



Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences

Department of English Language and Literature

**THE RISE OF FEMALE CONSCIOUSNESS IN  
GEORGE EGERTON'S SELECTED SHORT  
STORIES WITHIN THE CONCEPT OF THE NEW  
WOMAN**

Nurbanu ATIŞ

Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2016

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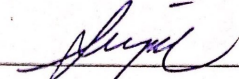
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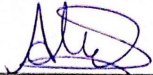
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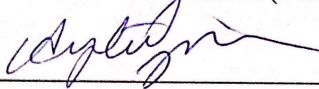
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## KABUL VE ONAY


Nurbanu ATIŞ tarafından hazırlanan "The Rise of Female Consciousness in George Egerton's Selected Short Stories Within the Concept of The New Woman" başlıklı bu çalışma, 21.09.2016 tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucunda başarılı bulunarak jürimiz tarafından Yüksek Lisans Tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.

  
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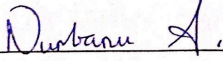
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- Serbest Seçenek/Yazarın Seçimi

27/12/2016  
Nurhan ATİŞ

## ÖZET

ATIŞ, Nurbanu. ‘Yeni Kadın’ Kavramı Çerçevesinde George Egerton’ın Seçilmiş Kısa Hikayelerinde Kadın Bilincinin Yükselişi. Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2016.

Sanayi devrimi ile birlikte Britanya’da önemli sosyal, edebi ve ekonomik değişimler ve dönüşümler meydana gelmiştir. Kadının durumu, bunlar arasında en önemlilerden biridir. Sınıfları ve sosyal durumları ne olursa olsun Britanyalı çoğu kadın, isteyerek veya istemeyerek, içine doğdukları toplumun ataerkil kuralları tarafından onlara dayatılan itaatkar rolü kabul etmek zorunda kalmışlardır. Kadınların toplumdaki erkeklerle eşit haklara ve pozisyonlara sahip olma isteğinin, kadınların erkekleşmeye başlaması ya da ötekileştirilmesi ile sonuçlanacağı, o dönemde üretilmiş ve kabul gören bir düşüncedydi. Dahası, benzer şekilde, kadınlar iş gücünü desteklemek amacıyla erkeklerin alanına girdiğinde, erkekler ile eşit maaşa ve haklara sahip olamadılar. Çalışmaya ve kendi paralarını kazanmaya başladıklarında ve ekonomik özgürlüklerini ellerine aldıklarında, kadınlar kendi yeteneklerinin farkına vararak eşitlik talep ettiler. Bu farkındalığın bir sonucu olarak, Ondokuzuncu Yüzyıl’da ‘Yeni Kadın’ kavramı ortaya çıktı. Bu ‘Yeni Kadın’, önceki kadınlara kıyasla daha yetenekli, daha dışa dönük ve dolayısıyla daha özgürdü. Bu kavramın bir yansıması olarak, aynı kapsayıcı terim ‘Yeni Kadın’ adı altında, yeni bir edebi akım ortaya çıktı. Bu akımın yazarları, kahramanlarını orta sınıf ya da işçi sınıfı kadınlar arasından aldılar. Eserlerinde kadın kahramanları ve bu kahramanların geleneksel cinsiyet rollerine karşı olan savaşlarını konu aldılar. George Egerton (1859-1945) da bu ‘Yeni Kadın’ akımının en önemli temsilcilerinden biridir. Britanya’nın ve Britanya kolonilerinin, ayrıca birtakım Avrupa ülkelerinin farklı kesimlerinde hayatı deneyimlemiş biri olarak Egerton, eserlerinde Viktorya Dönemi kadınının farklı koşullarını yansıtmaktadır. Bu tezde savunulan, yazarın kadın kahramanlarının, bu dönemin cinsiyet rollerine ve kadın cinselliğine olan bakış açısına meydan okuduğu ve bu meydan okuma sırasında da, okuyucuya cinsiyet rollerinin yapaylığını sorgulattığı düşüncesidir. Dolayısıyla, bu tezin başlıca amacı Viktorya Dönemi Britanya’sının sosyal ve siyasi arka planı bağlamında ‘Yeni Kadın’ kavramını tanıtmak ve bu akım çerçevesinde Egerton’ın, “The Marriage of Mary

Ascension: A Millstreet Love Story,” “An Empty Frame,” “Now Spring Has Come,” “A Cross Line,” “At the Heart of the Apple” ve “The Regeneration of Two” başlıklı kısa hikayelerini incelemektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** George Egerton, Yeni Kadın kavramı, cinsiyet rolleri, kadın bilinci, Viktorya sosyal değerleri



## ABSTRACT

ATIŞ, Nurbanu. *The Rise of Female Consciousness in George Egerton's Selected Short Stories Within the Concept of 'The New Woman'*. Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2016.

With the Industrial Revolution, remarkable social, literary, and economic changes and evolutions emerged in Britain. The condition of women was one of the most important one. Regardless of their class and social positions, most British women, willingly or unwillingly, had to accept their subservient roles which had been imposed on them by the patriarchal rules of the society in which they had been living. It was a constructed and accepted thought at that time that provided women who asked for equal rights and positions with men in society, it would result with either their masculinization, that was not supported, or marginalization. Furthermore, similarly, when women entered into men's domain to supply for labour force, they could not achieve equal payment and rights with men. When they began to work and earn their own money and achieved their economic freedom, they demanded equality which was the result of women's realization of their own capacities. As a consequence of this realization, 'the New Woman' concept emerged in the nineteenth century. This 'New Woman' was more able, more extrovert, and thereby freer than her antecedents. As a reflection of this concept, a new literary movement emerged under the same umbrella term 'the New Woman'. Writers of this movement created their characters from middle class or working class women. In their works, they presented female heroines and the fight of those heroines against traditional gender roles. George Egerton (1859-1945) is also one of the representatives of 'the New Woman'. Having lived in different parts of Britain and its colonies and also in other European countries, she reflects different conditions of Victorian women in her works. The argument here is that the female protagonists of Egerton challenged the Victorian view of gender roles and female sexuality, and while they are challenging, they also lead the reader to question the artificiality of these gender roles. Accordingly, the major aim of this thesis is to introduce the concept of the New Woman in relation to the social and political background of Victorian Britain, and to analyse the representation of "New Woman" in George Egerton's selected short stories: "The Marriage of Mary Ascension:

A Millstreet Love Story,” “An Empty Frame,” “Now Spring Has Come,” “A Cross Line,” “At the Heart of the Apple” and “The Regeneration of Two.”

**Keywords:** George Egerton, the New Woman concept, gender roles, female consciousness, Victorian social values

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## INTRODUCTION

There is a New Woman, and what do you think?

She lives upon nothing but Foolscap  
and Ink!

But, though Foolscap and Ink form  
The whole of her diet,

This nagging New Woman can never be quiet!

--*Punch* 1894

George Egerton (1859-1945), originally named Mary Chavelita Dunne Bright, is one of the most debated female authors of the Victorian Period (1837-1901) with her challenging ideas as opposed to the established norms and gender roles. Born in Melbourne (Australia) and raised in Dublin (Ireland), she is the “daughter of a mother of Welsh descent whose maiden name [is] George and an Irish Father, John Joseph Dunne” (Nelson 7). Due to the unstable occupation of her father, who serves as soldier in the British Army and then works as a captain (Jusová, “George Egerton” 28), she experienced financial difficulties in her childhood and adolescence period. However, as a daughter of a captain, she found a chance to travel “with her parents to New Zealand, Chile, and Wales before reaching Ireland, where the family lived until the mother’s death” (Jusová, *The New Woman* 50). After her mother’s death, she becomes the mother figure of her family by taking care of her younger siblings and her father, and also striving to survive despite the poverty she experiences (Nelson 7; Jusová, *The New Woman* 50-51). At the age of eighteen, she is sent to Germany to attend a Roman Catholic convent school when her father chose to spend the money sent by his wife’s brother on his daughter’s education rather than spending it on his wife’s funeral or the education of his sons (Jusová, *The New Woman* 52). It is an experience that directly affects Egerton’s perspective on religion, in particular Catholicism, and religious doctrines. Shaped by her experiences, her attitude towards religion is reflected in her stories by means of the problems and limitations her heroines have to face.

