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38.A panoramic view of 'the New Woman' in Victorian literature

Neslihan GÜNAYDIN ALBAY¹

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Abstract

The great social and cultural changes in the Victorian period had a great impact on gender roles. In both public and private sphere, the divisions in gender roles started to disappear with the emergence of a type of woman willing to be active in every area of life. Along with more frequent appearance and growing numbers of women in the work force through the late nineteenth century Elaine Showalter's notion of "sexual anarchy" and its different forms were invigorated. How the social status of women started to change along with industrialization by the end of the nineteenth-century was also reflected upon Victorian literature. For instance, in *Mrs Warren's Profession* the protagonist Vivie represents the new woman type who is ambitious to get education and to participate in work life as a self-sufficient woman in Victorian drama. When compared with the traditional woman type, she is more free-minded, independent and career-oriented. In D. H. Lawrence' *The Rainbow*, Ursula, is another significant prototype for the 'new woman', who struggles for more freedom and independence. She is well-educated and it is very difficult for her to come to terms with her pregnancy as she cannot accept the fact that one part of hers belongs to a man. She is unconventional and rebellious. She counters domesticity. In *The Story of An African Farm* by Olive Schreiner the protagonist Lyndall's life story on an ostrich farm depicts the limited choices and living conditions of a woman constrained by the rigid conventions of Boer lifestyle. Her main goal in life is to pursue after her own choices. In *The Type-Writer Girl* by Grant Allen, Juliet Appleton stands out with some infamous characteristics of her identity as a New Woman, such as smoking cigarettes, attending college, travelling on her bicycle, and wearing rational clothing. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that working women had an unstable position at the end of the nineteenth century, based on all these trappings of the New Woman, and the intersection of gender with the discourses of class, evolution and technology through a feminist perspective. Social pressure and prejudices restrict the opportunities of the new woman to go beyond her capacity and reach real freedom and happiness. Therefore, the society mostly puts barriers in front of her ideals and her dreams. Through a feminist lens, this study reveals the fact that the new woman expects to live in a more democratic society where she is honoured with equal rights and opportunities with men. She rejects being completely dependent upon men finally, instead she adopts the idea of self-help to gain the respect she deserves as a self-sufficient woman.

Keywords: The New Woman, gender roles, feminism, Victorian period, patriarchy

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Viktorya dönemi edebiyatında 'Yeni Kadın' a panoramik bir bakış

Öz

Viktorya dönemindeki büyük sosyal ve kültürel değişikliklerin cinsiyet rolleri üzerinde büyük etkisi olmuştur. Hayatın her alanında aktif olmaya istekli bir kadın tipinin ortaya çıkmasıyla hem kamusal hem de özel alanda toplumsal cinsiyet rollerindeki bölünmeler ortadan kalkmaya başlamıştır. On dokuzuncu yüzyılın sonlarında Elaine Showalter'ın “cinsel anarşi” kavramı ve onun farklı biçimleri, iş gücünde artan sayıda kadının daha sık görünmesiyle birlikte canlanmıştır. 19. yüzyılın sonlarında sanayileşmeyle birlikte kadının toplumsal statüsünün nasıl değişmeye başladığı Viktorya edebiyatına da yansımıştır. Örneğin, Bayan Warren'ın Mesleği'nde baş karakter Vivie, Viktorya dramasında kendi kendine yeten bir kadın olarak eğitim almaya ve iş hayatına katılmaya hırslı yeni kadın tipini temsil eder. Geleneksel kadın tipine göre daha özgür, bağımsız ve kariyer odaklıdır. D. H. Lawrence'ın Gökkuşuğu adlı kitabında Ursula, daha fazla özgürlük ve bağımsızlık için mücadele eden "yeni kadın" için bir başka önemli prototiptir. İyi eğitim almıştır ve bir yanının bir erkeğe ait olduğunu kabul edemediği için hamileliğini kabullenmesi çok zor olmuştur. Alışılmadık ve isyankardır. Evliliğe karşı çıkar. Olive Schreiner tarafından yazılan Afrika Çiftliğinin Öyküsü'nde, baş kahraman Lyndall'ın bir devekuşu çiftliğindeki yaşam öyküsü, Boer yaşam tarzının katı gelenekleri tarafından kısıtlanmış bir kadının sınırlı seçimlerini ve yaşam koşullarını tasvir etmektedir. Hayattaki asıl amacı kendi seçimlerinin peşinden gitmektir. Grant Allen'ın Daktilocu Kız'ında Juliet Appleton, sigara içmek, üniversiteye gitmek, bisikletiyle seyahat etmek ve rasyonel giysiler giymek gibi Yeni Kadın kimliğinin bazı kötü şöhretli özellikleriyle öne çıkmaktadır. Bu makalenin amacı, tüm bu Yeni Kadın tuzaklarına ve toplumsal cinsiyetin sınıf, evrim ve teknoloji söylemleriyle kesişmesine dayalı olarak, 19. yüzyılın sonunda çalışan kadınların istikrarsız bir konuma sahip olduğunu feminist bir bakış açısıyla göstermektir. Toplumsal baskı ve önyargılar, yeni kadının kapasitesini aşma, gerçek özgürlük ve mutluluğa erişme fırsatlarını kısıtlar. Bu nedenle toplum çoğunlukla, ideallerinin ve hayallerinin önüne engeller koyar. Feminist bir bakış açısıyla, bu çalışma, yeni kadının erkeklerle eşit hak ve fırsatlara sahip olduğu daha demokratik bir toplumda yaşamayı beklediği gerçeğini ortaya koymaktadır. Sonunda erkeklere tamamen bağımlı olmayı reddeder, bunun yerine kendi kendine yeten bir kadın olarak hak ettiği saygıyı kazanmak için kişisel gelişim fikrini benimser.

