

### 03. Unearthing the Hidden: A Gynocritical Reading of Selected Short Stories by Katherine Mansfield<sup>1</sup>

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#### Abstract

This study examines selected short stories by Katherine Mansfield within the context of Elaine Showalter's gynocriticism, through its biological, linguistic, psychoanalytic, and cultural models. Unlike traditional feminist literary criticism, which was primarily concerned with the ways women were represented within patriarchal discourse, gynocriticism shifts the focus to women's own voices, experiences, and artistic productions. It emphasizes the importance of examining female-authored texts valuing women's unique experiences and voices. Mansfield's fiction offers valuable material for examining female identity through a gynocritical lens. Her female characters are often portrayed as individuals confined by restrictive social roles such as motherhood, marriage, and domestic responsibilities with the conflict between their personal desires and socially imposed roles. Through her innovative use of literary techniques such as symbolism, stream of consciousness, and free indirect discourse, Mansfield critiques the social norms that confine women and limit their self-expression. This study argues that Mansfield's stories, viewed through Showalter's gynocritical framework, construct a female aesthetic that both mirrors the pressures women face in patriarchal society and illuminates the silenced, hidden, and overlooked dimensions of female identity, creativity, and subjectivity.

**Keywords:** Gynocriticism, female subjectivity, female experience, oppression, patriarchy

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## Gizli Olanı Ortaya Çıkarmak: Katherine Mansfield'in Seçilmiş Kısa Öykülerinin Jinekritik Okuması<sup>3</sup>

### Öz

Bu çalışma, Katherine Mansfield'in seçilmiş kısa öykülerini Elaine Showalter'ın biyolojik, dilbilimsel, psikanalitik ve kültürel modellerden oluşan jinokritik kuramı çerçevesinde incelemektedir. Kadınların öncelikle ataerkil metinlerde temsiline odaklanan geleneksel feminist edebiyat eleştirisinin aksine, jinoeleştirel yaklaşım kadınların kendi seslerini, deneyimlerini ve sanatsal üretimlerini merkeze alır. Bu kuramsal çerçeve, kadın yazarların metinlerinin incelenmesini vurgular, kadınların özgün deneyimlerine ve seslerine edebi bağlamda değer verir. Mansfield'in kadın karakterleri sıklıkla annelik, evlilik ve ev içi sorumluluklar gibi sınırlayıcı toplumsal rollerle kuşatılmış bireyler olarak tasvir edilir; bu karakterler, kişisel arzuları ile toplumun dayattığı roller arasında çatışma yaşarlar. Mansfield, sembolizm, bilinç akışı ve serbest dolaylı anlatım gibi yenilikçi edebi teknikleri kullanarak kadınları sınırlayan ve öz ifade olanaklarını kısıtlayan toplumsal normları eleştirir. Bu çalışma, Mansfield'in öykülerinin Showalter'ın jinokritik kuramı aracılığıyla incelendiğinde, hem ataerkil toplumda kadınların maruz kaldığı baskıları yansıtan hem de kadın kimliğinin, yaratıcılığının ve öznelliğinin bastırılmış, gizli kalmış ya da göz ardı edilmiş yönlerini ortaya çıkaran bir kadın estetiği oluşturduğunu ileri sürmektedir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Jinoeleştiri, kadın öznelliği, kadın deneyimi, baskı, ataerkillik

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## Introduction

Feminist literary critique emerged in response to women's historical marginalization in literary production and to the fact that their representations in literary traditions were primarily created through a male perspective. With the rise of the women's movement in the 1960s, feminist critics began to interrogate the ways in which women were positioned in process of literary productions as both writers and readers.

