

Investigating the mutual interactions of 19th century western women and their environment in George Gissing's *New Grub Street* and *The Nether World*

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Abstract

The present article explores an Ecofeministic approach to two novels of George Gissing, *New Grub Street* (1891), *The Nether World* (1889) based on the two notions of oppression and domination. George Gissing is the great English writer of the 19th and early 20th centuries, whose real novels can be considered as a reflection of the society of those days. During the 19th century and early 20th century, the urbanization was culminated, and the man's connection to nature was almost destroyed. This was accompanied by the oppression of women in the patriarchal society of that time which clearly indicates the fact that nature and women are empirically connected. By examining two notions of oppression and domination in Gissing's novels in this research, the researcher aimed to study the connection of nature and women as they are threatened by the same enemy – a toxic mindset of domination and control that degrades both women and environment to show that women and nature are both oppressed and dominated by masculine rules of patriarchal society of 19th century. The strategies and solutions of the female characters to save themselves and their nature from oppressions and dominations are also studied. This study concluded that the interactions between human and the environment, as well as the oppressive relationship between men and women in 19th century, have been well illustrated and criticized in Gissing novels.

Keywords: Domination, environment, George Gissing, Karen Warren, oppression, patriarchy, social ecofeminism

Introduction

George Robert Gissing was born in 1857 in Wakefield. He studied at Backline School in Wakefield and when he was a teenager, he read his first book *The Old Curiosity Shop* by Charles Dickens. His literary interest grew by his father's engagement and was inspired by books from his family library. In 1872, winning a scholarship, he attended Owens College, university of Manchester, where he won many honorable prizes such as a poem prize in 1873 and the Shakespeare scholarship in 1875. In 1876, he traveled to the United States, and lived in Boston and Waltham, Massachusetts for a while. After facing economic problem, he moved to Chicago and started writing short stories while working for different newspapers such as *Chicago Tribune*. The story of this experience is depicted in his novel *New Grub Street*. He died in poverty at the age of forty-six in 1903 (Coustillas, 1972).

George Gissing is so exact in his expressions of events and characters that there will not remain any doubt that he had experienced his characters' lives. His streets are the streets of poverty of all world. In portraying the places and circumstances, Gissing is extremely attentive and does not interfere any redundant element while many writers in his era used many explanations. By illustrating the life of poor people of the second half of the 19th century England, this realist writer finds a way to elaborate the other side of the coin of urbanization, in his novels. In his novels, illustrating the reformation of the society in 19th century England, there is a tragic picture of lands defeated from realities and values.

In the heart of the historical moment when the interwoven nature of imperialism, ecological degradation, exploitation of workers' racism and women's oppression is painfully obvious to many, ecofeminism appears to be gaining in popularity. Karen Warren (1997) in her book *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture and Nature* states that Ecological Feminism has roots in the wide variety of feminism, but what makes Ecofeminism different is its insistence that nonhuman nature and naturism (for example unjustified domination of nature) are feminist issues. She believes that Ecofeminism philosophy extends familiar feminist critique of socialisms of domination (racism, classism, sexism, and so forth) to nature. Karen Warren's works has been incredibly influential in development of ecofeminism, especially as a philosophical perspective. In her essay "Feminism and Ecology, Making Connections", she argues for a basic ecofeminist position: that feminist ought to pay attention to environmental issues and ecological interdependencies and that environmentalists ought to attend to connection among ecological degradation, sexism and other forms of social oppression (Cuomo, 2002).

Literature review

Two novels of George Gissing are used in this research as primary sources. The first novel is *The Nether World* which is among his first novels and deals with the working class. This novel which is written in April 1889 deals with the life of poor people who live in east London. The characters in this novel are divided into two groups, those who do as they like and those who do as they have to and they are not happy. The second novel which is used in this research is *New Grub Street* written in April 1891. This novel belongs to the middle period of his writing, the period of transition from social-lower class novels to cultural-middle class novels. In this novel which is one of his masterpieces, the different aspect of living in London is portrayed. Disappointment, failure, grinding poverty, sordid struggle, misery, illness, affliction, and so forth are companied with living in London with a gloomy atmosphere.

Although Gissing is considered as one of the great writers of his time, little study has been done on his works. However, a number of different critics have studied his works from different approaches. Social studies, civilization and alienation, and women and civilization are among the aspects from which Gissing's works have been studied. The works of these critics are considered as secondary sources as well as a source for receiving ideas and inspiration for the researcher. From one angle Gissing's novels have been studied from social standpoint. Adrian Poole in the book *Gissing in Context* (1975) studies the novel of Gissing *The Nether World* in the context of social differences and classed culture. She believes that "the value and stature of this novel is to be found in its articulation of the quality of human desire and suffering beneath the differences of class and individual personality" (p. 84). She expresses that *The Nether World* is "a most successful of Gissing's early attempts to dramatize on a large scale the problems of energy, need

and relationship in the context of extreme urban deprivation” (p. 84). The study of this work by Poole gave the researcher a good insight into the social conditions prevailing in *The Nether World* and consequently, the social conditions of the Gissing’s period.