Anahtar kelimeler: Yeni Kadın, cinsiyet rolleri, feminizm, Viktorya dönemi, patriyarki

A Panoramic View of 'The New Woman' in Victorian Literature

Introduction

Throughout history patriarchal vision and ideologies have influenced social constructions of gender and reinforced gender stereotypes that affirms the dominance and superiority of men over others, more particularly women. Plato equates being a woman with being a slave considering the living conditions of both ironically. On the other hand, based on his patriarchal visions Aristotle asserted that “the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules and the other is ruled. Another ironic criticism of the so-called weak side of women was made by Shakespeare in his popular play *Hamlet* with a focus on the “frailty” of women in a reference to all of womankind: “Frailty, thy name is woman” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*). He identified being a woman with frailty with a reference to her vulnerability to seduction. However, under the influence of modernisation and democratic societies, many leading female writers challenged patriarchal ideology and visions of domination with their landmark works.

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Primarily, Mary Wollstonecraft defied patriarchal ideology with her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792. Later, Virginia Woolf opposed patriarchal ideology with her *A Room of One's Own* in 1929. Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) distinctly depicts the unequal and unfair treatment women were exposed to while seeking for jobs, education, and solutions to their various problems about marriage and motherhood. In *The Second Sex* Simone de Beauvoir objected to patriarchal ideology in 1949. Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), has a significant part on the depiction of women in D.H. Lawrence's novels, while Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1969) stresses that gender is constructed by society. Feminism is "a point of view that rejects the definition of all human experiences as masculine, and is concerned with the belief that women are unjustly more disadvantaged and oppressed than men" (Iannone, 2001: 219). Likewise, Hooks analysed this movement as "feminism is a movement that seeks to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression" (Hooks 2016: 9) and asserted that feminism is a movement that aims the liberation of all gender identities from patriarchal social structures.

According to Işıklı, the belief that men and women are not equal, that women are at a lower level than men in terms of reason, and that their duty is only the care of the house, children and their spouses, has excluded women from all the pursuits of the public sphere (Işıklı 2014: 6). However, along with more frequent appearance and growing numbers of women in the workplace through the late nineteenth century Elaine Showalter's notion of "sexual anarchy" and its different forms were invigorated. Women were struggling to gain access to higher education and to the workplace, while feminist reform legislation enabled married women to improve their legal status and rights (Showalter 1990: 7). Some critics characterize the protagonist of the New Woman novel who "challenges social norms and conventional morality in order to achieve her own fulfilment – sexual, artistic, intellectual, or otherwise" (Miller 1994: 15). Jil Larson depicts New Woman novels as "waver[ing] between evoking admiration for these New Women and the new ethics of possibility that they bring to their relationships, and judging them for turning their backs on a traditionally feminine ethics of care" (Larson 2000: 167). Furthermore, for the new woman "marriage is no longer the goal toward which everything inevitably tends" (Larson 2000:159).