In this context, gynocriticism developed as a literary theory that examines not only the representation of women in literature but also how women write with their own voices, subjectivities, and experiences. Mansfield was a pioneer in short fiction, introducing innovations like plotless storytelling, the use of stream of consciousness, and an emphasis on psychological depth, preceding Virginia Woolf's adoption of these techniques. Over time, these methods have been integrated by writers and readers of modernist short stories, establishing Mansfield as a crucial role in the emergence of a unique female literary tradition. (Kaplan, 1991, p.3). This approach, which centers on women's experiences and language, transformed the way female identity is portrayed and understood in literature. Elaine Showalter in *A Literature of Their Own* (1977) argues that women writers such as Dorothy Richardson, Katherine Mansfield, and Virginia Woolf adopted modernist techniques while creating a "deliberate female aesthetic" (p. 33) shaped by female experience. This distinct female narrative style, focusing on women's themes and linguistic production, reshaped how female identity was constructed and perceived in literature.

Raised in colonial New Zealand, Mansfield often felt like an outsider within her own family and had a distant, critical mother. One striking memory captures this emotional gap that caused Katherine to feel excluded and inadequate from an early age: "Well, Kathleen, I see that you are as fat as ever" (Mansfield as cited in Tomalin, 1987, p.24). The restrictive and conventional atmosphere of New Zealand childhood strengthened Mansfield's feeling of being "the ugly duckling" (Mansfield as cited in Tomalin, 1987, p.25) within her family and inspired her desire for independence. After relocating to Europe and participating in modernist literary circles influenced her to develop a style that revealed the intricate psychological layers of her characters (Tomalin, 1987).

Through her use of stream of consciousness, free indirect discourse, symbolic language and fragmented and open-ended structure of her texts, Mansfield illuminates the complexities of female identity within patriarchal constraints. Her personal struggles find clear expression in the complex, fragmented identities of the women she portrays. Her stories depict women trapped in societal expectations like motherhood and marriage, while also struggling with their personal desires and experiences like loneliness and alienation, thus establishing a female aesthetic distinct from prevailing male literary conventions. As such, she portrays a fluid and uncertain sense of self in her innovative writing within modernist aesthetics (Fullbrook, 1986, p.2). Mansfield already clearly articulates this fragmented and unstable conception of the self in her journal entry from July 1920: "True to oneself! which self? Which of my many - well really, that's what it looks like coming to - hundreds of selves?" (Murry, 1926, p.205) thereby emphasizing that the self is constantly shaped by subconscious processes, societal influences, and inner consciousness. This multifaceted understanding of identity and selfhood is particularly evident in the appreciation expressed by Virginia Woolf, who is widely regarded as one of the leading literary figures of her generation, openly admired Mansfield's groundbreaking narrative techniques referring to her as "the only writing I have ever been jealous of" (Woolf as cited in Froula, Kimber, & Martin, 2018, p. 11). Woolf's recognition affirms Mansfield's pivotal role in shaping a distinctly female

modernist aesthetic.

Developed by Elaine Showalter, gynocriticism shifts attention away from patriarchal critical frameworks, focusing instead on women's writing in terms of its history, styles, themes, genres, and structures (Showalter, 1981, p.184). This approach aims to uncover a distinct female literary tradition and voice. Showalter's gynocritical framework includes four main models: biological, linguistic, psychoanalytic, and cultural. Each highlights different dimensions of women's literary expression, from bodily experience to language use, psychological identity, and social context.

This paper examines Katherine Mansfield's portrayal of female experience in selected short stories, such as *Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding*, *The Garden Party*, *Miss Brill* and *Bliss* through Elaine Showalter's four gynocritical models which include biological, linguistic, psychoanalytic, and cultural. Through close readings, it explores how Mansfield's use of narrative techniques functions within these models to express the complexities of women's bodily, emotional, and cultural realities.

This study hypothesizes that Mansfield's narratives, when analyzed through Showalter's models, reveal a female aesthetic that reflects the pressures of patriarchy and exposes the marginalized and oppressed aspects of female identity. Furthermore, it proposes that through this aesthetic, Mansfield establishes a distinct female literary voice that both diverges from and challenges the dominant male discourse in literature.