Following her father's death, Egerton moves to Norway with her father's friend, Henry Higginson who is "a married man [and] deserted his wife" for her (Nelson 7). By breaking away from traditions and traditional institutions, her extramarital relationship represents her perspective on love since she chooses to live as a mistress of a married man in a country she knows nothing about. However, although her two years spent with Higginson is a disappointment for her love experience since he is an adventurous, alcoholic and abusive man (Jusová, "George Egerton" 29; Nelson 7), it provides great opportunities and developments for her literary career. During the period she lives in Norway, she learns and meets "various Scandinavian writers, notably Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg, and Knut Hamsun" (Nelson 7) who highly influence her writing style and structures. She even makes some book translations; Knut Hamsun's *Hunger* is the most important one among them since it is the first time that this world-famous book is translated into English (D'arcy 168).

Egerton writes many books, namely *Keynotes* (1893), *Discords* (1894), *Symphonies* (1897), *The Wheel of God* (1898), *Fantasias* (1898), *Rosa Amarosa* (1901), and *Flies in Amber* (1905); several plays including *His Wife's Family* (1908), *The Backsliders* (1910), and *Camilla States Her Case* (1925); and, various short stories and articles for magazines and *The Yellow Book* mostly known for its association with Oscar Wilde trial and homosexuality. However, *Keynotes* and *Discords* are the most striking and discussed books of Egerton in the time as a consequence of free-spirited and unconventional heroines she presents in the stories of these books. Especially *Keynotes* creates wide public opposition because of the challenging conceptualization of woman and womanhood, and explicit descriptions of her heroines' sexual desires. The use of key in the title of the book, and her frequent reference to key in her stories is observed to be intentional and symbolic as follows:

few of them [men] have had the insight to find out the key to our [women's] seeming contradictions [...] [d]eep in through ages of convention this primeval trait burns, an untameable quantity that may be concealed but is never eradicated by culture – the keynote of woman's witchcraft and woman's strength. (*Keynotes* 30)

Key is considered symbolic by many critics in terms of representing women's access to her inner power, hence freedom. Dutta suggests that "it is almost as if Egerton is attempting to unlock the elusive mystery of female nature through these stories" (25);

therefore, these are the *key* stories which will open a new way to women by raising awareness and directing them to question their subordinated position. According to D'arcy's discussion of the key symbol, it stands for "independence, freedom to move at will, and the power to shut the door upon aggressors and unwelcome visitors" (174). In this case, these "unwelcome visitors" can be interpreted as men or, in a more general sense, as patriarchal order and masculine identity. Thus, Egerton aims to prove that each woman has her own key to her inner world and the power she hides there; and, she should use this key only at her own request indicating the importance of free choice.

Within the scope of freedom of choice, Egerton's strong and frequent reference to woman's sexual liberation is not only criticised but also she is marginalized by the critics and also the readers of her time. Hugh Stutfield is one of the first critics to call the stories of Egerton "erotic, neurotic, and Tommyrotic," warning that "society[']s [...] most dangerous and subtle foes are beyond question 'neurotics' and hysterics in their manifold forms" (833). It is most probably taken by Egerton as a compliment since she praises hysteria in her works as woman's power to challenge and reject the social order and norms. Moreover, the following statement of Stutfield definitely indicates that Egerton is achieving her aim in writing: "[t]o be a woman is to be mad,... [but even worse], the woman of the new Ibsenite [neurotic] school is not only mad herself, but she does her best to drive those around her crazed also" (Stutfield 835). It proves that the project of Egerton, which aims to reach as many women as possible and to enable them to question and challenge women's situation in the society, can be achieved through literature.

To further argue, Egerton and her fiction come to the forefront with her multicultural identity resulting from her experience of life "through New Zealand, Chile, Wales, and later Germany, the United States, England, and Norway, as well as Ireland" (Joyce 797). Her cosmopolitan background is indeed the most significant element that enables her to evaluate the Victorian society and values from a unique perspective. Her unconventional personal experience as a female enables her to perceive life and literature from different standpoints. Compared to the submissive and obedient Victorian ladies, she is a marginal woman who elopes with a married man to Norway and experiences two legally bounded marriages (O'Toole 147-148; Jusová 29). This

marginality and life experiences are obviously the key notions that enable Egerton to have distinctive and provoking writing style, which is mostly affected by her reading of Friedrich Nietzsche.

Nietzsche's determined denunciation of traditional bourgeois morality and institutional surveillance, his concept of the trans-valuation of values with its reformation of body, senses, and instincts, along with his explicit scorn for (particularly English) middle classes, understandably appealed to Egerton, who found in Nietzsche's discourse a philosophy singularly in accord with her life experiences. (Jusová, "George Egerton" 30)

Egerton's fiction firmly opposes the conventional morality, which is constructed by men to keep women subordinate. For Egerton, "women's untamed and savage spirits" ("A Keynote to Keynotes" 58) can never be taken under control by the artificial constructs created by any social, religious or political institutions. Therefore, she encourages women to tell their own *terra incognita* underlining the fact that the true social, intellectual and sexual freedom of woman can only be achieved in this way. She explains her project of liberating women through writing; she says, "I realized that in literature, everything had been better done by man than woman could hope to emulate. There was only one small plot left for her to tell: the *terra incognita* of herself, as she knew herself to be, not as man liked to imagine her – in a word to give herself away, as man had given himself away in his writings" ("A Keynote to *Keynotes*" 58). That is to say, Egerton argues that a man can write like a woman but cannot write as a woman; only woman herself has the access to her *terra incognita*, meaning unknown land. According to her perspective, although man has said everything in the name of literature, there is one thing left to woman: writing her own nature. That is what Egerton does, she writes woman's nature. Gerd Bjørhovde suggests in *Rebellious Structures* (1988) that Victorians are "as shocked by the way she write[s] as by what she write[s]" (129). Her explicit presentation of the sexual desires of her heroines, and the revelation of women's thoughts about the position and potential of women in the society are met by strict opposition of the Victorian readers. As Jusová explains,

[t]he circumstances of Egerton's personal heritage – her mother being from Wales, her father a rebellious, bohemian, and penniless Irishman with scorn for conventional English tastes and values, and herself born in Australia, where the relations between Irish and English populations were particularly vexed – served to problematize any simple sympathetic identification with English bourgeois interests and conventional sensibilities. ("George Egerton" 28)

Therefore, mostly originated from her own experiences both in England and in the Empire's various colonies, her rejection and challenging of the Victorian norms and conventions distinguishes her from the female authors of her time and associates her with the New Woman Movement. Within this scope, the major aim of this thesis is to study and analyse her fiction within the concept of her perspective towards New Woman through the selected short stories: "The Marriage of Mary Ascension: A Millstreet Love Story," "An Empty Frame," "Now Spring Has Come," "A Cross Line," "At the Heart of the Apple" and "The Regeneration of Two."

As indicated in Bjørhovde's given quotation above, besides the content of her stories, Egerton's innovative and unusual writing style and the techniques she uses also distinguish her from her contemporaries. Her choice of short story over novel is regarded as a way of standing against the traditions by many critics (Pykett, "George Egerton"; Jusová, *The New Woman*; McCullough, "Mapping the "Terra Incognita"") since traditional women writers of the time prefer novel as a way of expression. Her distinctive authorship reveals itself also in the fact that her works and style cannot be categorized in any specific literary movement of the period, instead her style is like a patchwork of all. It is suggested that "this refusal to conform to type may be considered part of her challenge to prevailing codes of propriety in literature" (Offen 145). As a result of her break with traditional writing styles, many critics regard her as "proto-modernist" (Faltejskova 26-27). Influenced highly by Scandinavian writings, Egerton's narratives are characterized as "self-consciously modern in form, they are impressionistic, allusive, episodic, making extensive use of dream, reverie and interior monologue" (Pykett, "George Egerton" 216). Instead of adapting a particular literary movement, she makes synthesis of modernism, naturalism, realism, symbolism and impressionism. She prefers writing in a "minimalist way omitting narrative description" (Faltejskova 27). To prove her aim of challenging conventions, Egerton frequently makes use of gaps in time, or events in order to give her reader a space where s/he can make assumptions and fill in the gaps in accordance with her/his comprehension of the story. She does not convey her stories in linear plots; instead she employs fragmentation and prefers "impressionism over chronological, explanatory, and conventionally structured storytelling" (Jusová, *The New Woman* 66). While reading her stories, the reader observes breaks, ruptures, and sudden changes or shifts as a result of her aim of



projecting the minds of her heroines. Since she focuses on “the impressions of individual moments in a woman’s life” (Jusová, *The New Woman* 66), and her changing psychology. Egerton employs stream of consciousness technique by presenting what goes through her heroine’s mind disregarding its time and relevance.