When we examine Victorian period more specifically, we observe that rigid categorization of gender roles in Victorian society made females of all ages exposed to oppression and demotion, while they contributed to the elevation of men to high positions of supremacy in all fields of human activity. In Victorian England the woman was considered the "angel in the house", who changed the home into a safe harbour for her husband and children to maintain their traditional roles. During this period some distinguished female writers dealt with the concept of "woman" with a criticism of the oppressive dominance of patriarchal authority over women in their works. Women who are oppressed, humiliated and degenerated owing to the hypocritical aspect of patriarchal societies throughout history experience a developmental process from a descent through an ascent in social position and professional sphere in the second half of the nineteenth-century. Traditional woman type victimized by a patriarchal system which treats women as second-class citizens in society by forcing her to submission and making her involved in a corrupted world inevitably as a result of low life standards, such as poverty, misery and lack of satisfaction in stereotypical gender roles was replaced by the new woman type, who defies conventionality just to lead her own life herself without any gender discrimination in public and domestic sphere. Generally, feminism was "... the struggle that women have started by creating solidarity among themselves against the norms and values of the male- dominated world and against the policies of sexualist" (Mitchell 1995: 6 - 7).

The ideal image of woman depicted by the patriarchal system triggered all stereotypical representations of women. Women were urged to assume all the attributions made to their nature as they were made to believe that they had these characteristic traits by birth. They were men's properties exposed to abuse and misuse, since they were overwhelmed by laws and marriage vows ironically. They did not have enough freedom or privacy to do anything without their husbands' permission as if they were the property or puppets of their husbands. Under the English common law, a woman had a disadvantageous position in a marriage because she could not do anything without her husband's permission as referred by John Stuart Mill in *The Subjection of Women* (Mill 1986: 21). For instance, Staves refers to the marriage and property-sharing relationship of the period and indicates that "the right of the husband over the property of his wife was given to him as a result of marriage through his wife" (Staves 1990: 52). The ideology which separates the roles and duties of men and women in daily life with certain lines assigned the woman the mission of managing her house, and being devoted to her husband while it assigned the man the mission of being the "breadwinner" and participating in politics in the public sphere. In this perspective, the woman is emotional, while the man is rational. Moreover, the woman is identified with obeying and submission, whereas the man is associated with commanding. There is such a belief that if each gender does not perform their roles properly, individuals will be confronted with only confusion and disorder. Depicted as "the angel in the house", the typical Victorian woman acquired domestic sainthood with a spiritual elation. On the other hand, Walby expressed that patriarchy could be defined in separate sections such as housework, male violence, heterosexuality, economic and political level, and that patriarchy was embedded in all social structures and institutions (Walby 1991: 20), in a reference to gender inequality. Religious references and resonances also contributed to the creation of the cliched woman portrayals. The bondage of the woman was consecrated by the Victorian image of the female as an angel in charge of protecting the home as a shelter from the corrupting or corrosive outer world.

How the social status of women started to change along with industrialization through the end of the nineteenth-century was also reflected upon Victorian literature. In *Mrs Warren's Profession* by George Bernard Shaw the protagonist Vivie represents the new woman who is ambitious to get education and to participate in work life as a self-sufficient woman in Victorian drama. When compared with the traditional woman type, she is more free-minded, independent and career-oriented. This play was received as "unpleasant" by the bourgeois public as Shaw decries the vices of capitalist society through it. Shaw's career started unappreciated as a dramatist, considering that this play was banned due to its subject matter and frank discussion of prostitution. The depiction of the play as immoral and degenerate stemmed from its glorification of prostitution according to some critics. Vivie is free-minded and rebellious, when compared with the traditional woman type. She challenges her mother who is involved in the business of prostitution and tries to justify herself by blaming the conditions. Vivie's moral codes and perception of morality are apparently different from her mother. She supports women who stand up for themselves by earning their own money. In addition, her mother's and her aunt's uncomfortable working conditions depicted the social reality of the working-class, that is, underpaying and overworking women of the period. At that time, women worked for a very small amount of money for long hours under unsanitary working conditions at the cost of their lives most of the time. They resorted to prostitution because of restricted social conditions and the lack of proper employment area. Mrs Warren is a conventional woman in her way of thinking. She asks "who is to care for me when I'm old?" (Shaw 1893: 70). However, Vivie is quite harsh and ironically defends her own rights against her mother who pays for her high education in this way: "I am my mother's daughter. I am like you: I must have work, and must make more money than I spend. But my work is not your work, and my way not your way. We must part" (Shaw 1893: 70). Very critical of her mother's morals and life philosophy, Vivie expresses her