## 1. From feminist literary criticism to gynocriticism: A historical and theoretical overview

The feminist movement's principles, aimed at challenging the historical subordination of women, influenced diverse areas of society. These effects were also felt in the literary domain, and feminist literary criticism, which examines literary works, emerged in the 1960s and developed alongside the women's movement (Humm, 1994, p. 2). Initially, the goal of feminist criticism was to identify and deconstruct patriarchal values embedded in texts written primarily by male authors (Barry, p. 122), aiming to decipher the patriarchal structure in their texts and adopting different approaches such as Marxism, psychoanalysis, and criticisms towards the author and the reader (Moran, 1999). Early feminist criticism aimed to uncover how literature reinforced gender norms and contributed to the oppression of women. Critics such as Kate Millett (*Sexual Politics*, 1970) and Mary Ellmann (*Thinking About Women*, 1968) exposed the sexist language and representation of women in canonical male-authored texts, drawing attention to deeply rooted cultural biases. However, from the 1970s onward, feminist criticism began shifting its focus. Rather than only critiquing male-authored works, theorists increasingly turned their attention to the neglected literary output of women themselves. This shift reflected a growing recognition of the need to analyse and reclaim women's voices, narratives, and literary traditions.

In this period, works such as Patricia Meyer Spacks's *The Female Imagination* (1975), Ellen Moers's *Literary Women* (1976), Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) are the main studies on women writers who were tried to be demonstrated as a subculture (Oppermann, 1994).

## 2. Elaine Showalter's gynocriticism and its four models

In her influential work *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), Elaine Showalter explores the historical journey of women writers striving to establish themselves within the male-dominated literary canon.

She categorizes this development into three chronological phases, each reflecting a different attitude toward literary tradition. The feminine phase is characterized by women writers adopting the stylistic and thematic norms established by male writers; the feminist phase represents a conscious rejection of these standards and a critique of patriarchal literary values; and finally, the female phase emphasizes the creation of a uniquely female literary voice and aesthetic, independent of male influence (Showalter, 1977, p.13).

A significant transformation in feminist literary criticism during this period was the shift in research toward women's literary texts. These texts began to be interpreted not only as challenges to patriarchal structures but also as part of a subculture where women's experiences were interwoven with social and cultural values. Showalter stresses this notion by referring to women's literature as forming a "subculture within the framework of a larger society... unified by values, conventions, experiences and behaviors" (Showalter, 1977, p.11).

In her later work, Showalter defines this evolution as "from an androcentric to a gynocentric feminist criticism" (1981, p.185), meaning that the critical focus moves away from analysing how male writers portrayed women, and instead turned toward understanding how women writers express their own realities, identities, and literary strategies. This gynocentric shift shows an important break from traditional literary criticism, which often focuses on the male-authored texts and ignores women's unique contributions to the literature. In other words, feminist criticism expanded beyond simply critiquing male narratives to developing a framework for celebrating and analysing women's creative contributions on their own terms.

In her work *Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness*, Elaine Showalter outlines two main strands of feminist literary criticism. Using the metaphor of the wilderness, she points out that by the late 1970s, feminist criticism had reached a theoretical dead end by focusing primarily on analysing patriarchal discourse without developing its own theoretical foundation. She argues that this impasse, as a feature of feminist criticism, arose from viewing women solely as readers rather than producers of texts, offering no genuine insight into their inner worlds or emotions and merely reflecting passive interpretations of how men perceive women. To overcome this, Showalter proposed shifting the focus to women as writers, capable of generating their own literary traditions, structures, and creative systems. To explore and critically examine such patterns in women's writing Showalter created new frameworks. Gynocriticism is a feminist approach that analyses women's writings "in terms of their history, styles, themes, genres, and structures of writing by women" (1981, p.184). It aims to analyze women's writing from a woman-centered perspective, focusing on how themes such as love, marriage, sexuality, and gender roles are shaped by women's experiences, and how women writers develop distinct narrative techniques and language. In her article, Showalter (1984) defines gynocriticism as "...roughly speaking, historical in orientation; it looks at women's writing as it has actually occurred and tries to define its specific characteristics of language, genre, and literary influence, within a cultural network that includes variables of race, class, and nationality" (p.36). It includes four models of difference: biological, linguistic, psychoanalytic, and cultural, each focused on underlining the unique features of women's writing.