In this sense, she is one of the most innovative and experimental writers of her time. Long before the Virginia Woolf’s discussion of stream of consciousness which is one of the most innovative literary techniques reflecting Woolf’s contribution to Modernism and the literary world (Sang 173), Egerton employs this technique in many of her stories by focusing on the psychological development of her characters. In fact, “she is one of first writers to use ellipsis” (Faltejskova 27) and stream of consciousness technique in her literary works (O’Connor 60). Thus, she avoids traditional values and customs not only in her life but also in her works through her style. She uses literature as a tool of subversion so that she can have an access to larger reader groups and to convey her message not only in words but also in a compact literary style in which the reader cannot find any trace of style. Bjørhovde summarizes Egerton’s style in one paragraph:

Her deliberate break with a conventional chronological narrative and her consistent use of an episodic, impressionistic technique which put more emphasis on “inner” realism than on outward realities and fact, seem to have struck her contemporaries as not only new and daring, but downright provoking, too. But her choice of topics seemed equally shocking: alcoholism, prostitution, promiscuity. (129)

Therefore, by choosing short story, and avoiding traditional writing styles, linear plots, and conventional topics in her fiction, Egerton criticises established norms and conventions. Her opposition to conventions makes her a distinctive and successful New Woman.

Although Egerton herself rejects to be a part of New Woman Movement, she is considered one of the most significant and prolific forerunners of the idea of New Womanhood due to her strong and sexually liberated female characters. However, she does not approve of the term New Woman as she thinks that it is a temporary and popular term, which does not really represent the spirit of women. In a letter written to Ernst Forster in 1900, she says: “I am embarrassed at the outset by the term ‘New Woman’ ...I had, contrary to opinion, no propaganda in view – no emancipation theory to propound, no equality idea to illumine” (qtd. in Heilmann 221). In the same letter,

she speculates that the term itself seemed to be “one of those loose, cheap, journalistic catch words” (qtd. in Heilmann 221). Her idea is more like creating a real change in the lives and mentalities of women rather than adopting a popular and trendy label that will be forgotten after it goes out of fashion. New Woman, on the other hand, is coined as a term by Sarah Grand (1854-1943), who is an Irish writer, public speaker, and one of the forerunners of the New Woman Movement (Pykett, “Re-Viewing Women Writers” 18). She uses the term for the first time in 1894 “to indicate intelligent, educated, emancipated, independent and self-supporting women who aimed to redefine gender roles and to overcome men’s superiority over women” (Joyce 83).

As a reflection of the New Woman concept of the late Victorian society, female heroines and their fight against the traditional gender roles becomes apparent in fiction. The new matter in these late Victorian women is their ability to escape from the domestic realm and to enter into the public area as a labour force, which provides them with sufficient financial support to survive without the help of men (Holcombe 3). Predominantly working class girls turn out to be the pioneers of The New Woman Movement since earning money contributes to their financial and social freedom. They struggle to be a more independent and boundless women especially in three domains: marriage, labour market and suffrage. The concept of sexuality for women also comes to the front line as a result of the rebellion of women who are oppressed and suppressed in their marriages not only mentally but also sexually. However, before getting into the details about New Woman’s development and goals, it would be helpful to scrutinise the social, political, and most importantly the economic background of the Victorian society and particularly the Industrial Revolution. For that reason, a general overview of the period will be given in terms of its effects and connections with the creation of New Woman identity.

As Colin Matthew indicates in his book *The Nineteenth Century: 1815-1901*, “the decisive characteristics of nineteenth-century Britain [are] the rapidly increasing velocity of ideas, of people, of goods, and of money” (1). With its ever-changing ground and significant growth rate, resulting from various economic, scientific, and social developments, this epoch turns out to be an “age of transition” (Holland 71). In this respect, along with innovations experienced in almost every field, woman’s social

existence is also affected by the change brought about through the Industrial Revolution. Forcing woman to leave domestic sphere and to make her presence felt in man's domain, Industrial Revolution, indeed, plays a crucial role in women's movement as it also does in the realm of economics and politics.

In the first quarter of the Nineteenth Century, Great Britain is "a country of some 13 million people," having most of its male population "on the land or in trades connected with agriculture" (Thomson 11). Practiced by hand and through the simplest methods used for centuries such as using hoes and shovels to plant seeds, or throwing seeds, agriculture is the main source of income for the majority of the populace. Capable of "[growing] their own food, [making] many of their own clothes and generally [managing] without having to buy very much" (McDowall 121), countrymen are self-sufficient. Two types of cultivated lands are available in villages: common fields, situated around village settlements, and planting type and harvest of which jointly decided by the villagers; and small private fields, where the type of plantation is decided by individuals who owned or rented the land. In this respect, having provided sufficient economic power to survive, rural workers are "freeholders, secure in their right to a cot and a few acres of land" (Quinlan 41). However, with the introduction of machinery in agriculture and the replacement of manpower-based old agrarian system with a machine-based modern system, the situation of the cultivated areas and rural workers is extremely affected. Especially the introduction of threshing machines to farming forces numerous farm labourers to leave their jobs. J. L. Hammond in *The Village Labourer, 1760-1832* displays the extent of the effects caused by machinery use in agriculture:

A landowner and occupier near Canterbury wrote to the *Kent Herald*<sup>1</sup> that in his parish, where no machines had been introduced, there were twenty-three barns. He calculated that in these barns fifteen men at least would find employment threshing corn up till May. If we suppose that each man had a wife and three children, this employment would affect seventy-five persons. (221)

Apparently, as reflected in such estimations giving significant numbers of workers replaced by machines, the most "workers and their families, failing to find employment, [are] forced to become vagrants" (Quinlan 41) and rural people are left with only two chances to survive: whether to stay and work for peanuts or to leave countryside and

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<sup>1</sup> A newspaper, established in July 1792 in Kent.

migrate to cities. During this period, those who choose to stay in their homelands face many hardships stemming from industrialization's omission of manpower.

At the beginning of 1830s, in East Kent, unemployed commoners who come together to defend their rights give a start to a riot called the Swing Riots (1830), spreading very quickly throughout South England. Considered as the main reason of farm workers' unemployment, threshing machines are the targets. Believing the destruction of these machines would enable them to take their jobs back, workers come together: "[t]he first riot occurred at Hardres on Sunday the 29<sup>th</sup> of August, when four hundred labourers destroyed some threshing machines" (Hammond and Hammond 220). Originated from a fictitious character, Captain Swing, who is "designed to spread fear among landowners and avoid the real protest leaders being found out" (National Archives par.3), most significant symbol of the riot is the letters, aiming to warn farmers and landowners, signed by Captain Swing. The letters are as following: "Sir, Your name is down amongst the Black Hearts in the Black Book and this is to advise you and the like of you to make your wills. The lane down to your farm is dark. We will light it" ("Who Was Captain Swing?" np.). The Swing Riots are unlike previous protests in a sense that they "represent the potential of collective action" ("Who Was Captain Swing?" np.) including both men and women. Tightly connected to a common purpose, the machine-breakers do not reveal any name. Interestingly, a girl named Mary Ann Johnson turns out to be the symbol of solidarity among rural people (Hammond and Hammond 222). In October 1830, a man called Charles Blow is arrested with the suspicion of organizing actions and arsons; lacking the sufficient evidence to find him guilty, accompanied by Mary Ann, he is kept in prison for three months and forced to confess (Hammond and Hammond 222). Nevertheless, "Mary Ann and her companion were questioned by so many different persons that they were put on their guard, and failed to give information that was expected" (222). In this respect, remaining silent for the sake of the riots and of the commoners, she demonstrates collaboration among men and women, proving how women can make their presence felt in man's domain. Although resulted in the increasing wages and reducing rents, "[f]ollowing riots, 19 people were executed, 505 transported to Australia and 644 imprisoned" (National Archive par.4). Soon after the revelation and punishment of the responsible workers, the situation turn back to the way

it used to be. Notwithstanding embodying itself with other movements in other places, the unrest among rural people does not come to an end.