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reaction to women's traditional roles and her mother's conflicting manners definitely: "I should not have lived one life and believed in another. You are a conventional woman at heart. That is why I am bidding you goodbye now" (Shaw 1893: 71). Talking to her mother bluntly, Vivie is unwilling to meet her mother for any reason any longer by stressing the fact that her beliefs contradict with her deeds and life experiences. Giving an account of her sister's pathetic end, Mrs Warren draws attention to the miserable living and working conditions of the period like that: "One of them worked in a white lead factory twelve hours a day for nine shillings a week until she died of lead poisoning. She only expected to get her hands a little paralyzed; but she died" (Shaw 1893: 44). It is evident that this kind of tragic end as a result of severe and unjust working conditions in which women were overworked, undervalued and underpaid urged some women to prostitution as a means of livelihood. Nonetheless, it is not a valid excuse for her mother to justify herself about her immoral profession as it was a matter of choice and preferences in life. The prudish daughter, Vivie asserts that everybody is responsible for their own choices and implies that it is up to them to lead a moral or immoral life as a consequence of their preferences. According to Vivie, people acquire the success they expect in life if they search for and create the required circumstances, instead of accusing the circumstances of their failure or immoral lifestyles.

Vivie declares her independence at the end of the play. She is a woman committed to her moral codes. No matter who or what it is, she is persistent in defending what she believes in. She hates her mother's duplicity and hypocrisy. Thus, she disowns her mother. The new woman cannot be slaved by social conditions easily. Femininity and domestic life are overshadowed by work life as it is obvious from Vivie's rebellious words: "if I took your money and devoted the rest of my life to spending it fashionably, I might be as worthless and vicious as the silliest woman could possibly want to be without having a word said to me about it. But I don't want to be worthless" (Shaw 1893: 69). These words refer to the fact that the new woman expects to live in a more democratic society where she is honoured with equal rights and opportunities with men. She rejects being completely dependent upon men finally, instead she adopts the idea of self-help to gain the respect she deserves as a self-sufficient woman.

Representing the new woman depicted also as "unwomanly woman" or "the desexualized half-man" in feminist theory, Vivie experiences conflicts with her conventional mother. This conflict between generations with the advent of the New Woman showed how gender roles were changing through the end of the Victorian age. "By the early nineties the disjunction created the most profound gap of the nineteenth century between mothers and daughters. The older generation of mothers, Womanly Women, were confronted by a new generation of daughters, the New Women" (Wood 1972: 172). A career-oriented woman, Vivie shows her reaction to domesticity and womanliness as a result of her passion for learning and desire for justice and equality both in education and workplace. Even if she starts to work in a company, Vivie is not allowed to plunge into the male-dominated business field which requires the law degree. Despite all these frustrating conditions and barriers for women's desires and dreams within the patriarchal society structure, Vivie shows strong power of will to stand on her feet without any financial help from her mother and parts ways with her forever.