In the biological model, women's writing and women's body, Showalter suggests that women's bodily and biological experiences can be significant in shaping their writing. She argues that the female body can be a source of inspiration for literary creation. However, while she acknowledges the influence of biological characteristics on women's writing, she does not reduce it solely to biology. Instead, she

emphasizes that biological experience is deeply intertwined with social roles and cultural expectations. As she puts it, “Ideas about the body are fundamental to understanding how women conceptualize their situation in society; but there can be no expression of the body that is unmediated by linguistic, social, and literary structures” (1981, p. 189). This suggests that although the female body plays a crucial role in shaping women’s literary voice, it is always interpreted and expressed through the filters of language, culture, and literary tradition.

In linguistic model, women’s writing and women’s language, Showalter examines one of the central concerns of feminist criticism, particularly gynocriticism, whether the language can be shaped by gender and whether women can develop their own unique form of expression within or beyond the male-dominated language system. Drawing on the ideas of American, English, and French critics, Showalter argues that language is not insufficient for women to express their own consciousness, but rather the cultural and social barriers preventing them from accessing the full range of language resources. In other words, women’s lack of freedom of expression, their restriction and oppression within the grip of social roles, have driven them into “silence, euphemism, or circumlocution” (1981, p.193). Showalter describes the “holes in discourse, the blanks, gaps, and silences” (p.193) in women’s writing not as reflections of their true inner worlds, but as expressions of oppression what she calls the prison of language. She argues that they symbolize the system to which women are imprisoned, and that their language is still not fully free. In fact, she states that a clear understanding of women’s writing first requires identifying the limitations they face and supporting their unrestricted expression of emotion and thought.

In psychoanalytic model, women’s writing and women’s psyche, Showalter explores the connection between the writer’s psyche and literary expression. She examines how women’s writing may be shaped by their psychological development, bodily experience and gender identities. Showalter critiques male-centered theories, such as those of Freud and Lacan, which portray women as inherently lacking. Instead, she argues that women’s writing should be grounded in a woman-centered framework that takes into account emotional, psychological, and experiential dimensions of women’s lives. Showalter maintains that women’s literature frequently engages with themes such as psychological conflict, social alienation, and crises of identity. These themes are rooted in gendered realities of women’s lives. As she notes, “the nature and difference of women’s writing lies in its troubled and even tormented relationship to female identity...” (1981, p.194-195).

In her final model, *women’s writing and women’s culture*, Elaine Showalter argues that the originality and distinctiveness of women’s writing can best be understood through the lens of women’s culture. She emphasizes that this culture is shaped by shared female experiences, which influence not only women’s literary voice but also their understanding of the body, language, and identity. Showalter emphasizes that women’s experiences should be evaluated within the broader context of the societal structures that shape them such as family, class dynamics, and prevailing moral norms. Drawing on Edwin Ardener’s Muted Group Theory, Showalter explains that women are a muted group within patriarchal culture, forced to express themselves through a language and structure not originally their own. In this framework, Ardener introduces the concept of the *wild zone* which is a space of female experience that lies outside the dominant male order and remains largely unspoken or unconscious. For Showalter, this zone represents both the erasure of women’s voices and the potential for a language that is authentically female.

### 3.Applying Showalter's gynocritical models to Katherine Mansfield's stories

#### 3.1 Biological Model - *Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding*

In *Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding*, Katherine Mansfield portrays Frau Brechenmacher's domestic labour and maternal identity through her evening routine. Before leaving for the wedding, she is seen putting four of her five children to bed, preparing her husband's uniform, and dressing in a narrow, dark hallway. In the story, her body is portrayed as trapped within the routine of domestic labour, marked by childbirth, exhaustion, self-neglect, and servitude. As Elaine Showalter's biological model suggests, biological experiences such as childbirth are not merely physical but are deeply shaped by cultural expectations and social roles. Frau Brechenmacher's reproductive role, initially a biological reality, has evolved into a social reality. The line "dressing in the dark was nothing to Frau Brechenmacher" (Mansfield, 1983, p.57) powerfully symbolizes how invisibility have become normalized in her daily life; here, darkness symbolically represents how her body is restrained both physically and socially.

