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An Ecofeminist Reading of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892)

Charlotte Perkins Gilman'ın "Sarı Duvar Kâğıdı" (1892) Adlı Eserinin Ekofeminist Bir Okuması

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Abstract: Ecological problems have always existed in the world so far, and they seem to exist for a long time in the future. Various approaches emerged in literature to raise awareness against ecological problems. Ecofeminism integrates ecology and feminism into one and seeks to draw parallels between the exploitation of the environment and the exploitation of women. Ecofeminism, which emerged as a new literary-critical approach trying to put the women and the ecological problems in the centre of the universe, occupies an important place together with other ecocentric approaches. Recently, most studies have focused on Charlotte Perkins Gilman's contribution to feminism. In literature, the relative importance of feminism has been subject to considerable discussions, and few studies have investigated the works related to women's issues from an ecofeminist perspective. The specific objective of this study to analyse Gilman's short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892) from an ecofeminist perspective. This study uses a descriptive qualitative and library research method in data collection. Data were collected from primary and secondary sources. While primary data was obtained from Gilman's short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper", the secondary data was collected from various books, journals and research articles. The study consists of two main parts. In the first part of the study, some brief information about feminism and ecofeminism and the historical background of these two literary-critical approaches will be given. The second part of the study will focus on Gilman and her short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" and this work will be handled from an ecofeminist perspective.

Structured Abstract: This study aims to handle Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper" from an ecofeminist perspective. Ecofeminism is a new movement in literature designed to establish a relationship between women's issues and environmental problems to be able to raise awareness against both women's issues and ecological problems. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method and library research in data collection. Data were collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected from Perkins Gilman's short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper", and the secondary data was collected from various books, journals and articles related to ecocriticism, ecofeminism, Gilman and her work "The Yellow Wallpaper". The ecofeminist features of this work will be analysed by giving references to the primary and secondary sources.

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The present study consists of two main parts. In the first part, some brief information about the process that varies from feminism to ecofeminism will be discussed. In this context, after focusing briefly on the first, second and third waves of feminism, the historical process and the scope and the objectives of ecofeminism will be discussed. In the second part of the study, after focusing on Gilman's contribution to literature, her short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892) will be handled from an ecofeminist perspective. How the writer made connections between women's issues and ecological problems will be discussed.

The influences of ecological problems have been felt for centuries. However, as a result of the technological developments and the negative influences of the Industrial Revolution, ecological problems began to be felt more intensely. These problems will certainly be more discernible in our experiences in the future if required precautions are not taken to create awareness against these problems. In this respect, it is crucial to create awareness, because these problems cannot be solved by ignoring or underestimating them. Literature may assist other scientific disciplines and play a significant role in creating awareness and coming up with solutions against ecological issues because of its capacity to appeal to large masses.

Recently, there have been increasing interests in ecological and women problems. The previous centuries brought about rapid developments in ecological and women's issues. Ecofeminism as a subgenre of ecocriticism advocates that women's issues are directly related to ecological issues. It assumes that the oppression of women and the ecological system cannot be thought differently. In addition to the feminist movement, ecofeminism aims to draw attention to the exploitation of nature as well as the exploitation of women. It combines feminism and women's issues with ecology and ecological problems in creating social awareness against both ecological and women's problems. Ecofeminism claims that patriarchy is the only cause of exploitation of women and ecology. Ecofeminism, which centres women and the ecology at the focal point of the universe, states that the solution to both problems will be achieved through associating ecological problems with women's issues.

According to ecofeminists, patriarchal society utilises women and nature constantly as a means of productivity. Patriarchal society divides the society into two as public and private spheres between two genders. While women are considered to be fully integrated with the private sphere, men are demonstrated to be fully integrated with the public life, which is considered to be superior to the private sphere. In addition, women are considered to be identified with the natural world that should be dominated and exploited by men in a male-dominated patriarchal society. In such a world, while women are oppressed by men, nature is oppressed and exploited by humanity. As a new perspective, ecofeminism may assist to come up with solutions to both ecological and women's problems.

Previous studies only focused on Gilman's contribution to the feminist movement. This study is different from the previous studies because it tries to handle Gilman's short story from an ecofeminist perspective, and additionally, this study tries to find the reasons for both women's issues and ecological problems stemming from patriarchal social values. Gilman was among the most influential women writers who contributed significantly to American Literature with her feminist tendencies in her works. She especially dealt with women's issues in her works and made important contributions to the feminist movement in her age.