In D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow*, Ursula, is another significant prototype for the 'new woman', who struggles to acquire more rights, and more space of freedom and independence. She believes that she must gain her place in the business world and be a well-known member with equal rights as men there. She is determined not to be a slave or captive in this tyrannical male-dominated world. In this novel Lawrence aims to subvert patriarchal narratives by defying the accepted role of women as the appendage of man. Despite his father's controlling behaviours, extreme expectations from her and feeling smothered by the pressures of her upbringing, Ursula prefers being independent like her mother. She is

successful at school and interested in Christian religious faith. Her ideal to be a good Christian is foiled by Christian lifestyle restricted by religious norms and values. She does not favour giving up all individual freedom while practicing Christian faith. She is well-educated and it is very difficult for her to come to terms with her pregnancy as she cannot accept the fact that one part of hers belongs to a man. She questioned: "The child bound her to him. The child was like a bond round her brain, tightened on her brain. It bound her to Skrebensky. But, why did it bind her to Skrebensky? Could she have not a child of herself? Was not the child her own affair? All her own affair? What had it to do with him? (Lawrence 1915: 464). Ursula is unconventional and rebellious in nature. She claims: "I believe there are many men in the world one might love—there is not only one man" (Lawrence 1915: 888). She counters domesticity. It is obvious that women want more in time, as confirmed by the lifestyles of Lydia, Anna and Ursula respectively in *The Rainbow* as progressive Victorian new women. Likewise, Lawrence underscores the changing roles of women and men in social life with a focus on women's broadened horizon:

For her, as for Maggie, the liberty of woman meant something real and deep. She felt that somewhere, in something, she was not free. And she wanted to be. She was in revolt. For once she were free she could get somewhere. Ah, the wonderful, real somewhere that was beyond her, the somewhere that she felt deep, deep inside her. In coming out and earning her own living she had made a strong, cruel move towards freeing herself. But having more freedom she only became more profoundly aware of the big want. She wanted so many things. She wanted to read great, beautiful things, and be rich with them; she wanted to see beautiful things [...] and there remained always the want she could put no name to (Lawrence 1915: 883-884).

In the novel the conflict of love and hate between men and women is evident. They cannot understand each other because of the communication gap. The man is fond of the earth, that is, materialistic world, while the woman longs for the infinite world. Not pleased with the lifestyle they are presented, women strive to create their ideal world. Exploring female sexuality with her mastery of psychological complexity, Lawrence compares Ursula's lifestyle with the lives of traditional women, based on socially-constructed gender assumptions and portrays what the ideal life for a woman is like in the eyes of society: "She would marry and love her husband and fill her place simply. That was the ideal (Lawrence 1915: 448-9). While discussing about love and marriage and the position of woman in marriage, Maggie put forward that "love was the flower of life, and blossomed unexpectedly and without law, and must be plucked where it was found, and enjoyed for the brief hour of its duration" (Lawrence 1915:888). However, Ursula is not satisfied with Maggie's comment as she thought that she still loved Anton Skrebensky. She could not forgive him because he had not been courageous and strong-willed enough to acknowledge her. He had clearly denied her: "How then could she love him? How then was love so absolute? She did not believe it. She believed that love was a way, a means, not an end in itself, as Maggie seemed to think. And always the way of love would be found. But whither did it lead? (Lawrence 1915:888). Social pressure and prejudices restrict the opportunities of the new woman to go beyond her capacity and reach real freedom and happiness. Society mostly puts barriers in front of her ideals and her dreams. Giving an account of the lifestyles of the Brangwen family's three generations, *The Rainbow* deals with the individual struggle of female characters to acquire fulfilment within the confines of their social life. In the last but most popular part, the book focuses on Will and Anna's daughter, Ursula's life story. Trying to find herself and be herself in life, Ursula Brangwen feels passionate love for Anton Skrebensky, who is an independent and free-willed man keen on his own decisions. She continues loving him for many years although he went to Africa to fight in the Boer War. Tom Brangwen's granddaughter, Ursula attends the college and becomes a teacher in the industrial world of Britain. She is very enthusiastic about education and starting working life and taking her place there. She takes different language classes and studies intensively just to fill the gap inside her. This blind desire to conquer the

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world of knowledge and reach significant qualifications always whipped up her wish to take her place in the world.

