

In 1977 Ellen Moers in her *Literary Women* coined “Female Gothic” as a new term in literary criticism. In this she seemed to be laying the foundation for a new conception and specific way of thinking about women writers as related to the Gothic genre. Moers in her critical book on women’s writing claims that the Female Gothic is “easily defined: the work that women writers have done in the literary mode that, since the eighteenth century, we have called the Gothic”¹. Nevertheless, along with other terms, Female Gothic was quickly adopted by the feminist critics and especially during the eighties of the twentieth century its interpretation underwent distinct changes. As Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik observe, since the late seventies “it has been increasingly acknowledged that women writers have made use of the non-realist Gothic mode in order to explore the problematic nature of female subjectivity in Western patriarchal culture”². Thus, what was originally conceived of as a specific coinage for the Gothic novels distinct by their female authorship, became a term encompassing the specificities of both woman style of writing and of the woman character as a means for the exploration of female experience.

The application of the term became more focused and consequently rather limited in the late 1980s. This was mainly owing to the essentializing tendencies that marked the gynocritical insistence on the distinctly different character of women’s writing as opposed to the works written by men as the predominant constituents of the literary tradition. Writing as a woman was therefore understood by gynocritics as participating in the construction of the female literary tradition. Due to their stress on gender dimension, Female Gothic in their conception consequently became subject to the “tendencies either to psychologically universalize the female mind or to oversimplify the cultural function of Gothic writing