Another aspect of Gissing's work that has been studied is in the view of civilization and alienation. Richard Pearson in his article “George Gissing and the Ethnographer’s I” studies the concept of civilization and alienation in Gissing’s novels. He presents different ideas about Gissing’s characterization and point of view from different thinkers like Raymond Williams and Virginia Wolf. Pearson also expresses that Gissing suffered from a reaction against what was seen as his pessimism, his egoism and his bleak portrait of society (Pearson, 2004). This article is a perfect analysis of Gissing and his novels regarding the civilization of 19th century. Another work which studies the notion of alienation in Gissing’s *New Grub Street* is "The Valley of the Shadow of Books: Alienation in Gissing's *New Grub Street*" by Robert L. Selig (1970). In his study, he proposes to concentrate on alienation as central to the novel. He expresses that although Gissing succeeded at least partly in rendering his own estrangement and that of fellow writers in term of art, the novel also retains undeniable elements of case history (p. 189). Selig combines textual analysis with historical perspectives unavailable to Gissing himself. Studying the critique of Gissing’s works from this perspective shed light on the spiritual and mental conditions of the Gissing community during the period of civilization and separation from nature.

Although all of the writers and figures above did their best to expand the theory of ecofeminism or study Gissing’s novels, none of them used the descriptions of Gissing’s novels to find out the social situation and lifestyle of that era to study the effects of environment on human life, body and soul. None of the theorists and literary critics have examined the relationship between women and the environment, the oppression and domination of patriarchal society towards women and nature, and the solution that women have devised to save themselves and nature from the clutches of domineering patriarchy. In other words, Gissing’s work has not been studied from the perspective of ecofeminism yet. In this research, it is tried to make a new vision to Gissing’s novels through the lens of ecofeminism.

Method

In *Ecofeminism Women: Culture, Nature*, she states that feminism is a movement committed to omission of male-gender power and privilege or sexism. Although, all feminists agree that sexism exist, is inaccurate and ought to be changed and it should put an end to sexist oppression, academic feminists have come to see that liberation of women cannot be achieved until all women are liberated from multiple oppressions that structure our gendered identities: women of color from racism, poor women from classism, lesbian women from heterosexism, young and older women from ageism, and so forth. Therefore, “feminism is intrinsically a movement to end racism, classism, heterosexism, ageism and so on” (Warren, 2000, p. 4). Warren in *Ecofeminist Philosophy* states that “something is a feminist issue if an understanding of it helps one understand the oppression or subordination of women. She brings different examples such as equal rights, comparably pay for comparable work, day care center that understating them sheds light on the subordination of women” (Warren, 2000, p. 1). She also expresses that “even trees, animals, toxics and nature language are feminist issues because understanding them helps one understand the status and plight of women cross-culturally” (Warren, 2000, p. 1).

Warren argues that “something is a feminist issue if an understanding of it helps one understand the oppression, subordination or domination of women” (*Ecofeminist Philosophy* 4). In a sense such a definition is widely open, taking various approach and issues to be worthy of feminist attention. At the same time, it certainly does not allow just any perspective to count as feminist. Throughout *Ecofeminist Philosophy*, Warren defends multicultural ethics while clearly advocating specific transcultural values, such as justice caring:

If we dare to care, if we dare to enter into community with others through an honest recognition of our commonalities and differences, we will be poised to create generally respectful, nonviolent, care-based, intentional communities where commonalities and differences are just that . . . Such intentional communities are a creative alternative to violence-prone communities where order is imposed from outside through unjustified domination. (Warren, 2000, p. 204)

In her widely-read 1991 essay “The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism”, Warren argues about basic issues of her ecofeminist philosophy. The view she explained is that a “logic of domination” that divides the world into bifurcated hierarchies is basic to all forms of oppression and domination. This logic (which Warren also calls a “conceptual framework”) is a way of thinking that encourages separating form and mistreating nature and members of subservient groups, for no good reason. In addition, the conceptual frameworks that are used to justify racism, sexism, and mistreatment of nature, are interwoven and mutually reinforcing (Cuomo, 2002).

The analysis of the theoretical frameworks that deal with the oppression of women and nature is the basis of the theory of ecofeminism. Today, the fusion of nature and women has become more prominent. Ecofeminists believe that the logic of domination supports the joint repression of women and the environment. Warren in *Ecological Feminist Philosophies* explains that “ecofeminism challenges patriarchy as a belief system, replacing it with non-dominating beliefs, values, behaviors and relations between humans and non-human nature” (p. 119). Philosophical attention to ecofeminist spirituality explains the role that women's experiences play in eliminating patriarchy. The idea that ecofeminist spirituality is used to empower women, while challenging patriarchal structures and practices, demonstrates women's creative ways of improving their lives and nature.