Throughout the work, the anonymous woman protagonist looks out of the window of the house, in which she feels imprisoned, and she describes the mansion, the rooms, the colour of the wallpaper, and outdoors. With these descriptions, the anonymous woman narrator tries to make connections between herself and her environment. In "The Yellow Wallpaper" some conspicuous points, such as the woman narrator's lacking a proper name, her isolation from the public sphere and imprisonment in a colonial mansion, the dominance of the woman narrator's husband, and his ignoring and being indifferent to woman narrator's demands, men's making use of their prestigious professions that make them dominant figures in their relations with women, woman narrator's suffering from psychological problems soon after her giving birth to a child and the increase in the mental problems of woman narrators due to ill-treatment and confinement in a nursery will be focused on, and these points will be endeavoured to be interpreted from an ecofeminist perspective. Furthermore, similar connotations, such as the problems the woman narrator faced in the work and nature in real life due to the men's oppressive treatments in a patriarchal society allow this work to be handled from an ecofeminist perspective.

Keywords: English Language and Literature, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper", ecocriticism, ecofeminism

Öz: Ekolojik sorunlar geçmişten günümüze kadar dünyada her zaman var olmuştur ve gelecekte çok uzun süre varlığını devam ettirecek gibi görünmektedir. Edebiyat alanında ekolojik sorunlara karşı farkındalık yaratmak için çeşitli yaklaşımlar ortaya çıkmıştır. Ekofeminizm, ekoloji ile feminizmi bir araya getirmektedir ve çevrenin sömürülmesi ile kadınların sömürülmesi arasında paralellikler kurmaya çalışmaktadır. Kadını ve ekolojik sorunları evrenin merkezine koymaya çalışan yeni bir edebi-eleştirel yaklaşım olarak ortaya çıkan ekofeminizm, diğer ekomerkezci yaklaşımlarla beraber önemli bir yer tutmaktadır. Pek çok çalışma Gilman'ın feminizme katkısına odaklanmıştır. Edebiyatta, feminizmin göreceli olarak önemi önemli tartışmalara konu olmuştur ve çok az kadın meseleleriyle ilgili çalışmada ekofeminist bir bakış açısıyla incelenmiştir. Bu çalışmanın özel amacı, Gilman'ın "The Yellow Wallpaper" (Sarı Duvar Kâğıdı, 1892) adlı eserini ekofeminist bir perspektiften analiz etmektir. Bu çalışmada, veri toplanılmasında niteliksel ve kütüphane araştırma yöntemi kullanılmaktadır. Veriler birincil ve ikincil kaynaklardan elde edilmiştir. Birincil veriler Gilman'ın "The Yellow Wallpaper" adlı eserinden alınırken, ikincil veriler ekofeminizm ile ilgili çeşitli kaynak kitaplardan, dergilerden ve araştırma makalelerinden elde edilmiştir. Çalışma iki ana bölümden oluşmaktadır. Çalışmanın ilk bölümünde, feminizm ve ekofeminizm hakkında kısa bilgi verildikten sonra, bu iki edebi-eleştirel yaklaşımın tarihsel arka planı ele alınacaktır. Çalışmanın ikinci bölümünde Gilman ve onun kısa öyküsü "The Yellow Wallpaper" (Sarı Duvar Kâğıdı, 1892) üzerinde durulacak ve bu çalışma ekofeminist bakış açısıyla ele alınacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "Sarı Duvar Kâğıdı", ekoeleştiri, ekofeminizm

Introduction

Humanity suffered from ecological problems throughout history for numerous reasons. The roots of ecological problems date back centuries ago. These problems became to be felt globally after the Industrial Revolution because humanity started to use nature as an unlimited and inexhaustible source of energy. Today, the most important causes of environmental problems are the armament race, nuclear tests, rapid population growth, unplanned urbanization, excessive water consumption, pollution and excessive carbon dioxide emissions. Humanity with anthropocentric approaches ignore the ecological problems and is reluctant to bring solutions to these problems. Sarah E. Boslaugh defines anthropocentrism as follows:

"Anthropocentrism, philosophical viewpoint arguing that human beings are the central or most significant entities in the world. This is a basic belief embedded in many Western religions and philosophies. Anthropocentrism regards humans as separate from and superior to nature and holds that human life has intrinsic value while other entities (including animals, plants, mineral resources, and so on) are resources that may justifiably be exploited for the benefit of humankind" (Boslaugh, 2016).

