atheism would affect her audience. The blatant, offensive anti-religious polemic would alienate right-wingers, her natural following, both in fundamentalist Protestantism and in the Catholic right (29).

For the American bourgeoisie, capitalism and religion went hand in hand and Rand only drove them away. Steven Cory writing for the Christian Today saw Rand as an enemy of the faith, in fact a diabolical enemy because ‘she was the oddest of birds, an atheist who believed in free enterprise’ (72).

In addition to her atheism, Rand disturbed religion critics by her rejection of sacrificial love. Moderate Christians reacted heatedly to her denunciations of altruism. The religious critics took note of her espousal of selfishness as a virtue with great disappointment. Her books preached selfishness, which went against the Christian spirit of charity and altruism. The themes and protagonists were full of disdain towards religion, pursuing their selfish interests without any social responsibility. Howard Roark’s willful destruction of the Cortlandt project and the actions
of the protagonists in *Atlas Shrugged* were in complete variance with the Christian ethic of sacrifice, love and charity. Moreover, her romanticizing of anarchy, sado-masochism and infidelity also ran counter to Christian values. For Bruce Cook, writing in *Catholic World*, the most unpalatable aspect of Rand was ‘her complete lack of charity’, her shameless odes to selfishness, which gained media attention and helped spread her anti-Christian message abroad (199-24).

The liberal amongst the laity also found fault with Rand’s defense of raw capitalism and her rejection of the love ethic. For many liberal critics like Charles F. Schroder, her ‘new morality’ of rational self-interest was no more praiseworthy than the nineteenth century rugged individualism. What worried most of them was how the young and impressionable would get affected with her subversive and dangerous ideas.

Outside religious circles, Rand’s atheism and ethic of selfishness brought more amusement than alarm. However, it was the religious press and critics who were alarmed by Ayn Rand and they saw her Objectivism as a rival to their established religions.

Just like the religious press, the political press was as loud in its criticism of her writings and especially took issue with the elitism emerging from Rand’s praise of larger than life heroes and other accumulators of wealth. The political press viewed Rand as ‘impertinent’ for hating the masses for being common and an ignorant majority. For the political left, Rand’s praise for rugged individualism, raw capitalism, advocacy of selfishness were all anathema. Both the conservative right and liberal left recognized that her numbers were small but should they turn political they could have a profound impact on American society.

Given the reaction her work provoked amongst reviewers and critics of the left and right alike, Ayn Rand’s conflict with society was on
all fronts. However, despite the furore her ideas have generated – despite the fact her writings have sold more than 20 million copies as her friend Barbara Branden states and despite the fact that Ayn’s philosophy has had a deep impact on American culture, little is known of her in literary circles.

The academia, scholars, reviewers, critics, other writers and the dominant patriarchal capitalist class, whose values Ayn Rand loathed and attacked in her writings have managed to keep Ayn Rand on the fringes of the philosophical and literary canon, ‘a subdivision of a chapter in every text book on American literature and philosophy...’ (O’Neill 24).

Ayn Rand’s case is singular in the sense that feminists did not see her as one of them for she shared no political commitment, no ideological camaraderie and no sense of an ‘other’ in a patriarchal world with them. However, despite her celebration of patriarchy and capitalism, she never rose to prominence in the traditional canon for she became an anathema to them for her atheism, glorification of selfishness and capitalism. Ayn Rand’s admirers may not agree but Ayn Rand was also like other women, a victim of the ruling class.

A quotation from The German Ideology written by Karl Marx and Frederich Engels will be apt where talking about monopoly capitalism they wrote, ‘the class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production’ (Ohmann 380). This probably sums up the situation of Ayn Rand, a victim of the politics of canon and rejected by the traditionalists as well as the feminists. The irony of her situation is all the more poignant, for despite her avowed allegiance to capitalism, the patriarchal-bourgeois class whose interests she advocated disclaim her with equal vengeance as the feminists.

* * *

Ayn Rand holds a unique place in twentieth century American
literature and culture. It is true that while the academic world refused to acknowledge her writings between 1940 and 1970, ‘in the post-Vietnam era, with neocapitalist emphases on ego enhancement and hero worship, people even outside her own tight circle of dedicated disciples recognized that she both reflected and helped restore to the American consciousness the recurring Myth of the rugged individualist’ as James T. Baker also notes in the preface of his book *Ayn Rand*.