As Chris Cuomo states in his article Karen Warren express an ecofeminism that is about strategies and solutions, as well as precise descriptions of problems. This ecofeminism includes sophisticated analysis of gender, race, and colonialism, and it is fundamentally linked to struggles for global justice and ecological flourishing (Cuomo, 2002). Although Karen Warren's approach to ecofeminist analysis sometimes goes so far as to emphasize the aspects of ecofeminism that are about understanding oppression and domination, her philosophy of ecofeminism is a logic that embraces the logic of domination and oppression as well as the solution to liberation from it in general. Her theory makes a significant contribution to the development of philosophical theories and political practices that provide a realistic and accessible alternative to hegemonic frameworks as well as the elimination of existing ones.

In literature, too, the subject of the relationship between the oppression of women and dominion over nature came sharply to prominence, particularly in the context of women and feminists' ideal vision. Returning to the central image of Carson's work, nature is often described as silent; humans are no longer able to listen to its language. Only when they begin to tune in to nature will they be able to work towards its preservation. Through the literary devices of fantastic

literature, novels and utopian tales see women living in synch with nature in a dynamic, spiritual and communicative network, and freely developing those feminine qualities of theirs that patriarchal power has always stifled (Bianchi, 2012).

Ecofeminist reading of the *Nether World* and *New Grub Street*

The Nether World and *New Grub Street* were written during the Industrial Revolution era in England. The Industrial Revolution had a profound effect on the lives of women and the environment at the time. The roots of environmental movements were in response to rising levels of smoke pollution during the Industrial Revolution. The emergence of large factories and at the same time the significant growth of coal consumption caused an unprecedented level of air pollution in industrial centers. On the other hand, the production of industrial gases in England began in 1812. This method produced a lot of effluent that was dumped into sewage and rivers (Fleming, 2006). The Industrial Revolution has been criticized for leading to the destruction of the environment and many habitats. Specific studies show that more than 95% of species have become extinct since humanity became the dominant species on earth. The Industrial Revolution is inherently unstable because it will lead to the collapse of society, widespread hunger, famine and resource scarcity (Mawle, 2010). Therefore, it can be concluded that nature and the environment were in their worst condition during the Gissing era and were almost destroyed. Especially with the enormous and negative effects of the Industrial Revolution at that time and the influx of people to the cities to find work in the hope of escaping poverty, caring and protecting the environment was almost forgotten. This can be clearly seen in these two novels.

Women and their environment

According to Karen Warren in *Ecological Feminist Philosophy*, what all ecofeminist philosophers do hold in common, however, is the view that there are important connections between the domination of women (and other human subordinates) and the domination of nature and that a failure to recognize these connections results in inadequate feminisms, environmentalism, and environmental philosophy. What the nature of these alleged connections is and which, if any, are accurate descriptions of the nature and root sources of the twin dominations of women and nature is largely what ecofeminist philosophers debate (*Ecological Feminist Philosophy X*). According to Karen Warren's theory, there is a deep connection between women and their environment because women have always been like nature, relaxing, nurturing, educating and the main source of support and peace. But more important than this is the common ground between women and nature which is domination and oppression by the patriarchal urban society, which will not give up any oppression in order to achieve its goals and interests. Therefore, it can be concluded that women and the environment have been suppressed and dominated by a patriarchal culture and society.

In two novels, *The Nether World* and *New Grub Street*, Gissing beautifully shows the forgotten nature and points to the dominance of a patriarchal urban culture. Written in 1889 and 1891, at the height of the Industrial Revolution, the two novels address the plight of women in industrial cities. The environment and nature at that time was in a very bad condition and was highly exposed to various types of pollution such as water pollution, air pollution, soil pollution and so on. In the same way, the women of the time were under great pressure to maintain their

survival in urban life, as if women were on the verge of extinction with the destruction and suppression of nature.

In *The Nether World*, Mrs. Hewett's character has all the features in common with nature. She is the mother of five children and the wife of John Hewett. Mrs. Hewett is a dignified, calm, and supportive woman who loves her children. Her support is reminiscent of Mother Nature, who, now that rural life and nature are almost gone, falls ill and eventually dies. She is only 27 years old but hard life makes her face look older. The writer portrayed her perfectly as follows:

Mrs. Hewett sat on the bed, and bent forward in an attitude of physical weakness. Her age was twenty-seven, but she looked several years older. At nineteen she had married; her husband, John Hewett, having two children by a previous union. Her face could never have been very attractive, but it was good-natured, and wore its pleasantest aspect as she smiled on Sidney's entrance. You would have classed her at once with those feeble-willed, weak-minded, yet kindly-disposed women, who are only too ready to meet affliction half-way, and who, if circumstances be calamitous, are more harmful than an enemy to those they hold dear. She was rather wrapped up than dressed, and her hair, thin and pale-coloured, was tied in a ragged knot. She wore slippers, the upper parts of which still adhered to the soles only by miracle. (Gissing, 1889, p. 24)