Boslaugh suggests that the anthropocentric approach centres the humans at the centre of the universe in many Western religions and philosophies. Since human beings are considered superior to other entities such as animals, plants minerals etc, they do not seem to have any responsibilities in their relations with these entities. Human beings believe that they have the rights to exploit other marginalised nonhuman beings. Güngör states that since human beings are considered to be at the centre of the universe in anthropocentrism and the nonhuman entities have been marginalised, nonhuman entities are considered to be mere tools created to serve the well-being of human beings (2020b: 360). Since humanity is an inseparable part of the ecosystem, it should not be ignored that the anthropocentric approach harms not only nonhuman entities but also human beings.

Güngör & Erkan state that the early reactions against the marginalization and the instrumentalization of nature can be found in American nature literature. Nature writers, such as Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Edward Abbey, Wendel Berry, Annie Dillard, Barry Lopez and Terry Tempest, stated in their works that all living beings were parts and important elements in nature. These authors like many other nature writers emphasized that human beings

should not be considered separate from the natural world (2020: 27). Among the works that dealt with ecological problems and made precious contributions to the emergence of ecological criticism in literature was Leo Marx's work, *The Machine in the Garden* (1964). This work examines the relationship between technology and culture in America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Güngör & Erkan, 2020: 29).

These early contributions of nature writing help the emergence of ecocriticism as a new and ecocentric approach attempting to bring the ecological problems into the agenda of literature. Ecocriticism brought an ecocentric point of view in opposition to the anthropocentric approaches. Ecocriticism suggested that an ecocentric approach should be adopted instead of an anthropocentric approach. Ecocriticism occurred as a reaction against all kinds of anthropocentric approaches as Güngör states as follows:

“Ecocentrism occurred as a reaction against all kinds of anthropocentric approaches and one of the most influential approaches criticizing and opposing the master and possessive roles of human beings in the world. Ecocentric approach rejects all kinds of views which centre humanity at the centre universe” (2020b: 361).

Glotfelty & Fromm (1996) state that ecocriticism, which can be defined as the study of the connection between literature and the physical environment in the most general terms and has been applied to literary texts since the 1990s, offers an ecocentric approach to the studies in the literature. Ecocriticism is a literary and environmental study, which concerns observing the environment and producing solutions to ecological problems from various aspects. Before ecocriticism was widely used as a new term in literary criticism, the environment was only used to mean the social environment of human beings. Since the human being is considered to be at the centre of the universe according to the dominant anthropocentric point of view, the most important thing is uniquely the interests of humanity. In this respect, mostly the material interests of humanity are taken into consideration in human-nature relations. However, with an ecocentric approach, not only the interests of human beings but also the interests of all marginalised nonhuman beings in the whole ecosystem started to be taken into account.

From Feminism to Ecocriticism

Since ecofeminism emerged from the feminist movement, it will be beneficial to touch on the feminist movement and its historical background briefly before handling the developmental process of ecofeminism. Wright (2018: 86) states that feminism is perceived incorrectly and thought that it demands only political, economic and social rights for women. Feminism is a movement opposing gender discrimination by defending the necessity of eliminating all kinds of oppression against women in public and private areas. In the eighteenth century, women started to fight against the inequalities in many areas, such as social, political, legal and administrative areas, and their roles in society. Feminism advocates the idea that women or men, regardless of gender, should have equal political, economic and social rights. Feminism aims to ensure gender equality in social, cultural, political, legal and working areas and opposes the assumed roles as wives, mothers and daughters (Taş, 2016; Akalın & Baş, 2018, Şentürk, 2020). Nowadays, the feminist movement, which reached its peak in the mid-1990s, crosses the borders and continues to affect millions of people all over the world.

The historical process of feminism can be divided into three main waves covering the period from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries. First-wave feminism emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Women started to make their presence felt and voices heard in society with first-wave feminism. They struggled for the right of voting for women. As Cova states the first-wave feminism officially started at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 when three hundred men and women came together to fight for equality. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, one of the pioneers of this

first-wave feminism, prepared the Seneca Falls Declaration summarizing the ideology and political strategies for the new movement (2012: 560-561).

The second-wave feminism emerged in 1963 with Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. However, before the publication of Betty Friedan's work, *The Second Sex*, written by Simone de Beauvoir in 1949 was among the reference books in feminism and gender studies, and it was considered as a significant source of inspiration for second-wave feminism (Kolay, 2015: 8). In the 1940s, family life was compulsory, and in the 1950s women were expected to get married and had a family life. Second-wave feminists opposed the role of housewife and motherhood determined by the patriarchal social values. They supported the participation of women in public life by leaving their private spaces. Second-wave feminism mainly focused on women's sexuality. Besides, for the first-wave feminists, sexuality, contraception, and abortion were indestructible taboos, but these issues became feminists' fundamental demands in the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1960s, the sexual revolution was made possible (Cova, 2012: 561).