Showalter's biological model is also embodied in the protagonist's bodily memory and emotional tension. As Frau Brechenmacher watches the couples dance, the line, "She forgot her five babies and her man and felt almost like a girl again" (Mansfield, 1983, p. 61) suggests a reawakening of her pre-maternal identity, a period when her body is associated with joy rather than duties. Mansfield gives readers a close look at Frau Brechenmacher's changing thoughts by using free indirect discourse, blending the narrator's voice with her subjective feelings so that readers can directly sense her emotional struggles. Her avoidance of eye contact and "a little nervous tremor round the mouth" (Mansfield, 1983, p.61) suggest an internal conflict: her body recalls youth and excitement, yet the demands attached to motherhood quickly pull her back. Here, Mansfield depicts a woman's complex journey and relationship with her body. Mansfield delicately portrays the physical and emotional transformations, including perceived bodily deformities, brought on by childbirth and motherhood, contributing to the woman's intensified sense of separation and estrangement from her previous self. This tension between personal experience and social role epitomizes Showalter's argument that even biological experiences like motherhood are never separate from the cultural frameworks shaping how women perceive and articulate their lives.

After a day filled with quiet disappointment and frustration, the story ends with a powerful image of the woman's emotional collapse and entrapment within her marriage and body. In the line "She lay down on the bed and put her arm across her face like a child who expected to be hurt as Herr Brechenmacher lurched in" (Mansfield, 1983, p.62), Mansfield uses the childlike posture to evoke the woman's defenselessness and helplessness. This movement signifies her return to a state of vulnerability, expressing emotional, physical, and sexual exposure within a marriage marked by a power imbalance. Bound to caregiving, reproduction, and silent endurance, the female body becomes a site where societal demands are imposed, reflecting Mansfield's condemnation of women's sexual oppression and the cultural expectation that defines them primarily as bearers of children (Kaplan, 1991, p.140).

#### 3.2 Linguistic model - *The Garden Party*

In *The Garden Party*, the linguistic model is demonstrated through the character of Laura whose narrative voice captures the tension between her personal moral values and the restrictive class norms of her society. Mansfield's use of narrative techniques, such as incomplete sentences and internal

monologues, depicts Laura's inner conflict. These fragmented expressions emphasize not only Laura's struggle to clearly articulate her thoughts but also the broader social pressures silencing women's authentic voices, as identified by Showalter.

Early in the story, Laura voices her objection to her family's indifference to the death of a working-class man stating: "But we can't possibly have a garden-party with a man dead just outside the front gate" (Mansfield, 1983, p. 542). However, this humane response is dismissed by her mother's reply: "People like that don't expect sacrifice from us" (Mansfield, 1983, p. 543). Here, Mansfield demonstrates class distinctions, as well as how Laura's voice is muted by patriarchal discourse. Laura's suppression is also evident in her mixed feelings she has about her thoughts and needs. Laura's expression of "Am I being extravagant?" (Mansfield, 1983, p. 543), as a part of interior monologue while looking in the mirror, demonstrates both self-questioning and the conflict between dominant social codes and her own values.

At the end of the story, Laura, standing over the dead man, can only say, "Forgive my hat" (Mansfield, 1983, p. 548). This apology demonstrates her inability to express her grief openly, using instead an unclear and indirect language, which features the barriers women encounter in expressing themselves due to culturally enforced limitations.

Also, at the end of the story, Laura's attempt to express her emotional response after visiting the dead man's home fails. She begins to say, "Isn't life—" (Mansfield, 1983, p.549) but cannot complete the sentence. This is exactly what Laura experiences: her inability to articulate her emotions is not a failure of thought or language, but a consequence of restriction within a male-dominated discursive system. For Showalter, this kind of silence and interruption reflects the cultural pressures that limit women's capacity to fully express themselves. Moreover, the dash itself becomes a marker of silenced emotion and unfinished expression, embodying what Showalter describes as the gaps and blanks in women's discourse. Her brother Laurie's patronizing response, "Isn't it, darling?" (Mansfield, 1983, p.549) imposes an external interpretation on Laura's experience, effectively silencing her again and symbolises the man's taking control of the woman's experience.