However, her struggle to seek for fulfilment for the desires of her passionate and sensual life against the materialist society around her fails. She cannot reach the fulfilment she longed for in her physical relationship with Anton. Even if Anton returns after 6 years and urges her to accompany him to India, she rejects his offer as she has lost her belief in him. Upon her refusal, Anton decides to marry another girl, which makes her forlorn and devastated. When she falls down a horse one day, she experiences miscarriage. Soon after this unfortunate event, she is filled with hope and motivated to begin life anew. Her vision of a rainbow heralds a new beginning for women and all people: "she saw in the rainbow the earth's new architecture, the old, brittle corruption of houses and factories swept away, the world built up in a living fabric of Truth, fitting to the over-arching heaven." (Lawrence 1937: 474). The title "rainbow" has an allegoric meaning for characters in terms of stages of life. Symbolically it is like a doorway opening for more promising days in the future for characters. For Ursula the rainbow represents the freedom from social and religious restrictions as well as the beginning of a more colourful and hopeful life. Dealing with the issues of conflicts, intense love and power struggles between family members at home, the book sheds a light on the impacts of sexually stormy marriages on the individuals fluctuating between happiness and sadness, and going through life and love according to their own conditions.

A self-supportive and self-educated writer, Olive Schreiner spoke for female emancipation in her works. *The Story of An African Farm* by Olive Schreiner portrays the rural life in the nineteenth-century South Africa with a critical eye on the strict Boer social conventions. Using the pseudonym "Ralph Iron", the author Olive Schreiner was exposed to both praise and negative feedbacks out of her unusual feminist and anti-Christian outlook on religion and marriage. Showing a parallelism to Schreiner's childhood memories on the deserted South African veld, the protagonist Lyndall's life story on an ostrich farm depicts the limited choices and living conditions of a woman constrained by the rigid conventions of Boer lifestyle. Portrayed as "the first wholly serious feminist heroine in the English novel" (Showalter 1984: 199), the protagonist Lyndall was the prototype of the new woman that was identified with Schreiner herself was vulnerable to the prejudices of her age as a woman. Her main goal in life is to pursue after her own choices. For instance, she favours having a child out of wedlock. She rejects the institution of marriage. However, as if she were condemned or punished by society because of this rebellious attitude, Lyndall dies in childbirth at the end of the novel. She portrays how gender roles are constructed by society and emphasizes how they dominate our life. Especially women are in charge of such a noble mission as child-bearing that they have great influence on all human beings regardless of their gender no matter how much they are criticized for doing it ill according to Lyndall's views:

They say women have one great and noble work left them, and they do it ill. – That is true; they do it execrably. It is the work that demands the broadest culture, and they have not even the narrowest [...] she must have knowledge of men and things in many states, a wide catholicity of sympathy, the strength that springs from knowledge, and the magnanimity which springs from strength. We bear the world, and we make it. The souls of little children are marvellously delicate and tender things, and keep for ever the shadow that first falls on them, and that is the mother's or at best a woman's. there was never a great man who had not a great mother—it is hardly an exaggeration (Schreiner 1971: 193).

Idealizing the expectations of "the new woman" and her dreams of freedom, Lyndall realizes her disempowerment as a woman as a result of her passion for learning and the double standards women encounter. While this situation fires her feminist motives on the one hand, it makes her hopeless and

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frustrated on the other hand. She explicates: “men are like the earth and we are the moon; we turn always to one side to them, and they think there is no other, because they don't see it - but there is (Schreiner 1971: 199)”. She was disappointed with the situation of female education at Boarding Schools as it thwarted her desire for knowledge and only instils weakness and imbecility on them. These schools prevented her from improving herself further. Once she burned the window frame for the girls to escape in order to see Otto, which referred to her feminist struggle and activism in life. However, she was not satisfied with the spark she ignites as it was not strong enough to inspire and to leave a permanent mark on them. It soon disappears just like the death of herself at the end of the novel. She deplores how little she achieved for women's cause. She opposes the socially-constructed idea that women are weak and vulnerable in nature and they are devoid of capacity, knowledge and physical strength required for social labour. She emphasizes: “suppose a woman, young, friendless as I am, the weakest thing on God's earth. But she must make her way through life. What she would be she cannot be because she is a woman; so she looks carefully at herself and the world about her, to see where her path must be made. There is no one to help her; she must help herself” (Schreiner 1971: 215-16). While giving a list of the difficulties women must overcome, Schreiner invites them to struggle encouragingly.