The third-wave feminist movement started in the 1990s. Most women involved in feminism in these years began to sympathize with identity feminism that gave more importance to differences. This was a break with second-wave feminists. In second-wave feminism, facts such as race, identity, sexual orientation, class discrimination, ethnic and cultural structure were not included in women's struggles. During this period, feminists did not only criticize the current situation of women, but they tried to develop women's alternative perspectives on some issues, such as war, security, economic development, underdevelopment, environmental problems, social equality, respect for social groups, and equality in society. The third-wave feminists mainly criticized the patriarchal social order, but could not find any common approaches that allowed any solutions to the existing problems (Taş, 2016: 171-172).

Ecofeminism was derived from "ecoféminisme", which was first used Françoise d'Eaubonne's concept in 1974. Ecofeminism commenced to be applied to literary works in the 1970s (Buell, 2005: 139; Zhang, 2020: 42). Tasneem (2020: 847) states that ecofeminism takes its energy from the feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s to create a change, and Tan (2020b: 344) states that "Ecofeminism is a subgenre of ecocriticism that came into existence within the second wave of ecocriticism". As Tan quotes from Bennett "ecofeminists shared the belief that feminism alone ignored many other issues and was not comprehensive sufficient to meet the needs of its supporters" (2020a: 13). From these statements, it can be deduced that ecofeminism tries to unite two different spheres, women's issues and ecological problems, under one roof as ecofeminism to be able to reflect women's issues and ecological problems in literary fields.

As Tan quotes from Bennett (2020a: 14) "ecofeminism consists of two distinct characteristics: holism and the annihilation of hierarchy". Holism affirms that all living beings in the world are strongly related to one another. According to ecofeminists, hierarchy, which is additionally associated with patriarchy, is regarded as the most important cause of social and ecological problems, because the "oppression of women and the environment are interconnected" (Tan, 2020: 344). Val Plumwood, in her book *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, states that the white male elite class, which is accepted as the sovereign in the Western culture, domineers on nature and women and excludes both women and nature. According to this view, nature and woman are valuable as long as there are resources available for the use of the domineering white male elite (1993: 22-23). Another important ecofeminist critic, Carolyn Merchant, in her *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and Scientific Revolution*, argues that ecology and feminism must be melted into a melting pot. In her work, Merchant stated that men identify nature with women and treat nature just as they treat women (1993: 185). In patriarchal societies, women are culturally and ideologically accepted as the "other", and inferior to men, and they should be controlled by men in all fields. Ursula K. LeGuin expresses the point of view of the men in the patriarchal society in her work as follows:

“Civilized Man says: I am Self, I am Master, all the rest is other--outside, below, underneath, subservient. I own, I use, I explore, I exploit, I control. What I do is what matters. What I want is what the matter is for. I am that I am, and the rest is women and wilderness, to be used as I see fit” (1989: 45).

According to Catherine Roach, in this social structure, women are identified with nature and perceived as part of the nonhuman and only half-human. Likewise, nature is perceived as a virgin resource to be used or raped as a feminine, half-human nature of the women (1996: 56). From these perspectives, it can be deduced that ecofeminism accuses the patriarchal social structure as the cause of both gender and ecological problems. Ecofeminists affirm that patriarchy dominates both women and the ecosystem creating pressure upon both women and the ecosystem. According to the ecofeminists, the subordination of women is directly associated with the subordination of the ecosystem. Therefore, there was a need for a new approach to establish a close link between women’s issues and ecological problems. According to Çetin (2005: 1), ecofeminists suggest that a non-gender ecological revolution is necessary for the liberation of nature and women. Ecofeminism does not try to impose women’s power in place of men’s power, but they try to use the female factor in the reconstruction and reshaping of the deteriorated social order.

Ecofeminism ascertains the interconnection between the domination of women and the ecosystem. As Zhang (2020: 43) states “ecofeminists are not merely concerned with liberating women and nature, but they also care about the whole planet with all its creatures, including human and nonhuman”. They argue “that there is a connection between the oppression of women and the domination of nature by a patriarchal society” (Zhang, 2020: 43). It is a fact that for centuries women have shared the same fate with nature since both have been despised and humiliated in a male-dominated patriarchal society. Ecofeminists claim that men systematically suppressed, humiliated and exploited the feminine nature. “Unless women are saved, the future of humans” will not be saved (Zhang, 2020: 43).