The Rebecca Riots (1839-1943), emerging in West Wales as another chain of protests through the end of 1830's, quickly turns out to be a symbol of rural people's pursuit of rights and justice. Being an obstacle for the transportation of goods and people, the deficiency of roads in Wales directly creates negative effects on trade; therefore, to eliminate such difficulty "[a] number of people (trustees) made up the trust and they improve the roads. In return they are allowed to erect tollgates and collect charges from road users" (Evans 48). Having the responsibility of road improvement, the amount of fees is also determined by the trustees, which change from place to place depending on the trustee (Evans 47-49). In this sense, as a new burden, tollgate fees deeply disturb villagers, who are already being subjected to high taxes, rents, and tithes; consequently, riots emerge. The riot against the tollgate system took its name from a scriptural figure Rebecca, a protective mother who has fought for food, for her family, and for her community, mentioned in the Bible as follows: "[a]nd they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, thou art our sister, by thou the mother of thousands of millions and let thy seed possess the gate of those that hate them" (Genesis 24 Verse 60). Directly targeting the tollgates, in a typical act, "[a] man on horseback, masked and wearing a woman's clothes, and followed by other men similarly disguised and mounted, all armed with guns and axes, destroyed the toll-bar and demolished the toll-house" (Halévy 78).

Not contented with destroying the tollgates, villagers' next targets are the workhouses emerging and becoming widespread throughout Britain as a result of the New Poor Law of 1834, "based on the belief that men should be forced into the labour market and self-reliance, where they would earn a decent wage in a productive, efficient, free-market economy" (Matthew 71). As understood, the basic principle of workhouses is to raise socially beneficial individuals; and, they "[complement] prisons, as part of a strategy of reforming the character of the poor" (71). Nonetheless, to build a workhouse is expensive and the application of the idea is troublesome having many defects that "[f]amilies [are] split up; husbands separated from wives and sisters from brothers [...]. In the past, they [villagers] often [give] food and goods to the poor but now they [are] expected to pay for building the hated workhouses" (Evans 48). Negatively affecting

every individual in society, such practice leads both men and women to collaborate and fight against the system. Consequently, uniting with men, women also “[join] in the attack on the Carmarthen workhouse that ended in a pitched battle with the army” (Matthew 175), resulting in the killing of a woman. Although repulsed by the military forces and forced to migrate as a consequence of seriously damaged agricultural fields, rebels are successful in terms of the disappearance of the tollgates.

In the light of these two riots, both having economic reasons beneath, for the first time a collective action takes place among working class people, including both men and women. Disregarding the sex or age of the participants, people stand in ranks with equality; women are “placed in the front line” (Matthew 175) displaying their abilities and capabilities. In this perspective, a foreshadowing of women’s future appearance in man’s domain is observed; however, it is the woman of towns who takes it one step further, which will be discussed in details on the following pages after the discussion of the major effect accelerating the immigration process of rural people: the Enclosure Acts (1845-1882).

The increasing productivity of soil, resulting from the use of machines and new methods, enrich both agricultural products and animal husbandry. Improvements in land use ensured wheat to be produced in almost any field, “[f]or the first time everyone, including the poor, could eat white bread [...and] the poor enjoyed the idea that they could afford the same bread as the rich” (McDowall 118). Additionally, possibility of growing animal feed in larger amounts and in more seasons of a year ensured animals to be fed in winter and to provide fresh meat in anytime of a year. Attracted by such prolific progress in agriculture, the landowners who have already been wealthy power holders are prompted by the opportunity of making money (Matthew 53-54). Having financial power over MPs, some of whom also have interests in agriculture, the landowners demand for a law “allowing them to take over common land and to enclose it” (McDowall 117), in return for moral and financial support; hence the Enclosure Acts begin to be practiced. According to the law, for an enclosure to take place, “a petition from a local person or persons” (Hammond and Hammond 19) is necessary; once accepted and approved by the Parliament, residents of the common land are driven off the fields and houses on these lands are demolished by giving the landowners

authorization to use and cultivate the lands for profit (McDowall 107-121). After the passing of enclosure laws, huge investments on agriculture are made; new methods of farming meet with machinery, and in this respect, Victorian Period turns out to be “a golden age for British agriculture, of ‘high farming’ and high profits, with investment in new farm buildings, drainage, and herds of animals to fertilize the soil. Thus, land gave status and high income, and the landed aristocracy was a self-confident caste” (Matthew 54).

On the other hand, such system “while profitable to the owners, brought hardship to the dispossessed rural workers” (Quinlan 41), results in the loss of cultivated soils and of the right to speak over common fields for the commoners. Replaced by machines, forced to work with minimum wages or sometimes to leave their homes if their homes are within the borders of a common land, most rural people become miserable. During this process, “[o]ver one thousand parliamentary Acts resulted in the enclosure of about four million acres” (McDowall 118), and also in the misery of displaced and unemployed thousands. An anonymous protest poem below explicitly reflects the reaction of common people suffering from the Enclosure Acts:

They hang the man and flog the woman,  
That steals the goose from off the common,  
But they leave the greater criminal loose  
That steals the common from the goose. (McDowall 118)

As observed along these lines, left jobless, landless, penniless, and, in some cases, homeless, people consider landowners thieves stealing the common lands and their lives. In cooperation with technological innovations, enclosures “[complete] the degradation and ruin of [...] agricultural poor” (Hammond and Hammond Preface VII). Therefore, as an unavoidable way for the commoners, migration from rural areas to urban areas reaches its peak.

However, the situation in cities is not better than the rural; “[a]lthough factory workers generally received higher wages than rural labourers, crowded tenements, the absence of health provisions, and the exploitation of child labour made for miserable conditions of life” (Quinlan 42). Causing the dehumanization of workers, long working hours,

insufficient working conditions, and inadequate wages create a pressure on labourers. Statements of a silk factory worker John Wright explicitly reveal the situation in factories:

The great number of hands congregated together, in some rooms forty, in some fifty, in some sixty, and I have known some as many as 100, which must be injurious to both health and growing. [...] The tediousness and the everlasting sameness in the first process preys much on the spirits, and makes the hands spiritless. About six months in the year we are obliged to use either gas, candles, or lamps, for the longest portion of that time, nearly six hours a day, being obliged to work amid the smoke [...]. (The Sadler Committee 4)

In order to earn their livings, labourers are forced to work under inhumane conditions. Notwithstanding, these are considered to be the lucky ones who are able to get a job, since “many migratory workers and their families, failing to find employment, were forced to become vagrants” (Quinlan 41). Under such circumstances, since the male members of family do not earn enough to feed their families, women are forced to enter the work force to support their families. Within the conjuncture of Victorian era, shaped by the prevalent idea of separate spheres for each gender, this is a quite inappropriate situation. According to Victorian ideology, “that men and women differed not only biologically but also in intellect, psychology, and emotions, supported a belief in the ‘separate spheres’ – the public for men and the private for women” (Heyck 195). Having sharply divided realms, the idea of duty for men and women is also constructed within specific tenets as indicated in the following lines:

Man for the field and woman for the hearth;  
 Man for the sword, and for the needle she;  
 Man with the head, and woman with the heart;  
 Man to command, and woman to obey;  
 All else confusion. (qtd. in Houghton 348)

Precisely established gender roles are the essence of Victorian ideal, best represented by Queen Victoria who is married “as a woman, not as Queen” (Matthew 168).