The new woman is depicted to be “an advocate of free love” (Allen, 1895), while she opposes family and legal marriage. Likewise, the unwomanly woman Lyndall prefers a life of free love. She declares: “I am not in so great a hurry to put my neck beneath any man's foot; and I do not so greatly admire the crying of babies” (Schreiner 1971: 184). She does not hesitate to meet social disapproval for the sake of her freedom. She elopes with her lover and then separates from him when she realizes their love is consumed. She depicts a man's love as “a fire of olive-wood” that roars and blazes every moment and then turns into a few ashes suddenly (184). Driven to loneliness and abandonment, Lyndall cannot find anyone equal to her in mind and heart. She is of the opinion that “marriage for love is the beautifullest external symbol of the union of souls; marriage without it is the uncleanliest traffic that defiles the world” (Schreiner 1971:190). Instead of submitting to an imperfect marriage, she prefers to lead her life as a pregnant fallen woman. Finally, her little girl baby dies, which adds more to her unhappiness and gloomy predictions over a love marriage under specific conditions. She favours a great and pure love to liberate her instead of a binding, oppressive one. She considers marriage as something that will tie her down. She is strictly against children and the institution of marriage. She dares to marry a man only if he serves and submits to her without any expectations. Lyndall's death at the end of the novel also has a symbolic meaning that refers to the dilemmas and vicious circles in women's lives. For the representative of the new woman, Lyndall, love, family and marriage are agreeable as long as they do not restrict her freedom. She can survive only in a world where gender equality is provided. It is essential that women reconstruct constrained social roles and contribute to social life under the same conditions as men. The problems of the new woman can only be solved by more enlarged social rights and liberties in the face of oppressive social roles, duties and masculine boundaries. Lyndall experiences the conflicts of being the new woman and reflects her dilemma about loving somebody sincerely with her unmanly manners and emotionally weak side like that:

‘I'm so tired. There is light, there is warmth’, she wailed; ‘why am I alone, so hard, so cold? I am so weary of myself! It is eating my soul to its core – self, self, self! I cannot bear this life! I cannot breathe, I cannot live! Will nothing free me from myself?’ ... I ‘I want to love! I want something great and pure to lift me to itself! (Schreiner 1971: 241-42).

Lyndall feels so helpless that she looks for a saviour that will help her to get rid of this suffocating patriarchal life. However, she does not lose her hope for love. By addressing her cousin Em, she asserts: “One day I will love something utterly, and then I will be better ... no one helps us, no one understands

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us; but we will help ourselves.' (Schreiner 1971: 242) Lyndall plays the role of a mouthpiece for Schreiner's feminist ideas in the novel. Even if she is portrayed as an attractive girl who meets the traditional standards of beauty and femininity as the object of male gaze, Lyndall feels overpowered by social pressure and expectations. Schreiner aims to overthrow the male gaze by making readers aware of Lyndall's thoughts and feelings about how she is perceived and what she is expected as a woman.

Writing under a female pseudonym in *The Type-Writer Girl*, Canadian writer Grant Allen probably intended to gain credibility for his first-person female narrator. Focusing on the tensions regarding evolution, modernisation, technology and the role of women at the end of the nineteenth century, Allen introduces the main characteristics of her central character Juliet Appleton as the "New Woman". Well-read and well-educated, Juliet feels an urgent need to earn her own money in a lonely life she is leading with her type-writer, her bike, and her dog after her father's death. She wears baggy trousers and enjoys the freedom of cycling. The book gives an account of her adventurous life in pursuit of freedom despite some negative experiences.

In *The Type-Writer Girl* by Grant Allen, Juliet Appleton stands out with some infamous characteristics of her identity as a New Woman, such as smoking cigarettes, attending college, travelling on her bicycle, and wearing rational clothing. Based on all these trappings of the New Woman, and the intersection of gender with the discourses of class, evolution and technology, working women had an unstable position at the end of the nineteenth century. Juliet Appleton was first employed at a law's office to make her own way after the death of her father, but she could not stand the irritating behaviours of her colleagues and employer. Later, she finds a chance to work for a publishing company as a type-writer girl as she was compelled to stand on her own feet. After she falls in love with her employer, she comes across some complications. Juliet, who is "a thinking woman, with heart, soul, brain, courage—a woman who could face life full of intrepid self-reliance" (Allen 2004: 119), turns out to be a victor in her struggle for life. She is "the fittest" to survive in accordance with the evolution theory. As a modern and highly developed figure of the New Woman, Juliet desires the freedom of a poor life and the respectability of the middle class in a gentlewoman status at the same time.