Ecofeminist Reading of “The Yellow Wallpaper” (1892)

Before focusing on the ecofeminist points in “The Yellow Wallpaper”, it will be beneficial to give some brief but important details about the work. The story of “Yellow Wallpaper” is narrated by an anonymous woman narrator. Initially, it is indicated that the woman narrator and her husband, John are about to move to a colonial mansion for the summer. John makes the decisions to move into that mansion because he considers that it will be beneficial for his wife’s health who suffers from nervous depression following the birth of their baby. The story significantly focuses on the relations between the woman narrator and her husband. John underestimates the woman narrator’s depression and he insists that she will get better with some rest without worrying about her illness. The woman narrator criticizes her husband because he deliberately is always indifferent to her demands. John is determined to force his wife to implement his decisions without questioning when he decides to move into a large room with ugly yellow wallpaper. The woman narrator enquires about her husband if they can move downstairs because she dislikes the colour of the wallpaper and finds the room a bit queer. However, John always ignores her and rejects her demands. The woman narrator’s psychological depression intensifies gradually after the social distancing and her confinement in the room with hideous yellow wallpaper. She sleeps all day long and stays up all night to stare at the wallpaper until she begins to believe that there is a woman hidden in the wallpaper. A few days before their departure from the mansion, John stays overnight in town and the woman narrator sleeps in the room by herself to stare at the wallpaper all night long. After John returns from the town and tries to enter the room, but the woman narrator refuses to let him in. Soon after John manages to enter the room, he faints after finding his wife crawling on the floor.

Gilman is considered to be the earliest pioneers of the feminist struggling for women’s rights throughout her life. As Özyön states that “Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper” is

among these protofeminist works bearing feminist connotations" (2020: 116). In the previous centuries, it was believed that society was sharply divided into two, such as public and domestic spheres. The domestic sphere was closely associated with women, while the public was reserved only for men. Owing to her radical notion, she was ahead of her time. Before the publication of prominent feminist writer Simone de Beauvoir's works, Gilman argued that women were oppressed by the male-dominated social structure, and she objected to the exclusion of women from public life and imprisonment in their houses in many of her nonfiction. In "The Yellow Wallpaper", she criticized the polarization of the gender-based public / private sphere that allowed men to monopolize public activities and imprison women in the domestic sphere. She argued that gender discrimination should have been avoided. As Rady (2018) suggested, Gilman openly supported the notion that there should have been only one common human sphere instead of two divided as men's or women's sphere.

Most studies have focused on Gilman's contribution to feminism. In literature, the relative importance of feminism has been subject to considerable discussions, and few studies have investigated the works from an ecofeminist perspective. The specific objective of this study to analyse Gilman's short study, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892) from an ecofeminist perspective. In "The Yellow Wallpaper", the problems and the oppression of Gilman's woman narrator resemble the causes of ecological problems. Similar to the oppression and the underestimation of nature in a patriarchal society, Gilman's woman narrator is underestimated and oppressed by her husband in the male-dominated society. Tasneem summarises the general view of ecofeminism and its attempt to connect women's issues with ecological problems as follows:

"Ecofeminism fuses ecology and feminism into one and seeks to draw parallels between the exploitation of the environment and the exploitation of women. It believes that the earth is interconnected, and nature does not recognize human boundaries. It holds that one of the reasons for the destruction of the Earth is that patriarchy only values the masculine traits of conquering and dominance and devalues the 'feminine traits of life-giving and nurturing. The patriarchal culture has been habitual to see women and nature as 'objects'" (2020: 846).

It is especially striking to notice that the woman narrator is not given a proper name by the author, because the author may wish to demonstrate that women are recognised as objects in a patriarchal society. Although there are many strongly felt striking feminist inclinations from the beginning to the end of the work, such as the woman's going insane (Notaro, 1999: 60), the power and the dominance of the patriarchy and the struggle of the female for freedom (Özyön, 2020: 116) etc, the short story starts with the most striking detail: the woman narrator of the work does not have a name. Gilman uses an anonymous woman narrator as a protagonist in "The Yellow Wallpaper" to reflect the notion that male-dominated patriarchal society ignores the identity and the existence of women in public life. There were deep inequalities between genders in public life. In the patriarchal family structure, women together with young men, children, slaves and domestic servants have to live a life under male domination. Bo (2018: 1500) states "In a male-dominated society, all the authoritative rights belonged to men in the fields of politics, economy, law, religion, education, military". The relations between an anonymous woman narrator and John, whose profession and name are particularly emphasised, reflect that in a patriarchal family system, men rule and dominate all the members of the family. In "The Yellow Wallpaper", the male-dominated social structure's influence on women characters, especially on woman narrator's, can be deeply felt from the beginning to the end of the work. The woman narrator constantly feels the power and pressure imposed by the male characters in this work. Gilman reflects this pressure at the beginning of the work by not giving the woman character a proper name unlike the men characters to emphasize men's crucial and indispensable roles in both social and family lives.