As mentioned, with the destruction of rural life and the influx of people to the cities to find better jobs and improve life, nature and the environment were severely oppressed. In the same way, women's lives were subjected to numerous and various oppressions. The connection between the oppression of nature and Mrs. Hewett, who is a symbol of an oppressed woman in Victorian times, is well illustrated. Just as nature has always played the role of protecting man and man has always sought to secure its own benefits from it, so Mrs. Hewett stood by her husband and, regardless of his poverty and difficult living conditions, gave up all her aspirations to stay with and help him. But John was so obsessed with repression and pressure that at the age of 27, she saw death as a means of relief and salvation from her troubles.

Mrs. Hewett dies in peace and silence, just like nature that died at that time. Both were somehow killed by the pressures and hardships of a patriarchal, utilitarian and domineering society. The allusions and metaphors in the descriptions of the story are reminiscent of Karen Warren's connections between nature and women. Looking at examples of supportiveness, love for children, and concern for the husband as well as Mrs. Hewett's peace, one can easily realize the conceptual connection between this character and nature. The simultaneous oppression of nature and women in this novel, the existence of a value hierarchy between men, nature and women like Mr. and Mrs. Hewett and even other characters, all show the existence of this kind of relationship between nature and women in the novel. On the other hand, the discussion of health and urban risk factors, which is widely seen in this novel, indicates the existence of a kind of empirical and experimental connection. The issue of health and urban air pollution, which had a greater impact on women's lives during the Industrial Revolution, had become a major concern at the time. This is also seen in *The Nether World*.

This connection can also be found in the other main female characters of the novel. For example, exhausted by the oppression and domination of the patriarchal system, Clara, moves to another city but just as she was about to reach her goal and success, she was attacked by acid and lost her future. Jane Snowdon also lost her legacy as a result of these oppressions. She is also involved in the value hierarchy and suppressed by his father and grandfather. According to Karen Warren in *Ecological Feminist Philosophy*, a conceptual framework is a socially constructed set

of basic beliefs, values, attitudes, and assumptions that shape and reflect how one views oneself and others. It is oppressive when it explains, justifies, and maintains relationships of domination and subordination. An oppressive conceptual framework is patriarchal when it explains, justifies, and maintains the subordination of women by men. Oppressive and patriarchal conceptual frameworks are characterized not only by value dualisms and value hierarchies, but also by “power-over” conceptions of power and relationships of domination (*Ecological Feminist Philosophy* xii). For this reason, it can be concluded that there is a conceptual connection between the female characters in *The Nether World*.

In *New Grub Street*, Mrs. Milvain, the mother of the main character, Jasper and her sisters Dora and Mud, has similar characteristics with Mrs. Hewett. Mrs. Milvain, who lives in the village of Wattelorough, has similar characteristics to nature. Like Mrs. Hewett, she has a supportive, compassionate, and comforting role for her children, especially Jasper. Jasper, who comes from London only once or twice a year, only takes the cost of living in London from his mother, and the mother, despite her own difficulties and the hardships of her daughters' lives, gives her as much financial and non-financial assistance as possible. This kind of oppression of the supporting mother is somewhat reminiscent of oppression of Mother Nature by a patriarchal society. Invasion to urban life, extreme exploitation and industrial domination of nature in agriculture, air and soil and water pollution at the same time are considered as different forms of natural repression as Jasper, as a symbol of patriarchal society and culture, oppresses and dominates his mother and sisters. According to Warren's theory of connections, there is a conceptual connection that reinforces Jasper's logic of domination against his mother and sisters. In this novel, we see that at the end of the story, Ms. Milvain, who is the symbol of Mother Nature, dies too.

Women and nature oppression by patriarchal culture

One of the main issues related to the ecofeminist study of literary works is the study of the oppressions and dominations of the patriarchal system and culture towards women and the environment. As mentioned in the previous section, the relationship between women and the environment in various forms has led to the formation of a common system of repression against them. Karen Warren in *Ecofeminism Philosophy* states, ecological feminists, ecofeminists, claim that there are important connections between the unjustified dominations of women, people of color, children, and the poor and the unjustified domination of nature (Karen Warren, 2000, p. 1). Karen Warren's remarkable point is her focus on the oppression of women. She prioritizes the study of the oppression of women because of its connection to the oppression of nature, and believes that in order to begin an ecofeminist critique and study the oppressions and dominations of a patriarchal society, one must begin with studying the oppressions of women.

Ecofeminists begin with gender as a category of analysis. As such, ecofeminists highlight claims about women as women in their discussions of interconnected systems of unjustified domination (rather than, for example, on women as humans, as mothers, as wives, as daughters, as sisters). But this is not because gender oppression is more important than other forms of oppression; it is not. It is because a focus on ‘women’ reveals important features of interconnected systems of human domination... So, in order to unpack specific gender features of human systems of domination, ecofeminists often (but not exclusively) focus on "women" (Warren, 2000, p. 2).