### 3.3 Psychoanalytic model – *Miss Brill*

Katherine Mansfield's *Miss Brill* centers on an aging English teacher living alone in France. She spends her Sundays visiting a public garden, where she escapes her loneliness by imagining the people around her as actors in a grand theatrical performance, giving her life a sense of connection and meaning. The story offers a modernist portrayal of the *femme seule*, a solitary woman excluded from the protective structures of social class and male support, extending the tradition of 19th-century governess novels like *Jane Eyre*. Unlike those earlier novels, where reintegration into society is sometimes possible, *Miss Brill* presents no such hope. Her isolation is portrayed as permanent (Fullbrook, 1986, p.103). Fullbrook identifies Miss Brill as Mansfield's most profoundly isolated female character (1986, p.103), and her loneliness forming the emotional core of the narrative.

In Katherine Mansfield's story *Miss Brill*, viewed through Elaine Showalter's woman-centered psychoanalytic model, the psychological and social isolation of women, particularly aging women, within patriarchal society is explored. While classical psychoanalytic Freudian interpretations might view Miss Brill's fantasies as symptoms of repression or lack, Showalter's gynocentric approach sees them as identity crises that arise from external alienation and systemic exclusion rather than internal deficiency. Miss Brill creates an imagined stage in which she imagines herself as an actress on that in



the park. This is a constructed reality she makes to escape being viewed as an aging woman. The line, "Even she had a part and came every Sunday. No doubt somebody would have noticed if she hadn't been there" (Mansfield, 1983, p.552) suggests her wish to be seen, revealing both her emotional loneliness and her need to construct a sense of belonging in a society that devalues women after the loss of socially idealized youth and beauty.

The constructed sense of identity is disrupted when a young couple look down on her stating: "Why does she come here at all - who wants her? Why doesn't she keep her silly old mug at home?" (Mansfield, 1983, p.553). This statement symbolizes the patriarchal system's devaluation of older women. Mansfield explores Miss Brill's emotional world through stream of consciousness and interior monologue, aligning with Showalter's argument that women's writing offers insight into uniquely female realities shaped by their psychological development and gendered experiences. The story demonstrates how these women's place in society is limited, how they are psychologically isolated, while simultaneously attempting to uncover unexpressed aspects of womanhood.

Furthermore, Katherine Mansfield uses the symbol of the fur as a significant narrative device in her story Miss Brill to reflect the protagonist's inner world. Showalter's concept of gynocriticism emphasizes how female authors reveal women's marginalized emotional experiences, which Mansfield illustrates through Miss Brill's interior monologue and symbolic use of the fur. Early in the story, Miss Brill interacts with her fur as if it were alive and builds an emotional relationship with it. This is part of the imagined world she creates to cope with the loneliness, marginalization, and neglect she experiences in a patriarchal society. At the end of the story, as she puts the fur back into its box, Mansfield, through the scene where Miss Brill "heard something crying" (Mansfield, 1983, p.553) brings to the surface the feelings of worthlessness and emotional burdens that women have when they are rejected by society. In other words, the crying fur symbolizes the echo of the woman's repressed emotions. Mansfield's intimate and symbolic narrative style, opens the door to Miss Brill's emotional reality and fragmented psyche, enabling the reader to sense her solitude and despair. This symbolic narrative demonstrates how women's unspoken feelings and social exclusion are articulated in literature, as Showalter emphasizes in her psychoanalytic model.

### 3.4 Cultural model – *Bliss*

Analysing Katherine Mansfield's stories through Showalter's cultural model reveals how the author reflects female experience as shaped by the cultural, historical, and social conditions of her time. By centering women's perspectives often overshadowed by patriarchal structures, Mansfield uncovers the unseen aspects of their lives. On the surface, Bertha appears to conform to traditional roles as a wife and mother engaged in domestic routines. However, Mansfield questions this portrayal through her modernist techniques by exposing Bertha's internal conflict. As Kate Fullbrook (1986, p. 102) argues, in *Bliss*, Bertha's female desire is caught between two conflicting cultural norms: the traditional discourse suppresses female sexuality, whereas the modern discourse recognizes desire but confines it within fixed meanings and stereotypes.