Both nature and women are given certain roles in a patriarchal society. Woman's biological capability of giving birth is used as a means of reproduction. As nature is given harm in fulfilling its reproduction role, the woman narrator begins to suffer from mental depressions soon after giving birth. Both women and nature are sacrificed for contributing to the male-dominated social structure's interests. Similar to human beings' turning a deaf ear to the ecological problems, John does not pay any attention to the woman narrator's mental problems. Besides, though men are recognized as the only authorities by society to find solutions to the ecological or women problems, they could not fulfil these roles properly. Instead of finding solutions to the problems faced by women and nature, men are the root causes of the problems. It can be deduced from these implications that men are speciesist in their relations with nature and sexist in their relations with women. When handling this work from an ecofeminist approach, the aforementioned issues will be taken into consideration.

Contrary to the woman narrator in the work, Gilman gives names to male characters, and more importantly, the male characters, John and the woman narrator's brother in the work have prestigious occupations. Particular emphasis is given to the professions of the male characters. The woman narrator deliberately repeats her husband's occupation in many parts of the work: "John is practical in the extreme. He has no patience with faith, an intense horror of superstition, and he scoffs openly at any talk of things not to be felt and seen and put down in figures. John is a physician (Gilman, 1892: 647). In addition, she highlights her brother's occupation as follows: "My brother is also a physician, and also of high standing..." (Gilman, 1892: 648). They seem to enjoy their natural rights to make decisions on the woman narrator's behalf since they assume that men belong to a privileged gender and they have occupational opportunities according to the patriarchal values. The woman narrator expresses that she seems to agree with this situation as she states: "John laughs at me, of course, but one expects that in marriage" (Gilman, 1892: 647). As Bo (2018: 1500) states "in most male's mind, they earned more money than females so they had the privilege to abuse and scold their wife and children". This prestigious occupation provides them superiority in their relations with women. Both the woman narrator's husband and her brother use their occupations to abuse and scold the women. John, the woman narrator's husband, always makes his domination felt through making decisions on her behalf. In this context, the anonymous woman narrator cannot react against her husband when he makes decisions on her behalf, because she is forced to obey by social norms that her husband makes the best decisions.

In this way, Gilman resumes giving her messages just at the beginning of the work. Gilman implies that women are not only excluded from public life, which is only reserved for men but furthermore their identities are completely denied. She suggests that in a male-dominated patriarchal society, women are ignored and used as tools for reproduction, similar to the use of nature as a limitless source of energy for material interests. The relations between men and women in this short story evoke the relations between humanity and nature. For men, neither nature nor women do not have any identities or importance unless they are productive, and therefore beneficial for the men's sakes.

Another striking point in the short story is the setting of the work. The setting of the short story is playing a great role by its effects on the woman narrator. The story takes place in a colonial mansion. When the anonymous woman narrator gives her impressions about the house, she states that it is "a colonial mansion, a hereditary estate, I would say a haunted house..." (Gilman, 1892: 647). Gilman emphasizes that the setting of the place is a colonial mansion, resembling the colonial past implying the relations between the colonisers and colonised lands. The characters can be divided according to their gender. In this respect, the man represents the colonisers and the woman narrator represent the colonised lands. The woman narrator's imprisonment in this colonial mansion is implicitly associated with slavery and exploitation. Just as the colonisers exploit both the people and the natural resources of the colonised lands, John dominates his wife by shutting her into this mansion. Like the enslaved and impoverished colonised lands, the woman narrator loses her freedom.

Even though she always expresses her dissatisfaction and there is something up as follows: "That spoils my ghostliness, I am afraid, but I don't care - there is something strange about the house - I can feel it" (Gilman, 1892: 648), she cannot react against such exploitations and imprisonment and makes herself heard due to her passive situation in the public sphere.