In *The Nether World* and *New Grub Street* the element of nature is very faint due to the coincidence of story writing with the era of the Industrial Revolution and the oblivion of nature and rural life, as well as the mass urbanization to find work and build a better future. In *The Nether*

World, for example, there are almost no scenes of nature, and the environment is often urban. In *New Grub Street*, the migration from the village to the city is also indirectly depicted. For example, the migration of Edwin Reardon is mentioned and blamed:

His mother's desire to live in London had in him the force of an inherited motive; as soon as possible he released himself from his uncongenial occupations, converted into money all the possessions of which he had not immediate need, and betook himself to the metropolis. To become a literary man, of course. His capital lasted him nearly four years, for, notwithstanding his age, he lived with painful economy. The strangest life, of almost absolute loneliness. (Gissing, 1891, p. 80)

Migration from rural to urban areas on the one hand, and the industrialization of large cities, especially London, are the most important factors in the patriarchal oppression and domination. Air and water pollution in big cities, factory smoke, industrial waste and other things had caused the destruction of nature and the environment of that time. The interest in urbanization and the new civilization, although very exciting and attractive for the men of that day, was seen as dark and black for Gissing. He criticizes the urbanization and flourishing of this civilization in the language of one of the most important characters in *New Grub Street*:

'Civilisation!' exclaimed John, scornfully. 'What do you mean by civilisation? Do you call it civilising men to make them weak, flabby creatures, with ruined eyes and dyspeptic stomachs? Who is it that reads most of the stuff that's poured out daily by the ton from the printing-press? Just the men and women who ought to spend their leisure hours in open-air exercise; the people who earn their bread by sedentary pursuits, and who need to live as soon as they are free from the desk or the counter, not to moon over small print. Your Board schools, your popular press, your spread of education! Machinery for ruining the country, that's what I call it.' (Gissing, 1891, p. 32)

Exploitation, domination and oppression are not limited to nature and the environment, but also the women of this society are subjected to various repressions, both by the men of the society and by the culture of the patriarchal society. Men oppress women, society oppresses women, and even women oppress women. The male characters in these two novels often oppress women directly and indirectly in order to serve their interests better. By the way of illustration, In *The Nether World*, the main character, Jane Snowdon, is oppressed by her grandfather as a symbol of patriarchy, by her father as a symbol of patriarchal society, and by her employer daughter Clementine Pickover as a symbol of an oppressive woman. Jane Snowden's grandfather, Michael Snowdon, despite his great wealth, always keeps Jane in a difficult situation and forces her to work hard to provide for herself what she wants. He considers himself entitled to decide on Jane's future, and Jane has a duty to live the way Michael wants her to live for his satisfaction. Michael is a strict grandfather who allows himself to interfere in Jane's marriage in order to maintain his power and wealth. Michael makes decisions for Jane as he pleases and does not seek her opinion at all, as if Jane is a commodity that belongs to Michael. He does not tolerate opposition and easily suppresses Jane to achieve his own interests, which is to preserve his wealth.

Returning home, he murmured to himself again and again, 'She must not marry. She must overcome this desire of a happiness such as ordinary women may enjoy. For

my sake, and for the sake of her suffering fellow-creatures, Jane must win this victory over herself.' (Gissing, 1889, p. 362)

As another example, Joseph Snowdon is Jane's father who comes to London to see her after many years. Regardless of his paternal interests, Joseph easily seizes Jane's inheritance and escapes, using the patriarchal laws of inheritance at the time. The remarkable point in this section is criticism of the author by showing the unjust and oppressive laws in the society, which has no other result but to oppress women and increase the domination of men. Joseph is a symbol of a patriarchal society that does not value the identity and individuality of the women of their society, even if it is their own daughter. Acceptance of the presence of patriarchal laws in society leads to the oppression of women and nature.

Among the other oppressed characters is Clara. She is the eldest daughter of John Hewett, who seeks wealth and fame in society through acting in the theater, but is repressed by her authoritarian father. In the patriarchal society of the Industrial Revolution, any attempt by female characters is doomed to failure. Clara eventually falls victim to her misogynistic community and is attacked by acid. Clara, along with other women in the story, such as Jane, Penntloaf, Mrs. Hewett, and even Clementine, is doomed to oppression, and like nature, which was almost destroyed at that time, has no choice but to destroy her life, aspirations, and future.