Having an audacious nature, Juliet is of the opinion that men are "no longer ardent" and "grow shy of marriage" (Allen 2004:112). Juliet can adapt to her environment better than "insipidly fair" Michaela, who is depicted as weak physically and mentally (Allen 2004:67), in contrast to braver and stronger Juliet. As opposed to Juliet's general belief on men's preference of "medievally shivering", Mr. Blank does not like fragile, conventional woman type. Representing mid-Victorian feminine conventionality, Juliet's angelic foil, Michaela "is not the fittest in the struggle for existence and therefore cannot be the most highly-evolved woman. Juliet, the "abnormality," is healthier, stronger, and more attractive to the late nineteenth-century man." (Allen 2004:13) Actually, Allen disproves his own evolutionary view of woman, considering Michaela, not Juliet will become Mr. Blank's wife. This requires sacrifice on Juliet's part. Mr. Blank and Michaela are more alike than more socialist and egalitarian Juliet in respect of class consciousness. Furthermore, believing that there is considerable difference between feminine and masculine writing, Juliet thinks that *the Odyssey* is an "epic of the imagination and mystery", whereas *the Iliad* is an "epic of fact" in which everything has sharp, definite outlines as a feature of a masculine poem (Allen 2004: 24). Her appropriation of *the Odyssey* for the sake of her own aims and her indirect comparison of herself to wily hero, Odysseus are reinforced with her figurative cross-dressing. "Juliet's identification with a male hero and Allen's female pseudonym initiate an elaborate web of transvestism that make gender boundaries unstable from the outset" (Allen 2004:11).

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Conclusion

All these female characters victimized by the patriarchal system in their own period have their own stories to tell and literature has become a platform and a strategy to resist the system and undermine the patriarchal construct of gender in male-dominated grand narratives. These literary works attempted to deconstruct the taken-for-granted assumptions about women and subvert the patriarchal hierarchy. Educated middle-class women gained the new woman position by going through a transformation from their traditional roles through a more liberalistic lifestyle at the end of the nineteenth century. The enhancement of their social status and rights enabled them to be active outside the home by encroaching on men's sphere. Their challenge of conventionality was for the sake of their struggle to be the master of their own life. With more modern views they wanted to be as influential in public sphere as in domestic sphere although they were exposed to social pressure about unsexing themselves by appearing more in paid work like men. Their participation in workforce and more employment opportunities for them later reinforced their "new" status and independence in the whole world. In this paper I tried to demonstrate how the New Woman played a leading role in changing the lives of women from enslavement in domestic life through emancipation and independence in every sphere of life, at least with the same rights as men without any discrimination by reading fiction in light of a feminist theory and methodology. Social expectations conflict with the desires and ideals of the new woman. The new woman is not pleased with restricted living conditions that she was condemned to. Thus, she prefers being challenging and inaccessible in meeting social standards or expectations. In this sense, the position of the woman in late-Victorian period was re-examined through implicit and explicit references in Victorian fiction.

Despite their frustration in love, marriage and relationships, their new profile as the "new woman" turned out to be for the better in the long run, considering the improving social conditions of late-Victorian women in the subsequent years. They were outstanding with their ideals about education, economic independence, getting married just for love, equality for both gender and social usefulness. They prepared the ground on which women of the next generation will expand in order to acquire more prominence in social, political, and economic sphere. They devoted themselves to women's emancipation and for this purpose they risked even their own happiness. Their principal goal was to be recognized as humans first and then to reach freedom and opportunities equal to men in late-Victorian Britain. What made them new was their original ideas, stupendous courage, and transcendental attempts to open the door to a whole new world for women. The new woman was offended by oppressive, anti-liberalist policies of male-dominated Victorian society. She felt alienated in this discriminatory world as she could not find a proper place and partner for herself, meeting her sublime dreams and progressive ideas. Even though her singular ideas and distinguished status were ignored or suppressed most of the time, the new woman did not give up on her dreams and cause.

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