Each gender has their own roles in patriarchal societies. Gender roles have always existed, especially due to fundamental physiological differences between men and women. While public life is reserved only for men, women are imprisoned in a domestic environment defined as a private space. There are some roles set for women. What is expected from women is to be good mothers and wives. "In the history of patriarchy, females took serious duty to bear and bring up children. They should obey male thoroughly" (Bo, 2018: 1500). Pregnancy, childbearing and nurturing and education of the children are among the expectations from women. As Güngör states women were always encouraged to be virtuous. "Angel in the house" was a symbol to define the women in the previous centuries. The writers in the eighteenth century like Samuel Richardson gave examples of how to become a virtuous woman in their works (2020a: 72). The symbol of "angel in the house" has been influential for centuries. The women, who fulfil these established roles properly, have been praised by society, whereas the women who could not become good wives and mothers have been criticized severely. Gilman's woman narrator in the short story represents the women, who do not conform to the rules and do not fulfil their motherly duties. She is not the angel in the house, but as Özyön states "she becomes the opposite, the madwoman in the attic (2020: 117). With this character, Gilman revolts against all kinds of roles set by the patriarchal social system.

Since men earn money, they assume the role of the head of the family, while women are considered to be engaged in housework and serve as housewives. In such a patriarchal social structure, women are expected to be productive. Likewise, there are some expectations from nature in male-dominated patriarchal social systems. Nature must be productive and meet the expectations of the patriarchal social structure. Nature is forced to be more productive. "Besides, females and nature were both dominated by males in different aspects. In man's view, they were the king of the family, and everything was up to them" (Bo, 2018: 1500). Similarly, since men are put at the centre of everything in a patriarchal society, moreover they consider themselves kings in their relations with nature. Both women and nature are used as tools owing to their fertility and productivity in a male-dominated society. Both women and nature are expected to obey the rules imposed by the patriarchal social structure. Nature and women should be submissive and contribute to a male-dominated society with their capabilities of being fertile and productive, while men always demand this fertility and productivity.

The woman narrator had a healthy life before giving birth, but soon after giving birth she experiences serious mental disorders. Postpartum emotional disturbances can be regarded as a reaction against the expectations of the patriarchal society. Similarly, it can be stated that ecological problems occurred as a revolt of nature against the expectations of human beings. For example, in the short story, the garden, once described as vivaciously, is now described as an abandoned place. In this way, Gilman draws an analogy between the woman narrator and the garden as follows: "There were greenhouses, too, but they are all broken now" (Gilman, 1892: 648). The garden, which was once a perfect garden, is now depicted as gloomy and abandoned just like the woman narrator. The deep shadows the woman observes when she looks through the window, the old-fashioned flowers and the pruned trees resemble men's intervention. Trees were not freed but suppressed and pruned. Like the aforementioned plants and bushes in the garden, the woman herself feels suppressed and pruned.

Another remarkable point in the short story is John's indifference to her wife's demands. Whenever the woman narrator tries to discuss her problems, John never pays attention to her, or underestimates her problems and expresses: "There is nothing so dangerous, so fascinating, to a

temperament like yours. It is a false and foolish fancy. Can you not trust me as a physician when I tell you so" (Gilman, 1892: 652)? In this way, he always abuses the privileges and the authority given to him by the patriarchal society. It is possible to notice this disdainful attitude from the woman narrator's following expressions: As it can be observed from her statement, for John, the woman's thoughts are impossible, or even absurd that he only ridicules and laughs at her statements. Since the narrator woman's statements are always simplified or even ridiculed by her dominant husband, she prefers keeping silent. As the woman narrator states, "You see he does not believe I am sick!" (Gilman, 1892: 647). Like many other Victorian women, she is forced to be silent because she is not heard by the opposite sex in any way. She is sure that she will never be able to attract her husband's attention, so she does not even cry when she is with her husband: "I cry at nothing, and cry most of the time. Of course, I don't when John is here, or anybody else, but when I am alone" (Gilman, 1892: 650). The woman is so emotionally weak that she cannot even express John her own opinions. John represents an institutionalized control over his wife. His domination always exists and can be felt in every period of the woman narrator's life. She is treated as a subordinate of John.

Whenever the woman narrator expresses her unhappiness and mental problems, John brings up her financial problems. In a way, John forces her wife to obey his orders when he expresses, they have to stay in that colonial mansion. What matters for John is not his wife's mental health, but his material interests. They have paid for the mansion and leaving it earlier means more financial loss for him. "Why, darling!" said he, "our lease will be up in three weeks, and I can't see how to leave before" (Gilman, 1892: 650). When the woman expresses that she does not like the colour of wallpaper, that there are some oddities in the room and wants to move another room in the mansion, he does not listen to him or even laughs at what she expresses: "I suppose John never was nervous in his life. He laughs at me so about this wall-paper" (Gilman, 1892: 649)! It is not the health of the woman that matters to the man, but his material interests. As a doctor, or in other words, as someone who has authority over a woman. Although he offers psychological or spiritual healing, he fails. John is unable to fulfil his duty and abuses his authority because John is indulged in material interest instead of healing his wife's health problems. The woman narrator is completely hampered by the measures.