According to the epoch’s norms and gender based duties, “the ideal woman [is described as] pious, pure, submissive, and domestic” (Agress 114). In support of this view, the duty of English women is extensively described in sermons, books,



magazines, fictions, and advice books such as the following: “[t]he great and weighty business of life devolves on men, but important business belongs to women... Society does best when each sex performs the duties for which it is especially ordained” (qtd. in Matthew 167). In this period, a great number of advice books, informing women of their duties to reach the ideal, are written by many women writers; undoubtedly the most known of them being Sarah Stickney Ellis (1799-1872), the author of *The Wives of England*, *The Women of England*, *The Mothers of England*, and *The Daughters of England: Their Position in Society, Character, and Responsibilities*. Through such advice books, the idea of duty is impressed on Victorian women, giving them a sense of value.

On the other hand, as the rising power of the age and controlled by men, science turns into a tool against women. Many scientific researches are carried out to prove the inferiority of women. While some scientific studies aim to compare the body and the brain of women with men to demonstrate the weakness of the female and the strength of male, some other studies focus on proving the duty of women as reproductive tools. Late nineteenth-century England witnesses growing fears that the world’s major imperial power is degenerating, in populace number and in English racial purity. The Eugenics Movement, which is concerned with the control of human reproduction, “grow in response to anxiety surrounding falling birth rate figures” (Moseley 2). As Richard Soloway states “generations of Victorians associated high fertility and large families with the vitality and progress of their country, despite the dire warnings of Thomas Robert Malthus and other nineteenth-century political economists” (3). Journals and newspapers warn married women to fight against the decreasing population with a greater commitment to family. It is highly believed that

female demands for the vote, expanded education, greater economic, occupational, and professional opportunities, as well as control over property, children, and less explicitly, sexuality, called into question the stability of the family, the nature of authority, the fundamental religious, moral, and scientific basis of gender, and the very future of the race. (Soloway 110)

Jill Davis presents the opposition of eugenics to the feminist movement as an organisation “in which Darwinist ideas came to contest feminist ideas about women’s social role in nineteenth century England [...] predicated on the reduction of people to their sexual and reproductive roles, reasserting the biological binary of man/woman that

feminism was struggling to deconstruct” (Davis 20). To further argue, “eugenics not only reinscribe women as biological sustainers of the populace, but attempt to market them as mothers: procreative, but not necessarily sexual” (Moseley 3). The Eugenic Movement is not only supported by English imperialists but also the Fabian society, which is “founded in 1884 to advance the principles of socialism in democracies” (Moseley 3). As a member of this socialist group, Havelock Ellis presents prescriptive guidelines for females especially from eugenics perspective:

The breeding of men lies largely in the hands of women. That is why the question of Eugenics is to a large extent at one with the woman question. The realization of eugenics in our own social life can only be attained with the realization of the women movement in its latest and completest phase as an enlightened culture of motherhood, in all that motherhood involves alike on the physical and psychic sides. (qtd. in Gardner and Rutherford 20-21)

Many studies are carried out on women such as weighting their brains to prove that as a biological fact, women have less intellect and abilities, and it cannot be changed. Additionally, well-known hereditary scientists, such as Francis Galton, he used quantitative theories to predict female’s limited mental functioning. Soloway presents one of the results of Galton’s studies of the 1880’s that “the discovery that not only were women physically inferior to men, but in contrast to received opinion, their sensory acuity and, consequently, their intellectual ability were less developed than previously believed” (115). To support this argument, Allen argues:

Man reigns supreme. The inventing, discovering, creating, cogitating mind is pre-eminently masculine; the history of humanity is conclusive as to the mental supremacy of the male sex [...] In the domain of the pure intellect it is doubtful if women have contributed one profound original idea of the slightest permanent value to the world! (qtd. in Helsing, Sheets, and Veeder 77)

As a strategy employed by the patriarchal authorities in order to underestimate woman’s power, active and free-spirited women are associated with hysteria. It is also suggested that hysterical girls are likely to be “lively, gifted, and full of intellectual interests, [women of] powerful intellect [and] sharp and critical common sense” (Freud and Breuer 40).

However, nothing can restrain the increase in the number of women who begin to work in man’s fields. Developed under dogmatic cultural limitations, these working class women in the late nineteenth Century England make an unremitting argument for social

advancement since “[m]odern industrial methods have produced an entirely new quality of domestic life, and have thereby altered the role of women” (Klein 16). Having her economic independence, she is in *men’s world* and a part of the external world. She is challenging all the cultural, traditional, and patriarchy-based ideals and ideologies. She is not limited by the borders of her house, of marriage, of traditional norms; on the contrary, she is emancipated, extrovert, and full of passion. The best weapon for this innovative woman to break the borders of patriarchy is her pen as an 1894 *Punch* cartoon proclaims:

There is a New Woman, and what do you think?

She lives upon nothing but Foolscap and Ink!

But, though Foolscap and Ink form the whole of her diet,

This nagging New Woman can never be quiet! (qtd. in Offen, 188)

Throughout the *fin de siècle*, a group of women named by Sarah Grand as “the New Woman – also labelled Novissima, the wild woman, the odd woman, the revolting daughter, and numerous other names –” (Jusová *The New Woman* 1), come forward by defending the idea that “women’s economic independence and sexual liberation [were] both a woman’s right and a pressing social necessity” (Jusová *The New Woman* 4), and a radical change in traditional roles of women and men is needed. Dominated by strict ideologies regarding gender roles, such demand for equal rights is revolutionary for the Victorian society and perceived as a direct threat to the social norms and male authority. Not only men give New Woman an evil eye, but also traditional Victorian women whose minds are trapped and nurtured by patriarchal ideology underestimate and exclude these emancipated women. However, despite all the oppositions they receive from their society, this new type of woman is determined to behave in accordance with their free will. Even their choice of clothing is a rebellion to the flamboyant Victorian petticoats; they begin to wear trousers, to ride bicycles, and to smoke publicly indicating a more “*mannish* look” (Tóth 257).

In a more general framework, “[t]heir revolt [is] against their inferior position in a man’s world. Middle and working-class women [have] experienced this inferiority in different ways, and it [is] not easy for the women’s movement to develop a common consciousness [...] to challenge them [is] to strike at the certainties of the age” (Harrison

157). However, they are determined to put an end to this subordination and suffering of women within the limits and established duties of the period. They do not demand for limited rights or freedom in one particular field but they ask for freedom in every domain of the society. Since it is a movement based on individual perceptions of womanhood, it is almost impossible

to draw up a coherent, ideologically consistent list of the attributes and aims of the New Woman, but it is possible to identify the cluster of related concerns her advent sparked. The debates that rage around this figure in the 1890s repeatedly return to questions of female sexual desire, maternal identity, and women's representation of women. (Fluhr 243)

Supporting freedom in all domains, the New Woman is also the sexual woman who is free to follow her sexual desires. During the 1880's and 1890's, sexuality, long hidden underneath layers of petticoats and female propriety become a visible issue open for public debate. New Woman's argument of sexual freedom finds its parallels in the organizations like the Men and Women's Club. In an 1887 *Fortnightly Review*, Karl Pearson writes, "I hold that the sex relationship, both as to form and substance, ought to be a pure question of taste, a simple matter of agreement between the man and [the woman] in which neither society nor the state would have any need or right to interfere [...] its form and duration would vary according to the feelings and wants of individuals" (15). Both sides defend that as a part of human nature, sexuality cannot be limited within the boundaries of social norms. Creating stereotypes especially for women, male dominated culture of the time has created an idealised woman who is beautiful, well educated, submissive, obedient, perfect wife, and perfect mother; and, this ideal woman image is imposed on Victorian women as a role model. As opposed to this idealisation, "[i]n its essence, the women's movement [is] an attack upon the "patriarchal ideal" of Victorian society and the special role of domesticity and dependence, of subjection, which it assigned to the perfect woman" (Holcombe 3)

The defenders of the New Woman reject the idealisation of woman by the male gaze since it does not reflect the real woman who has no claim to be perfect. They do not want to be depicted as submissive, obedient, and as a second-class citizen. Instead, they only demand equal rights with men; "[m]ore specifically, women [claim] the right to receive an education as good as men's in order to develop their abilities to the fullest extent, and the right to work in whatever career they [choose] and for which they [are]

fitted, free from a degrading and debilitating dependence upon men” (Holcombe 7). Obviously, these are the most significant issues that Egerton also defends and reveals through her works. She encourages Victorian women to have a kind of education that can broaden their perspectives towards women and women’s subjugated role in society. With her intellectually and sexually liberated heroines, Egerton attempts to present role models for Victorian women in order to deconstruct the established ideas about womanhood and to reconstruct women in accordance with her idea of New Woman.