In *New Grub Street*, oppressions are seen in a different way. The main character of the novel is Marian Yule, who is constantly dominated and exploited by her father, Alfred, a writer. She has to work for her father all the time and print the result of her work with her father's signature and present the income to her father. Marian is completely under the domination of her father. Even when she tries to marry Jasper, her love, she is strongly opposed by her father. Alfred Yule is a clear and complete symbol of patriarchy that does not tolerate the slightest change and freedom for women even his daughter. In patriarchy, you either have to be completely under the domination of the father or you have to disappear completely. Patriarchal culture has no flexibility:

I am not inclined to repeat what I have already fruitlessly told you. For the sake of a clear understanding, however, I will let you know the practical result of my dislike. From the day of your marriage with that man you are nothing to me. I shall distinctly forbid you to enter my house. You make your choice, and go your own way. I shall hope never to see your face again. (Gissing, 1891, p. 560)

Regardless of the repressive character of Alfred Yule, the main character of the story, Jasper Milvain, is the perfect symbol of the patriarchal society of the Gissing era. He is a proud and opportunistic young man, a lover of wealth without any moral principles. He is one of the most repressive and domineering characters in the story just like the urban society that had emerged at that time, and in order to increase its domination, it did not observe any moral restrictions and began to exploit nature and destroy it. Jasper initially oppressed his sisters. By receiving a lot of money from his mother, he actually brought hard life to his sisters. He also forced them to move to the city after the death of their mother and make a living by writing. This is while the girls themselves do not have the will in these decisions. Jasper's repressions do not end here. When he realizes that Marian's inheritance has been lost, he relentlessly abandons her and goes to her cousin Amy Yule to marry her because Amy's share of the inheritance was higher than Marian. Jasper is a symbol of patriarchal culture and society in which the identity, value and feelings of women are not important and only its personal benefit is important.

Speaking of oppressed women, Amy Yule is also noteworthy. Amy is loyal as a devoted woman who sacrifices all her desires to achieve her husband's wishes and stays with him until the last moment. Her husband Edwin is also a symbol of the oppressive man of 19th century society, who, despite his one-sided expectations and the economic pressures that bothers Amy, still blames Amy for his failures. Edwin has an ambitious and lazy personality who is not willing to give up pride and selfishness under any circumstances even the loss of his wife and child. Amy, who is at the peak of her beauty, sacrifices her desires to bring Edwin back to his heyday. She does not travel, she saves money and lies to everyone about her condition, but Edwin rebukes her despite all Amy's sacrifices:

'I have thought of something, dearest. Do as you proposed last year; find a tenant for the flat whilst we still have a little money, and then go away into some quiet country place, where you can get back your health and live for very little, and write another book—a good book, that'll bring you reputation again. I and Willie can go and live at mother's for the summer months. Do this! It would cost you so little, living alone, wouldn't it? You would know that I was well cared for; mother would be willing to have me for a few months, and it's easy to explain that your health has failed, that you're obliged to go away for a time.'

(Gissing, 1891, p. 270)

Strategies and solutions of female characters

Karen Warren sees ecofeminism as a way to get out of trouble, and not just as expressing the problem. She sees ecofeminism as a ring for the pursuit of global justice and environmental development. According to Karen Warren, “ecofeminism is not only a theoretical study of the oppression and domination of patriarchal society over women and nature, but also an attempt to develop practical strategies and practical solutions to replace the frameworks of repression and hegemony” (Cuomo, 2002, p. 9). Thus, according to Karen Warren, the efforts of women in Gissing novels who are a symbol of women during the Industrial Revolution and the peak of the era of destruction, exploitation, domination and oppression of the environment can be studied.

Women in *The Nether World* have different reactions to this onslaught of repression by society, but in general their strategy can be divided into three categories. Women who fight for their rights and do everything they can to save themselves from the pressure of this repression, women who align with patriarchy and oppress other women to achieve their goals and women who have already accepted defeat and find any effort to fight fruitless. But what Gissing shows at the end of the novels is the failure of three groups. That is, women, whether they fight or not, whether they try or not, will not succeed in defeating this patriarchal culture.

In *The Nether World*, the female protagonist is Clara. A beautiful and artist girl who does everything to achieve her dreams. Clara faces three types of oppression. The first type of oppression is patriarchal repression. Clara's father, John Hewitt, is a low-income, hard-working father. He plans to send Clara to an acquaintance's house to get paid for her work, but when he encounters Clara's interest in acting, he becomes very upset. Clara, who loves theater, resists and fights against her repressive father. With the help of her father's friend, Sidney, she runs away from home and joins a traveling theater group to move to Lancashire. The important point here is the presence of a strict and selfish father who, regardless of the interests and talents of his children, is only concerned with his own interests and earnings. Therefore, the existence of John Hewitt as the oppressive and patriarchal father is Clara's first enemy to fight:

She doesn't know, poor girl! Everything in the life she has been living is hateful to her - everything since she left school. She can't rest in the position to which she was born; she aims at an impossible change of circumstances. It comes from her father; she can't help rebelling against what seem to her unjust restraints. But what's to come of it? She may perhaps get a place in a large restaurant - and what does that mean? (Gissing, 1889, p. 146)

