

# **A Comparative Study of Margaret Forster's *Diary of an Ordinary Woman* and Shahrnush Parsipur's *Women without Men: A Showalterian Analysis***

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## **Abstract**

Feminist literary criticism flourished in what is called as the second wave of feminism which was the period of academic and theoretical discussions about the place and representation of women in literature. It started with study of images of women in literary works by male authors. Elaine Showalter, an American literary critic, later suggested another mode of study in the feminist literary criticism which she called gynocriticism or woman-centered framework to study women as writers and literary works written by women, gynocriticism is a female framework to study women's writing. Showalter describes four models of difference of writing by women: biological, linguistic, psychoanalytical and cultural models of difference.

This thesis studies two novels, *Diary of an Ordinary Woman* by British writer Margaret Forster and *Women without Men* by Iranian writer Shahrnush Parsipur comparatively using the cultural model of difference as its framework. The Cultural model of difference considers the double-voiced discourse of the writing by women resulted from the women's experience as a muted group inside the dominant patriarchal group. Four cultural circumstances were chosen to examine the duality of women's experience inside the dominant culture: women's search for identity, female friendship and bonding, career choices and conformity and resistance to codes of behavior and appearance, to discover whether the similarity of experience of women in Iran and Britain can bond them across time and place. Though the experience of the women in both novels show the duality of their way of life but the quality

and level of these experiences are very different that makes the possibility of bonding between women and women writers in Britain and Iran difficult. Therefore in order to study Persian women writing a framework suitable to Iranian culture is needed.

Keywords: *gynocriticism, cultural model of difference, double-voiced discourse, muted group, dominant group.*

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