Although George Egerton is considered one of the forerunners of the New Woman movement by many scholars, she is one of the most underestimated female authors of her time. The decrease in “her popularity in the last several decades [of Victorian Period], the unavailability of her books and the merciless lack of bibliographical commentary on either [Egerton] or her works” (Middlebrook 141) can be regarded as the reason of her underestimation. Her association with *The Yellow Book* is another reason of her decreasing popularity. Since Oscar Wilde has the book with him through his trial of homosexuality, *The Yellow Book* becomes a symbol of homosexuality and degeneration (Ledger 5). Therefore, the content of her works are also condemned and categorised as degenerated. When she dies in 1945, she is remembered once more. As the writer of her obituary relates, “George Egerton's death brings back to mind the ‘New Woman’ school of fiction of the nineties in which the ‘problems’ of the relations of the sexes for the first time in English literature were put before a somewhat bewildered Victorian public” (“Mrs. Golding Bright” np.). Since the 1990s, the interest in Egerton has grown, although she still remains under-studied in relation to other Victorian women writers such as Sarah Grand, Olive Schreiner (1855-1920), and Mona Caird (1854-1932). Contemporary scholars study Egerton's fiction in relation to a variety of topics including Modernism, eugenics, colonialism, essentialism, impressionism, and feminism. In accordance with the ideas discussed above, the major aim of this study is to analyse George Egerton’s selected short stories and the heroines depicted in these stories within the concept of New Woman. Particularly, this thesis aims to focus on Egerton’s idea of New Womanhood and sexually liberated female characters who either question or challenge all socially and religiously established norms of the Victorian society.

Despite the increasing number of studies on Egerton and her literary works, it is still problematic to access accurate and detailed information about her life. The major difficulties experienced throughout the research of this study were the inaccessible primary and secondary sources, some of which are only available for the researchers in the UK and the USA; and, the limited number of the sources written about her life and her works. Only a number of her stories are taken into consideration by the critics; for instance, “The Marriage of Mary Ascension: A Millstreet Love Story” and “At the Heart of the Apple” are the stories which are not studied or analysed in details by any critic. The other stories are also only studied by a few critics and scholars; a situation that both limit the analyses because of the lack of sources. Moreover, there is not any academic study or any publication about Egerton in Turkey. In this sense, this study is expected to contribute to the criticism of New Woman and George Egerton in British Literature; also, it is expected to pioneer the studies to be conducted on New Woman and George Egerton in Turkey.

In the first chapter of this study, “The Marriage of Mary Ascension: A Millstreet Love Story” and “An Empty Frame” are discussed within the context of religious and social conventions of the Victorian Period. Although both stories are analysed within the concept of marriage, focal points of these analyses are different. “The Marriage of Mary Ascension” is analysed in terms of the domination of religion both in society and the lives of individuals. The analysis of this story focuses on the intervention of religion and religious institutions in marriage. Through the story of Mary who is an unmarried young girl obeying her father’s decision in her arranged marriage, the study aims to reveal Egerton’s criticism of religion and social conventions as man-made artificial constructs. On the other hand, in the analysis of “An Empty Frame,” the focal point is the criticism of social norms and criteria of the marriage institution. Through the experience of the story’s unnamed and married heroine, Egerton reflects the remorse and sense of futility in a marriage in which both wife and husband are in love with other people yet cannot follow their desires because of their socially assigned roles as wife and husband. Hence, the analysis aims to uncover Egerton’s criticism of the limitations established in social life by the patriarchal tools such as marriage institution and socially accepted gender roles.

In the second chapter of this study, “Now Spring Has Come” and “A Cross Line” are analysed within the frame of woman as a sexual agent. The main focus of this chapter is the representation of female sexual desires from the perspectives of woman characters who are in different social positions. The main focus in the first story, “Now Spring Has Come” is the representation of an unmarried New Woman character who has freedom in every field of the society including her preference of love. She is able to follow her desires and instincts and to take the responsibility of her choices; she is in charge of her own life. Therefore, the analysis intends to reflect Egerton’s introduction of a role model who is socially, intellectually, and in particular sexually liberated. On the other hand, the analysis of the second story, “A Cross Line,” focuses on a married New Woman character who freely acts with her desires despite the limitations of her marriage. The story reflects Egerton’s project of sexual freedom through the descriptions in which she can fulfil her desires by being both the subject and object of her fantasies. In this sense, the analysis aims to prove the writer’s argument that although marriage can take woman under control and limit her behaviours, it cannot prevent women from experiencing her sexual desires.

In the third chapter, “At the Heart of the Apple” and “Regeneration of Two,” are analysed within the frame of motherhood and marriage as a choice of woman not as a duty assigned to her by the social norms. Both of the stories represent Egerton’s idea of true feminine who can enjoy sexuality and motherhood out of wedlock. The main focus in the analysis of “At the Heart of the Apple” is its uncivilised and savage heroine who lives in an isolated house at the hill where she is away from social norms. Through her experiences with the two males, Egerton reverses gender roles and uses man as a tool of reproduction indicating that in the absence of social roles and conventions, each gender is able to fulfil their desires and aims of lives. In the second story, “Regeneration of Two,” the main focus is the representation of a love story that continues out-of-wedlock as it rejects man’s dominion and possession of woman. Through what seems like a utopic setting where a community of women is presented, the analysis aims to reveal Egerton’s argument that women do not need either man or man-made rules and norms to experience sexuality. Therefore, the analysis aims to reveal Egerton’s subversion of artificially constructed gender roles and social orders.

**CHAPTER I**  
**AWARENESS OF WOMEN WITHIN THE BONDAGE OF**  
**RELIGION AND MARRIAGE: “THE MARRIAGE OF**  
**MARY ASCENSION: A MILLSTREET LOVE STORY”**  
**AND “AN EMPTY FRAME”**

... all thrilled her virgin senses with a new meaning and a  
 terrible fear – fear of sin in thought, in word, in deed.

--Egerton, “The Marriage of Mary Ascension: A Millstreet  
 Love Story”

... if it had not been for a mistake she would have suited  
 you as well, made me realise, don't you see? that I would  
 have done some one else better!

--Egerton, “An Empty Frame”

George Egerton established a unique sense of authorship compared to the traditional Victorian writers with her distinctive perspective regarding her experiences in many countries both in British colonies and in other European countries. Her multicultural identity enabled Egerton to observe her society from diverse perspectives. Her approach to individual freedom and projection of her society distinguishes her works from the literary movements of Victorian Period, which generally focus on the moral values and accepted gender roles, or the negative aspects and effects of the Industrial Revolution on middle class and working class people. She focuses on the mental development of her heroines and the awareness they experience; her unconventional and rebellious ideas about social norms and gender roles, and the “use of her Irishness, her ‘outsider’ status, as a subversive tool to disrupt the ideological matrix” (O’Toole 145) helps her exceptional writing style to attract literary attention. This realization is projected by Egerton in many domains, such as the status of men and women in society, social norms, marriage institution, demand for equal rights, and religious borders and rules. In particular, Christianity and its doctrines with respect to marriage and duties based on gender, are unequivocally one of the most disputed issues she dwells on in her works.



Accordingly, the main focus of this chapter is religion and marriage. In the analysis of “The Marriage of Mary Ascension: A Millstreet Love Story” and “An Empty Frame” respectively in terms of the impact of religion and religious institutions on social life, and the socially constructed standards of marriage in Victorian society. The idea to be defended throughout this chapter is that “the New Woman novels, enlivening reform rhetoric even while operating within the boundaries of conformist culture, created a new mode of activism for Victorian women that enabled them to proffer critique about marriage and society” (Walls 229). Considered one of the forerunners of this movement, the major aim of Egerton is to uncover the artificiality and hypocrisy of social norms and roles, and to create awareness among the Victorian women.