The other aspect that Clara is fighting against is a patriarchal society that now, after the destruction of nature, has done its best to grow and prosper by maximizing exploitation and domination and oppression to women in society. Clara's fears are clearly seen in city life and on city-to-city trips in the theater group. The difference that society makes between men and women can also be seen in the theater group. Mr. Peel, the symbol of this patriarchal society, is the head of the theater group, which, despite Clara's talent and ability, gives her a small role. Clara speaks to him with all her might so that she can play her favorite role, and she finally succeeds. But the third oppressor who destroys Clara's life is the presence of oppressive women. In other words, another group of women choose to accompany patriarchy in repressing other women in order to save themselves. With all her beauty, endurance, toughness and courage, Clara falls victim to her colleague Grace's acid attack and her artistic life ends forever. She fights all his life and believes that the only way to succeed in such a society was to fight. A fight that is doomed to failure and repression:

I should have thought you knew by this time that there's no such thing as friendship or generosity or feeling for women who have to make their way in the world. You've had your hard times as well as I, and what's the use of pretending what you don't believe? You wouldn't give up a chance for me; I'm sure I should never expect you to. We have to fight, to fight for everything, and the weak get beaten. That's what life has taught me. (Gissing, 1889, p. 293)

Speaking of oppressive women, Clem Pickover is one of the women who oppresses other women in order to achieve her goals and also to escape the pressure of patriarchal urban life. This type of character, which is also present in other works of Gissing, is a symbol of a group of women in society who choose oppressing other women and accompanying and helping patriarchy as a way of salvation and the main strategy of their liberation. But Gissing beautifully shows that such behavior is also doomed to failure, and perhaps a more disgraceful failure. Therefore, accompanying and helping patriarchy and oppressing other women as a strategy to save women and the environment is also rejected by Gissing.

Against the warrior and fighter characters, there are women who have already accepted their defeat. They consider resistance to the oppression of patriarchal society ineffective and make no attempt to liberate themselves. This causes them to remain silent about any repression and not to protest against it. They often value the demands and needs of the patriarchal system over their rights and strive to meet them. For example, one of the main characters of *The Nether World* is a young girl named Jane Snowdon, who, as mentioned, is suppressed in three ways. But she chooses the strategy of acceptance and accepts defeat without any protest or struggle. Although Jane could have made a good living with her inheritance, but since she accepts the oppression, she remains silent against her father's immorality and legal fraud, and is forced to work in a sewing shop to make living with the least facilities. The same thing happens to Pennyloaf Candy. She is also constantly insulted, humiliated, harassed and even beaten by his husband Bob. But she still takes

care of her children and tries to calm down the living conditions. And even when Bob is chased by the police, she stays with her until the last moment. Pennyloaf is also a symbol of a woman who, despite the pressures of oppression of patriarchy, never struggles and defends herself, as if she has accepted defeat in advance and considers any effort useless. At the end of the story, she is forced to work hard to provide for herself and her children. The women of *The Nether World*, like nature which is forgotten during the Gissing era, have been forgotten and just as the use of nature is merely for exploitation and domination for the growth of industrialization and the advancement of patriarchal life and culture, the presence of women alongside men in the family and society are only to help men and their situation, and any attempt at liberation from this conditions is doomed to failure. Gissing beautifully depicts the atmosphere of that day at the end of the story:

In each life little for congratulation. He with the ambitions of his youth frustrated; neither an artist, nor a leader of men in the battle for justice. She, no saviour of society by the force of a superb example; no daughter of the people, holding wealth in trust for the people's needs. Yet to both was their work given. Unmarked, unencouraged save by their love of uprightness and mercy, they stood by the side of those more hapless, brought some comfort to hearts less courageous than their own. Where they abode it was not all dark. Sorrow certainly awaited them, perchance defeat in even the humble aims that they had set themselves; but at least their lives would remain a protest against those brute forces of society which fill with wreck the abysses of the nether world (Gissing, 1889, p. 558)

The same can be said for the women in *New Grub Street*. The women in *New Grub Street*, like the women of *The Nether World*, are under intense patriarchal pressure in London society at the time. The growth of urban-rural migration, as seen at the beginning of the novel, leads to an increase in urbanization and, consequently, to the rise of men power in society. Likewise, men increase their pressure and domination over women. As mentioned earlier, Jasper Milvain is an oppressive, domineering, and utilitarian figure. The reactions and solutions of women in this novel are similar to *The Nether World*. A group of women fights and resists and tries to free themselves from this pressure. A group joins the patriarchy and oppresses other women to achieve their personal goals and a group already accepts defeat and always finds itself under the repression of the patriarchy of its society.