Mansfield brings to light how female sexuality is culturally constrained through Bertha's inability to openly express her desires and her belief that such feelings can only be manifested in a "drunk or disorderly" (Mansfield, 1983, p.337-338) state. Bertha's question, "How idiotic civilization is! Why be given a body if you have to keep it shut up in a case like a rare, rare fiddle?" (Mansfield, 1983, p.338) metaphorically expresses this repression. The fiddle symbolizes how the woman's real connection to her

body is limited and disabled it is not allowed to be played actively, and its rhythm and artistic sound remain unheard. This implies that the woman's control over her body, her power to sense it, and her right to freely experience her sexuality have been taken away. The *rare fiddle*, though valuable, represents how society controls the female body and confines female sexuality within restrictive norms. Bertha's repressed desires and inability to express them reveal how patriarchal culture shapes the female experience. Furthermore, Mansfield employs what Showalter defines as double-voiced discourse to represent Bertha's emotional tension. Through free indirect discourse, the narrative subtly contrasts Bertha's internal desires with external expectations. The symbol of the rare fiddle thus reinforces this narrative dissonance, reflecting her emotional alienation and inner discontent.

In addition, Mansfield touches on same-sex desire as another culturally suppressed dimension of female sexuality. The story hints at Bertha's attraction to Pearl Fulton. The line "What was there in the touch of that cool arm that could fan — fan — start blazing — blazing — the fire of bliss that Bertha did not know what to do with?" (Mansfield, 1983, p. 344). This moment captures Bertha's confusion and repressed longing, which Mansfield conveys not through direct narration but through symbolic imagery, such as the pear tree and the physical sensation of touch. Given the era's constraints, this desire is articulated indirectly, as described in Showalter's notion of the *wild zone*, a realm of female experience beyond male linguistic and cultural discourse. Mansfield's modernist techniques, particularly stream of consciousness and symbolism, thus serve as tools for expressing the unspoken, revealing the hidden layers of female identity that patriarchal language suppresses.

## Conclusion

To sum up, Showalter's gynocriticism, grounded in four main models, allows for an in-depth examination of Katherine Mansfield's fiction that foregrounds women's experiences within a patriarchal context. This study examines selected short stories by Katherine Mansfield through the lens of Elaine Showalter's biological, linguistic, psychoanalytic, and cultural models, demonstrating how the author employs modernist techniques to develop a woman-centered narrative that masterfully explores women's identity, bodily experience, psychological conflict, and social roles.

Mansfield's innovative narrative techniques and themes effectively reflect the conflict between female identity and societal expectations, capturing women's psychological distress, silenced voices, and cultural exclusion. This study demonstrates how her stories address not only the social and cultural restrictions faced by women but also offer their individual experiences in a complex and nuanced way within these boundaries.

Each story explores the ways in which women are oppressed, muted, or controlled within a patriarchal system, as well as how their individual experiences within these constraints are examined from various perspectives. In *Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding*, Showalter's biological model illustrates how the female body, linked to motherhood and domestic labour, is transformed into a socially constructed role. Moreover, the protagonist's desire to dance further reveals the hidden spirit of her body. In *The Garden Party*, through the lens of the linguistic model, the woman's inability to articulate her emotions directly is conveyed through gaps and blanks in language. In *Miss Brill*, the psychoanalytic model exposes how female identity is shaped by psychological repression and marginalization. In *Bliss*, the cultural model draws attention to the conflict between prescribed gender expectations and inner desires, as well as the suppression of female sexuality.

This research primarily contributes by integrating all four of Showalter's gynocritical frameworks to provide a comprehensive analysis of Mansfield's female characters and narrative techniques in depth. Consequently, it supports literary research on Mansfield by highlighting her efforts in developing distinctively feminine modernist voice that challenges patriarchal values and giving voice to female subjectivity. Hence, Mansfield's endeavor to establish a modernist literary identity specific to the female subject and opposing patriarchal structures becomes more evident, offering literature with a new lens through which female experience is perceived and represented.

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