## **“THE MARRIAGE OF MARY ASCENSION: A MILLSTREET LOVE STORY”**

I have often thought of it as one of the most barbarous customs in the world, considering us as a civilized and a Christian country, that we deny the advantages of learning women.

--Daniel Defoe, “The Education of Women”

“The Marriage of Mary Ascension: A Millstreet Love Story” is George Egerton’s one of the least known and analysed stories, which is reprinted and hence revived by Aubane Historical Society in 2011. As one of her literary works where Egerton reveals the mindsets and ideology that the religion constructed in Victorian Britain, a slice of life of Mary and her captivity within social and religious borders is presented to the reader in the story. It is a distinctive story with regard to its heroine, who is different from the highly sexualised and free-spirited female characters that the writer generally represents in her other stories. The representation of such a passive and obedient character can be interpreted in two different ways within the context of the period. When analysed from the first perspective, since Egerton is highly associated with the trial of Oscar Wilde as a consequence of her writings in *The Yellow Book*, she prefers to avoid sexuality and explicit expression of desires in her later works (Ledger 8). Therefore, she may introduce such a low profile and more convenient female heroine as a consequence of her later writing policy. According to the second perspective, on the other hand, representation of a traditional and submissive woman character is intentional in terms of proving that woman’s consciousness of her position in the society does not make any difference in her suffering if she does not stand against or subvert this position. In this sense, it can be taken as a criticism of women who internalise and obey the restrictions of the patriarchal ideology although they are aware of their suppressed status. In accordance with these arguments, the objectives here are to analyse how religion and social norms function in the construction of gender roles and the conceptualization of Victorian values and duties, and to reveal how they intervene in the private life of an individual with respect to family bonds and marriage institution.

The story is about a section of Mary Ascension Moylan's life in which the writer presents the process leading to her match with an *appropriate* husband. From the very beginning of the story, Egerton implies the social and religious obedience of her protagonist with her naming. Introducing her name both as Mary and Ascension, she addresses Virgin Mary who is the symbol of purity and obedience to God. The sacred place of Virgin Mary and her attitudes in terms of virtue and dutifulness are always exemplified as holy in Christianity (Rosen 17-20); and, she is presented as a role model for all the young ladies in the Victorian Period by many instruction books (e.g. *Daughters of England, Wives of England*). Hence, Mary Ascension is the representation of Virgin Mary and her virtues; and, it may be a foreshadowing for Mary Ascension's submissiveness in the decision of her marriage and for her choice of duty over her passion.

In the introduction of the story, the reader understands that Mary's father wants her daughter marry an appropriate match; and, Father O'Sullivan, the local priest, is the person who will find her match in return of the five percent of her dowry. The idea of arranged marriage is one of the main problems Egerton highlights in the story since she considers it "women trade on male sexual desire" (Harris 1408) proved in the story through Mr. Moylan's and O'Sullivan's perceptions of marriage as a business. As an extension of this problem, the writer also reveals that Mary is desperately in love with Corporal McNaughton and frankly presents her feelings for him:

She could hear, and she felt that with him (this man with whom she had never exchanged more than the courtesy of a greeting when they met) it was the same; could hear with some sense different from her ordinary hearing, the throb of her heart, the tingle of her blood racing in jerks through her veins and thrilling through every fibre, until it was like the thrumming of the telegraph wires in certain phases of weather. ("The Marriage" 8)

As observed, her love is not presented as a sexual desire on the contrary to the general perspective of Egerton; but instead, it is depicted as a pure one based on emotions as the writer intentionally gives information through parenthesis. However, being instructed in a monastery, Mary cannot go beyond the religious doctrines which order her not to act against the decision of a father. Therefore, she unwillingly accepts to be a part of this *smart business* of her own father, James Moylan, who pays a good deal of money as dowry to the rich doctor Jeremiah to marry Mary. In addition to this, with the marriage

of Mary, he makes sure that life and future of his daughter is under guarantee and he can also get married to the widow Ryan, who is the cousin of Mary's dead mother. The story successfully ends with a reference to the feelings of the girl who is influenced by this business over her life, in which she has no right to comment: "[a]ll was silent again in the girl's heart – it was numb and cold in there" (Egerton 24). She obediently accepts the rules given to her both by her biological father and religious Father O'Sullivan. In this sense, she chooses social and religious duty over her own destiny and happiness.

Before getting into a detailed analysis of the story, it is important to explore the perspective of George Egerton with regard to her religious belief and national identity. She is an "intensely Irish" (Aubane Introduction II) person and a Catholic; however, "[a] year spent at a Catholic convent school in Germany when she was eighteen provided Egerton with a lasting hatred for Catholicism organized religion and the ascetic life style" (Jusová "George Egerton" 29). Since she does not approve of some practices of Catholic Church, she did not hesitate to criticise what she has considered the limitation over private life of an individual both in her own life and in her literary works as well. Nevertheless, Egerton's criticism is partially different "from the usual English derogatory perspective as she dislike[s] England just as much at that time" (Aubane Introduction II). Her criticism of the Church is not from an English hence Protestant perspective, which mainly disapproves of Catholic belief and teachings. It is from a more extensive perspective where she only censures the hypocrite structure and practices of the Church and religion, which are mostly affected and shaped by the Victorian norms and corrupted by the power struggles between the State and religious authorities. She strongly defends the only thing that should matter between a woman and a man is love. Institutions or morals should not intervene in the private lives of individuals (Jusová "George Egerton" 31-44).

As a matter of fact, one of the main targets of her criticisms through this work is England; the preliminary idea she discusses is the English way of life and its hegemony that corrupts everything and hence Ireland. This is the idea with which she opens the story of Mary arguing that similar to everything England intervenes, Millroad, which is the name of the town where the story takes place, also loses its beauty: "[t]he old Irish name 'the little town in the lap of the hills' had instinctive poetry, therefore more of

truth, in its naming. Whatever beauty it may have once had vanished with its growth; it had become as uninteresting as its English name” (“The Marriage” 1). In this case, England and its moral principles are on the target of Egerton’s criticism since she states that the hegemonic ideals of England claim a right over everything including Irish way of life (O’Toole “Keynotes from Millstreet” 148-149). She asserts that the imperialistic mind of English authorities do not only regulate its policies over the world but also ironically regulate and corrupt the values and lives of individuals by the imposition of their own Victorian values and religious doctrines.

At this very point, it is appropriate to concentrate on the domination of religion, its relationship with the Victorian norms, and how it defines social codes and gender roles since religion has been one of the most effective parts of English hegemony. Being one of the keystones of Victorian Period, religion has functioned as a determinant factor in society and in creating the notion of duty both for women and men. It has always been used as a way of controlling the social order and of defining social and cultural identity; in particular, for such a traditionalist period as Victorian Era, where moral and behavioural codes became more of an issue, religion and religious doctrines have served as regulatory tools by giving people a sense of order and responsibility.

The pattern of the cosmos, the history and destiny of the world, and the ordering of social, political and domestic relations were all explained in biblical and theological terms. Christianity provided a system for understanding, a framework for discussion, and a vocabulary for the expression of complex notions, from the governance of the self to the governance of the state, from Christian dealing in the marketplace to proper conduct on the Sabbath. Faith and ritual affected people at many different levels, making spiritual, intellectual, emotional and visceral appeals. Public and private affairs alike were deeply infused by religion. (Cressy and Ferrell 1)

As clearly understood, dominating every single part of society and individuals, religion has functioned as the most fundamental element to form the essence of a community and its culture. Acting as a key figure and providing explanation of life and also the events that people cannot comprehend, it has formed a basis for the whole worldview of British society with regard to social norms, laws, and order. Moreover, the scope of this core element has expanded to such a great extent that it has become the final decision maker in all spheres from the smallest unity of the society to the greatest empires as it has been experienced in the case of Henry VIII. He had to part from the Roman Catholic

Church to make a personal decision – to divorce Catherine of Aragon – since “[f]or both political and family reasons [Pope] wanted Henry to stay married to Catherine [and ...] forbade Henry’s divorce” (McDowall 69). For hundreds of years, such influence, indeed, has been accepted without any questioning, because it has been regarded as the ultimate power and supreme rule coming from the creator and protector of all, from the God. Consequently, it has been used to constitute laws, moral codes, and customs; in other words, “[f]ar from being regarded as a protected subsidiary of the State, the Church of England was an integral and indispensable part of the theory and practice of governing” (Hempton 3). Therefore, it can be inferred that ruling class is able to keep people under a willing control through religion by creating a concept where individuals have self-control in accordance with the teachings of religion. Evidently, the most effective way to create this auto-control is establishing a concept in the minds of people that the Church and the State stand for the authority of God who is the greatest of all kinds and always provides the best law and order for the humankind. Although the authority of Church has been in decline through the Victorian Era as a consequence of some scientific researches and theories such as Charles Darwin’s evolution theory, which furthered the arguments about the doctrines of religion and opened the way of questioning religious dogmas, Christianity has still continued to be the most influential factor. Therefore, it is impossible for a Victorian reader to read and perceive the literary works of the time without understanding the influence of religion.