Marian Yule, Alfred Yule's only daughter, is facing severe oppression from her father. Alfred, who uses all of his daughter's energy and writing power, does not even allow her to publish her works with her own signature. Father's domination ends when he asks Marian to give him her inheritance from her uncle to start a magazine in his own name. But the important thing is that Marian does not finally give in to her father's repression and confronts him. Marian, who does not want to give up her love, prepares to move out of her father's house, like Clara in *The Nether World*. Marian confronts her father's repressions and argues with him fiercely. She reveals her serious decision to marry Jasper and use her inheritance:

My patience is at an end when I am treated as if I had neither rights nor feelings. However, wrong the choice I had made, this was not the way to behave to me. His disappointment? Is there a natural law, then, that a daughter must be sacrificed to her father? My husband will have as much need of that money as my father has, and he will be able to make far better use of it. It was wrong even to ask me to give my money away like that. I have a right to happiness, as well as other women (Gissing, 1891, p. 562)

Eventually, Alfred loses his sight and places the burden of the family on his daughter Marian. On the other hand, Marian's share of the inheritance is reduced to a very small amount, which changes the course of her life and her efforts to escape the pressure of her father's patriarchal domination and repression fail. Marian and her mother are doomed to failure in loneliness and poverty. Marian loses her fight like Clara.

Against Marian's character, it is her mother, Mrs. Yule, who has accepted and come to terms with this repression. Mrs. Yule, who is from a lower social class, is constantly insulted, humiliated and repressed by her husband. Although she is completely devoted to her husband and daughter and does not even see her own family, she is severely disrespected by Alfred. She is not even allowed to associate with Marian as a child because Alfred feared that the behavioral characteristics of the lower class would be passed on to Marian. This is exactly the oppression that Karen Warren states that patriarchy applies to gender, social class, and so on. However, Mrs. Yule acknowledges the oppressions. She is a symbol of women in a patriarchal society, who, despite making many sacrifices and being oppressed and dominated by men, never protest against these oppressions and do not take action to free themselves from the tyranny of patriarchy.

The London work-girl is rarely capable of raising herself or being raised, to a place in life above that to which she was born; she cannot learn how to stand and sit and move like a woman bred to refinement, any more than she can fashion her tongue to graceful speech. Mrs. Yule's behaviour to Marian was marked with a singular diffidence; she looked and spoke affectionately, but not with a mother's freedom; one might have taken her for a trusted servant waiting upon her mistress (Gissing, 1891, p. 117)

But the most important character that can be introduced as a combination of the two mentioned categories is Amy Yule, Marian's cousin and Edwin Reardon wife. Amy stayed with Edwin until the last moment of his life, despite all the pressures of city life, as well as his husband's misbehavior and oppression. She struggles to change her situation by lying to friends, lowering the current cost of living, providing comfort to Edwin, and even forcing him to travel. She continues to try until the last moment to change the situation, but when she fails, despite the difficulties of the divorce law at the time, she decides to separate from Edwin. The remarkable thing about Amy's personality process is that she accepts oppression in the first step and then changes her strategy to struggle. But by showing Amy marrying Jasper, who is a more repressive and domineering figure than Edwin, Gissing still considers Amy's efforts and struggles a failure. Amy did her best and paid a lot of cost and even lost her child, but just when she thought she was free and able to overcome the difficulties, she got into more trouble with her marriage to Jasper. It is as if Gissing tries to say that any attempt to defeat patriarchy in the urban industrial society is doomed to failure and that there is no escape from this sinister fate.

Conclusion

What is studied in this paper is the study of the oppression and domination of patriarchal society in George Gissing's two novels, *The Nether World* and *New Grub Street*, from Karen Warren's Ecofeminist perspective. What Karen Warren express is that Ecofeminism not only pays attention to the relationship between women and nature and not only shows that existence of oppression and domination of patriarchal society, but it also considers the strategies and solutions that women try

to free themselves from these oppressions and save nature and themselves. In this chapter, according to Warren's theory, we first try to study the relationship between women and the environment. Then, the existing oppressions and dominations of women and the environment, which were prevalent in the culture and industrial patriarchal society of 19th century London, are examined. What is studied in the final part of this chapter is an examination of the strategies that women in the story take to free themselves from patriarchy. What is certain is the existence of this connection in these novels between women and their environment and the existence of more and more oppressions of women in the absence of nature in the urban space. But Gissing, as the author of these novels, condemns the attempt to escape oppressing in a society that is far from nature and is on the verge of complete industrialization. In the absence of nature, women will be left alone, depressed, defeated and oppressed.

It can be concluded that according to Karen Warren's theory, ecofeminism examines the strategies and solutions that women use to save themselves and nature from a patriarchal society. From this perspective, women in *The Nether World* and *New Grub Street* fall into three categories. One group of women fight against the patriarchy of the industrial society of the 19th century, another group align with it to oppress other women and nature in order to achieve their personal goals and interests, and a third group already accept defeat. They accept and remain silent in the face of the oppression and domination of the men of society. Basically, a society that oppresses its nature and the absolute power is in the hands of the men of a civilized industrial society, its women are doomed to oppression in any way, whether they fight, whether they support the oppression, or whether they already accept defeat.

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