Writing about Ayn Rand is a problematic task in itself and making a case for her inclusion into the literary canon may even sound scandalous in some circles. In most intellectual circles she is either outrightly dismissed or unduly eulogized for her philosophy and fictional writings. This academic ambivalence towards her only increased her popularity among the masses to an extraordinary level. Thus on the freeways of Southern California, the hero of her magnum opus, *Atlas Shrugged*, became the subject of automobile bumper stickers with the insistent question, ‘Who is John Galt?’ (Baker). Her bold, iconoclastic and uncompromising ‘individualism’ is also much admired in colleges and universities today than it was, maybe, from 1950 to 1970s. Whether or not we find her palatable to our intellectual taste, her impact on contemporary American and international culture is without doubt very significant.

Ayn Rand is one of the most widely discussed philosophers of recent times and her philosophy is best expressed in her works of fiction and particularly in her two major novels, *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*. The impact of her novels is impressive and more than five million copies of *The Fountainhead* have been sold since its publication in 1943 and her other well-known novel, *Atlas Shrugged* has sold over two and a half million copies since its publication in 1957. According to conservative estimates of The Ayn Rand Foundation in New York, each continues to sell between a hundred thousand and two hundred thousand copies every year. In addition, Ayn Rand’s novels have been translated
into a dozen foreign languages and her following is no less outside The United States of America than inside it.

The popularity of Ayn Rand and her philosophy of Objectivism is by no means reflected solely in book sales. At the zenith of her fame in the 1960s and 1970s over eighty cities in The United States and Canada offered lecture courses in Objectivism with operations in such varied countries as Germany, Pakistan and the Marshall Islands to name a few (O’Neill 5). In addition, Ayn Rand was a syndicated columnist for the Los Angeles Times between 1962 and 1965, and according to O’Neill, ‘what is perhaps the supreme accolade which our society is capable of bestowing upon a public personality, she was made the subject of an interview in Playboy for March, 1964’ (5-6).

In 1963, Ayn Rand was awarded an honorary degree, Doctor of Humane Letters from Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon. The 1960s were the high point of Ayn Rand’s career. She lectured at Harvard, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Johns Hopkins University. She was always abreast of the current affairs, publishing her responses to contemporary events, writing her observations in the form of essays and books. Not the least she was a much sought-after speaker. In 1974 she was invited to West Point to speak at its graduation ceremony. In 1979, NBC, one of America’s leading broadcasting networks, announced plans to develop a mini-series based on Atlas Shrugged. An aspect of Ayn Rand’s personality that the common readers of her works are not aware of is her stint in Hollywood between 1926 and 1932. She worked as a screenwriter for Cecil B.De Mille and also played a bit role in his movie The King of Kings. Her first piece of fictional writing, Red Pawn, was sold to Universal Pictures to be made into a movie. Paramount Pictures and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer also employed Ayn Rand as a screenplay writer. Between 1944 and 1949 Ayn Rand was back at Hollywood writing the screenplay for The Fountainhead and she even had the final say in having Gary Cooper to play Howard
Roark opposite Patricia Neal, who was playing Dominique Francon.

Ayn Rand never overtly patronized any political party. Her sympathies for the Republicans were an open secret. Members of the Libertarian movement acknowledge their intellectual debt to her philosophy though she rejected them and the intellectual executor of her philosophy, Leonard Peikoff, continues to do so. The impact of Objectivism and her philosophy has been so profound that one of the most reputed policy think-tank, concerned with political conflicts, their resolutions and disaster management is the acclaimed Rand Institute. The Institute has its headquarters in Washington D.C. and has branches in all the important capitals of the world.

Popularity alone is no standard for inclusion into the literary canon, but the fact remains that, however anyone may feel towards Ayn Rand, her ideas are as popular today as they were when she was alive. Her views may appear outrageous to her detractors but she cannot be ignored because of them. Mimi R.Gladstein in her book The Ayn Rand Companion states, ‘One’s academic peers, whose politics are generally left of center, consider her political theories a little to the right of the John Birch Society and they question the wisdom of your choice of subjects. These same individuals would not question the study of Ezra Pound who was a rabid anti-Semite and made treasonous broadcasts for Fascist governments. So much for academic objectivity’ (4). For that matter the stature of Paul deMan as a very important deconstructionist is not diminished by his association with Fascism in his early period. One can add the names of such eminent writers as Rudyard Kipling, D.H.Lawrence, T.S.Eliot and Norman Mailer, who definitely do not risk academic heresy keeping their political and social views within sights. Thus, Kipling’s imperialist views notwithstanding, he finds a very respectable place in the canon of English poets, and despite receiving a heavy bashing from feminist critics; D.H.Lawrence and Norman Mailer continue to enjoy a good readership
and critical acclaim. T.S.Eliot was known for his right-wing Catholic views, which many secular humanists find disconcerting.