When this situation is interpreted from an ecofeminist perspective, it can be assumed that while women are endeavouring to be cured with the application of useless drugs and pressure due to mental disorders she has to suffer after giving birth, a similar application is in use for nature in using machinery and chemicals in farming to increase productivity and fertility of the soil. Men ignore that such practices cause lifelong problems for both women and nature. However, the patriarchal social structure has always been able to find a persuasive way to silence and suppress both women and nature. This demonstrates that the male-dominated social structure does not take women's problems or ecological problems into their agenda, and additionally, these issues are only ridiculed even when they are mentioned. In this context, it is possible to integrate women with nature; men do not care about the reactions of both women and nature. Men exploit selfishly without thinking whether these applications will harm women and nature. Besides, men shut their ears to the reaction of both women and nature and laugh at them. Human beings do not care about ecological reactions. Just as human beings feel up to exploit women, they feel up to exploit nature. The only thing expected from both women and nature is to passively accept all practices which will not bring any solution to their problems and hope to be able to recover despite everything. Even if women and nature realize that their situation is getting worse, they neither find the strength in themselves to express themselves nor have the belief that men will consider their reactions.

Gilman tries to give the message that men, the only authoritative power in society do not take into account any problems as long as they are not disturbed by these problems financially. They ignore the problems by adopting an egocentric and sexist attitude towards women and a speciesist attitude towards nature. It is possible to state that similar to the ignorance of the women's issues in a

patriarchal society, the ecological problems are ignored by the same authorities. In the male-dominated social structure, both women's and the ecological problems are underestimated and not taken into account as long as their effects are felt in the capitalist economies.

The short story is ending with a pessimistic note. The woman tears the wallpaper and begins to crawl on the ground with the woman who was imprisoned in the wallpaper, and then her husband comes and faints at the sight she observes. Then the woman begins to crawl on her husband. "And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back! " Now why should that man have fainted? But he did, and right across my path by the wall, so that I had to creep over him every time" (Gilman, 1892: 656)! Just like the anonymous woman in the story, in the future, nature will be unable to withstand this patriarchal exploitation and will react more. Nature can destroy humanity who exploits all resources in response to all these damages. There is an undeniable similarity between the woman who reached the point of madness and the world that reached the apocalyptic point. In this respect, when a solution is to be found, it is necessary to change the male-dominated, speciesist, sexist and class-based social structure, and to find solutions to both women's problems and natural problems with a more egalitarian social structure.

Conclusion

Ecological problems have always existed as a result of financial worries, especially after the Industrial Revolution, because nature began to be used as a source of energy and it was exploited after the Industrial Revolution. In their relations with nature, human beings demonstrated an anthropocentric and speciesist attitude. In literature, ecocriticism emerged as a reaction against the exploitation of nature for financial worries of the capitalist economic system. They tried to create awareness in the world and recall the human beings that all living things should be equal including human beings. They have an ecocentric approach in their handling the issues in literature. They endeavour to give voice to nonhuman beings in the world. They are against the marginalisation of nature. For them, human beings should accept that they are a part of the ecosystem like the other living or non-living entities.

Ecofeminism as a subgenre of both ecocriticism and feminism combine the words eco and feminism to indicate that patriarchal society exploit the women and ecological system and therefore, they developed an approach against injustices against ecology and women. In this short story, Gilman gives a message that a male-dominated society ignores women's problems. When this work is read from an ecofeminist perspective, it can be deduced that not only women's problems but consequently ecological problems are derived from the patriarchal system, which marginalises both women and nature. It can be said that nature has to face a lot of problems similar to the woman narrator in the work who has to struggle against mental problems. From an ecofeminist perspective, the solution to this problem is obvious: To find solutions to these problems, both woman and nature should be given a voice and respected. Otherwise, the reaction of women and nature will be very tremendous and its bad impacts cannot be repaired unless required precautions are not immediately taken. Nature should be free without human interruption. Like the woman narrator in the short story, nature will go insane. Both women and nature should be valued and their problems should be reflected in the social agenda. Otherwise, nature will react against all kinds of pressures at a higher level. It can be deduced that nature's reaction will not be positive at all for the future of humanity.

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