What probably emerges from these examples is the fact that ultimately it is a writer’s ability to transmute ideas into art forms, which help him/her survive even very biased vitriolic attacks. There will be very few critics who will question Lawrence’s or Eliot’s claim to literary greatness. In this context one can also give credit to Ayn Rand for paying attention to the art of character portrayal in her fictional works. She has surely presented some very powerful characters that continue to haunt the reader for a long time. In certain respects her characters can bear comparison with some of the ‘transcendent characters’ of some of the works of Mark Twain like Hank Morgan and Colonel Sherburn.

From the point of view of plot construction The Fountainhead should pass all tests. It extols individualistic virtues and presents them in a compact manner. We observe a purposeful progression of logically connected events leading to the resolution of the climax. The events are entwined with the fate of Howard Roark – the hero, and all subsequent events and characters in the novel are connected to him.

The novel is sub-divided into four parts and in each part Ayn Rand juxtaposes against Howard Roark a character that represents a variation of spiritual collectivism, as against Howard Roark’s individualism, unswerving integrity and exceptional ability. Thus, Peter Keating, Ellsworth Toohey and Gail Wynand, each bring into focus Howard’s character in contrast with theirs. At the same time the plot follows his (Howard’s) career from the day he is expelled from the Architecture School of Stanton Institute of Technology, through his difficulties in establishing himself as a working architect to his professional and personal victory and vindication.
The novel begins with Howard Roark standing on a cliff by himself. He has been expelled from the Architecture school, ‘Howard Roark laughed. He stood naked at the edge of a cliff … He laughed at the thing which had happened to him that morning and at the things which now lay ahead …’ (TF 7). This opening line can be seen in relation to the last line of the novel which also has Howard Roark standing atop the Wynand Building, ‘Then there was only the ocean and the sky and the figure of Howard Roark’ (TF 680). Thus, the novel begins and ends with the colossal figure of Howard Roark, a device which contributes to the unity of this work. We also observe how Ayn Rand has followed the cardinal principle of good fiction writing by integrating the plot with the theme. The theme of the novel that Ayn Rand identified as ‘individualism versus collectivism, not in politics, but in man’s soul’ is artistically interwove with the plot – the growth of Roark’s career.

One also observes Ayn Rand’s talent for creating dramatic situations. Often short sentences are used to very good effect. Thus, the conversation between Howard Roark and the Dean of the Architecture school is a good example:

“…the sheet bore a drawing – a house of glass and concrete. In the corner there was a sharp, angular signature: Howard Roark. ‘How do you expect us to pass you after this?’ ‘I don’t.’ ‘You left us no choice in the matter. Naturally, you would feel bitterness towards us at this moment, but …’ ‘I feel nothing of the kind,’ said Roark quietly. ‘I owe you an apology. I don’t usually let things happen to me. I made a mistake this time. I shouldn’t have waited for you to throw me out. I should have left long ago” (TF 13).

In fact Ayn Rand’s short sentences lend great dramatic force to
her memorable characters. Thus, the first real description of Gail Wynand is like John Galt’s in *Atlas Shrugged*. He (Gail) appears a shadowy figure before he is finally introduced in part three and achieves his unique power through Ayn Rand’s language:

‘Gail Wynand raised a gun to his temple ...He felt no relief, no despair, no fear. The moment of his end would not grant him even the dignity of seriousness. It was an anonymous moment; a few minutes ago, he had held a toothbrush in that hand; now he held a gun with the same casual indifference.’ ‘One does not die like this, he thought. One must feel a great joy or a healthy terror. One must salute one’s own end. Let me feel a spasm of dread and I’ll pull the trigger. He felt nothing.’ ‘He shrugged and lowered the gun. He stood tapping it against the palm of his left hand. People always speak of a black death or a red death, he thought; yours, Gail Wynand, will be a grey death ...’ (TF 377).

* * * *

Ironically it is Marxist literary criticism — which would surely have been an anathema to Ayn Rand — that rises in defense of Ayn Rand and unearths the politics behinds her being ignored by the intelligentsia. The value of a text, according to this perspective is determined through ‘ideology’, and in this case the literary establishment representing an ideology has succeeded in marginalizing her to the periphery. This view may also be supported by structuralist criticism, which inspired by descriptive linguistics, rejects the idea of works having intrinsic value. Linguistically no work is inferior or superior. The value is externally determined. Structuralist critics’ efforts in literature may probably help
Ayn Rand’s case. The distinction between popular and classic does not hold if one applies the insights of this school of criticism. There is simply no fool proof method, as a structuralist perspective would suggest, by which Ayn Rand’s works can be dismissed as ‘non-literary’.

The image of Ayn Rand has surpassed her fiction and philosophy and according to Mimi R. Gladstein in *The Ayn Rand Companion*, ‘Ayn Rand can be compared to Hemingway and Fitzgerald in that her public persona came to be as well known as her most carefully created fictional character. Just as the flaming, hell-bent-for-leather, jazz age Johnny became indistinguishable in the public mind from the hard-drinking, fountain-swimming Scott, and the “macho,” adventuresome Hemingway hero was outswaggered by “Papa” himself, so Ayn Rand became the quintessential Rand heroine. She presented herself as representative of the fictional ideal: rational, objective, uncompromising, unswerving. Her followers could find on imperfections’ (5). Thus, Ayn Rand is one of the few writers who successfully managed to embody her work with her own persona, thereby bringing an element of reality to her writings.

To conclude we may add that Ayn Rand’s fiction will always have its dedicated readership of the young, and her philosophy with all of its imperfections is probably doomed to academic immortality. William F.O’Neill in *With Charity Toward None*, delineates very succinctly the reasons he sees for Ayn Rand’s philosophy making to the literary canon as, ‘It meets all of the required standards to be included in the usual college curriculum in philosophy: (1) It is simple and therefore readily comprehensible. (2) It is extreme and therefore memorable. (3) It is dogmatic and can therefore be classified easily in relationship to other points of view. (4) It is a position that has been lacking in formal philosophy (ever since the recognition that science is implicitly founded upon a pragmatic base) to exemplify the formal philosophical category of
what might be termed “non-theistic essentialistic realism.” (5) It is untenable and can therefore be used for purposes of philosophical one-up-manship by professors of philosophy who can easily demonstrate their own intellectual superiority over all comers by disposing of still another patently implausible point of view’ (24).

Whatever Ayn Rand may or may not have achieved, we will not be wrong in saying that even negation is a sort of reverse affirmation. Her writings continue to serve as intellectual catalysts and her philosophy of Objectivism provides a marvelous source of ‘protest commitment’ to the more youthful members of our society. Ayn Rand’s place in American literature and philosophy is yet to be determined.
Conclusion

In the preceding chapters it was observed that feminism is the first theory to emerge from those whose interest it affirms. As a theory, feminist literary criticism recapitulates the reality it seeks to capture. It drew its ideological and theoretical framework (premises) from various cultural and theoretical schools. However, in Marxism feminism found an auxiliary as both are theories of ‘power’, explaining the inequality in the distribution of power. While for Marxists, the individual is deprived of one’s work, in feminism the deprivation is of one’s sexuality and both thus dwell on one’s conception of lack of power.

For Marxist feminists, women’s liberation has become a prerequisite, a measure of society’s general emancipation, a part of the superstructure, or an important aspect of the class struggle.

It was discussed how the women’s situation has been explained as a consequence of her biology, of her reproductive function, her marital responsibilities in a patriarchy and finally through the artificial gender roles and attendant sexuality. For Marxist feminists all these predications of women’s sexuality are a form of patriarchal power where a woman is a sex object for men. Women are objects and under primitive exchange systems, women are exchange objects. Thus under capitalism women’s sexuality as an object for and by men is valued as any other object under capitalism: namely as a commodity.

As we have seen, it is the objectification or commoditification by Ayn Rand of her female protagonists in her fictional works that raises some disturbing questions. This commodification of Rand’s heroines where they are ‘exchanged and circulated’, enforcing the idea of their being ‘objects’ or ‘products’ in a capitalist patriarchy, ensured her being omitted
from the ‘canon’ of Women’s Studies and her ‘atheism and libertarianism’ ensured her not being part of the traditional literary Canon.

The basic philosophy in her novels, as observed earlier, is the presentation and projection of ‘the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, his productive achievement as his noblest activity and reason as his only absolute’ (Rand, *For the new Intellectual*).

A critical analysis of Ayn Rand’s fiction indicates that far from presenting active, assertive, successful and sexually emancipated heroines with a revolutionary and novel theme, instead of the jaded themes and plots of American fiction, Ayn Rand’s fictional works are no less guilty of feminist charges. Her heroines and plots in fact do more harm than good to women’s cause.

Her novels are all about female servitude – intellectual, political and sexual which has been made amply clear by her views of feminity and the goal of her writing. Implicitly evident in her fiction and explicitly stated by Ayn Rand in her philosophy is the conviction that women should stand in divine awe of the primal force, the superior male.

A feature of Ayn Rand’s stories, and a highly petrifying one is the depiction of the ‘rape-encounters’ between the heroine and hero at their first meetings. Despite their being active, assertive, professionally successful and sexually emancipated, the women characters in her novels are presented as brainwashed victims of patriarchy. They exist for their men and in the process appear masochistic. Thus, the male protagonists rape almost all her women characters but strangely the women they seem to enjoy their rapes. These rape scenes completely ‘dehumanize’ women. Readers with a ‘raised consciousness about the nature of rape’ find this
symbolism unpalatable. Ayn Rand’s glorification of rapes in a sense entitles men to access and annex women, for in a capitalist patriarchy women are defined by their biological sex. Also the social requirements of patriarchy need the institutionalization of male sexual dominance and female sexual submission.

Investigations by feminists into rape, incest, sexual harassment, pornography and prostitution in a patriarchy, are not primarily seen as physical abuse or violence against women which demeans them but that ‘they are art and morality from a male point of view’ (MacKinnon 19). They add to the ‘excitement potential’ and for feminists such female demeaning is inimical to their objectives.

This study has found that Ayn Rand unmistakably reinforces the macho myth argument that violent sex and rape, far from being criminal and abrasive behavior, are actually every woman’s secret desire. This is made clear through Dominique Francon’s talk of ‘sex’ being best when it is accompanied with violence. One may observe in Rand’s ‘theory of sex’ strong hints of sadism and masochism.

An analysis of her different works very clearly suggested that for Ayn Rand, man was the normative force, the center of all things and ‘woman’ gets meaning through her relationship with man. This relationship is not one of equals but a master-servant relationship.

Another question that this study tried to explore was Ayn Rand’s stance on capitalism as seen through her various writings. It was seen that Ayn Rand’s fiction brought her to the attention of many young intellectuals starved for alternative philosophies other than the prevailing existential, relativistic and Marxist philosophies. As her fame grew, she moved from being a novelist to being a philosopher.
By 1957, with the publication of Atlas Shrugged, her first phase as a fiction writer came to an end. In her second phase as a philosopher she dedicated herself to save America and the world from ‘collectivist statism’ and for this the New Intellectuals had to be provided with a philosophic base to subscribe to. John Galt’s speech in Atlas Shrugged provided for this philosophic platform of Objectivism and in the rest of her writing career she would explain this message and its philosophy through six books. These books, far from presenting any ‘systematic philosophy’, are composed of articles, public addresses and passages from her novels. She proclaimed the ‘philosophy of Objectivism’ as the only route to a ‘rational life’. Her call to Americans and other people at large was to ‘relearn individualism, have admiration for capitalism and productivity and evince belief in rational self-interest’. This for her was the only authentic ‘sense of life’.

The study discussed that Ayn Rand’s case is unique in the sense that despite her being a woman intellectual, she has provided strength to the opponents of women. The feminists of any hue want to have nothing to do with her because of her celebration of patriarchy in her works and more so because of the valorization of a sado-masochistic female psyche. On the other hand her political philosophy is untenable due to anarchist overtones in it. But all this ambivalence towards her does not prevent an objective reader from thinking that she writes in a very powerful manner. Her ideas may appear radical to some, subversive to others, still, ironically though from a feminist angle, she will continue to please, provoke, and anger a worldwide readership.
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