In this context, observing the control and power of the Church and the roles and codes put into practice by them in every single domain of her society, Egerton displays the dominance of the Church and the interaction between Church and State with regard to authority, economy, and social order. While she is portraying the town, she demonstrates two authority figures as the guardians and control points of the town:

[t]he town itself was shaped like a dumbbell [...] Church and State had each grabbed an end knob, and, in conformity with the world’s history, they flourished at the expense of the people. In this instance, being in Ireland the State was represented by the Church (that is, the Protestant place of worship) [...] The other knob looked more prosperous, consisting, as it did, of the chapel (Roman Catholic Church), the priest’s house, schools and convent. It spoke volumes for the business instincts of those pious ladies that they had chosen, as is the case in every town in Ireland, the most attractive bit of ground in the place for their home. (“The Marriage” 1)

Having experienced such a life in Millstreet, Egerton doubtlessly reflects the political and regional situation of the town at first hand, since “[s]uch a fusion of Irish regionalism, and a more elusive, impressionistic perspective of landscape often appears in Egerton’s work” (O’Toole “Keynotes From Millstreet” 148). This regional portrayal projects that with their supreme power, the Catholic Church has the control over town and the Protestant Church represents the authority of the State. That is to say, both churches have dominating features not only in spirituality but also in politics, economy, and education. Nonetheless, through the indication of prosperity, the writer depicts and reveals that the power of the Catholic Church is felt more in the town, which is undoubtedly an ordinary situation for an Irish town. Having the power of educating people in both science and religion, in “schools and convent,” the Church obviously has direct access to the minds of people. Under such circumstances, its hegemony over education enables the Church to educate people in accordance with its own ideology and doctrines.

The controversial existence of Protestant and Catholic Churches, whose doctrines are significantly different from each other, is another detail presented by the writer. It is particularly essential to be aware of English authority’s consideration “of Catholicism as an alien element in British society” (Atkin and Tallett XV) since being a Catholic means having loyalty to Roman Catholic Church, which is an external power located in Vatican and ruled in conformity with Catholic European countries, while Britain has already had the Church of England established by King Henry VIII through “the Act of Supremacy in 1534” (McDowall 69). Instead of showing commitment to the Church of England and hence the power of British Empire, Irish community’s choice of remaining loyal to the Catholic Church has given rise to an unrest among English people and politicians and it is considered as a rebellious attitude against British hegemony. Thereby, as an important part of Irish national identity, Catholicism reinforces the idea that Irish people are direct threat for the unity and strength of British Empire. On the other hand, believing in Catholic teachings but being governed by the Protestant authority of England has created confusion and chaos both in the minds of individuals and in the governance of the countries: “in Britain [Catholicism] was clearly the faith of a minority. Moreover, the loyalty of that minority to a Protestant polity was constantly called into question” (Atkin and Tallett XIV). At this point, by emphasising “at the

expense of the people” (“The Marriage” 1), Egerton implies people’s rejection of both British domination and the Protestant Church. She also criticises the Catholic Church, which has unpleasant and restrictive practices according to her perspective. Therefore, although people of the time are not contented with the situation, they do not have sufficient rights and power to stand against the authority and the traditional understanding of life and world.

In this context, as an androcentric religion in which the God is referred as “He”, it is inevitable to have patriarchal doctrines in all domains. Especially when it is considered that “ruling-class, white, male power is reproduced in and by most texts written by privileged men, that male control of the political process, the medical community, the publishing industry, and of discourse itself has produced a body of work that actively inscribes patriarchy” (Hall 5), Christianity and its teachings, as a concept based on a written text and role modelling, might be deviated from its origin as a result of the interventions made by the patriarchal ideology. To be specific, this is the idea Egerton defends and explicitly reveals in the story while she is describing a ritual in which women and men pay rounds around a well of wish dedicated to unnamed saints and their graves:

[a]nd in all this the grave white Christ with the tortured brow would find little of Himself or His teachings. Indeed, He has as little in common with the saints of the ‘pattern,’ the severe church rules, and the fanatical revings against dance and song, and all the beautiful wooing of man and maid, as the little lady Mary’s son of Apocrypha, who made clay sparrows on Sunday, had with the dour Moloch of Calvin’s invention. (“The Marriage” 2)

It is not a coincidence that Egerton uses the adjective “white” to describe Christ; on the contrary, it can be taken as a sign of the idea WASP – white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant – which has been accepted as the superior identity by the Europeans throughout ages. Through emphasising the idea that “Christ [...] would find little of Himself or His teachings,” Egerton clearly manifests the interpretation of Christianity, and defends that the image and teachings of Christ are distorted. At this point, it is not the religion that the writer criticises but it is the WASP version of the religion in which “white, European, and ruling class [men have claimed...] I am the unified, self-controlled centre of the universe” (Jones 362). Defending the idea that religion has no race or gender, Egerton puts forth that the aim of her criticism is for the equality of all



including not only white women but also women of colour, which is quite unique when the date she has lived in is taken into consideration; and, she proves her point by employing “often women of lower classes, exotic races, or hybrid species” (Jusová, “George Egerton” 38) and also all the oppressed creatures like animals or in particular nature in her works.

Rejecting any kind of oppression practiced on any kind of creature, she also includes animal suffering and rights to her discussion, as is the case in this story. Having a broad perspective about the behavioural habits of her society, she reflects the oppression or cruelty she has experienced or witnessed; and, while she is depicting the market place in the town, she explicitly demonstrates that

[a] brutal callousness to animal suffering was everywhere in evidence. Fowl and geese, tied tightly by the legs in bunches of six or seven, hung, head downwards, all through the longest market day, without water or thought of their possible torture [...] one would have to go to Spain, or other countries of the South American republics to find a parallel to such brutal indifference to animal suffering. (“The Marriage” 3)

As observed, unlike other New Woman writers, who generally focuses on the inequality and suppression that middle class or working class white women have experienced, the scope of Egerton’s criticism is not limited with a specific group of women, but it embraces all units of a society including animals. She, on the other hand, draws the attention of the reader to the indifference of women when it comes to the animals; and, implies that although like animals, women are prisoned and tortured in the hands of male power, they do not act against this authority but on the contrary, they become a part of it. She argues that “[t]he most soft-eyed of the women with beautiful brows would pluck her geese alive for a bed, with a smile at remonstrance” (“The Marriage” 3), which clearly presents the fact that women have just accepted their roles as passive and inferior creatures and become another component of the patriarchal system. In the most general sense, through the projection of this scene in the story, Egerton tries to convey the message that women should voice injustice and inhumanity they have witnessed, as she has done in her works, to stand against this order and to get the rights they and all the other oppressed groups deserve.

However, for an era in which male dominated religion controls every single domain from society to economy, her intention is indeed considered marginal and rebellious

because any opinion related to “equality, [and] freedom [... is accepted as] dangerous, untrue, and contrary to church teaching” (Rosen 18). Egerton doubtlessly reflects the control of the Church in the story through the character of Father O’Sullivan who is the Father of the Catholic Church in the town and the authority figure in the story. In parallel with his authoritative position, he is depicted as a strict and despot character: “Francis Xavier O’Sullivan was senior curate, but, as Canon Cleary was delicate in health, and disinclined, as a student, to meddle with politics and parochial quarrels, he had it all his own way. His methods were autocratic and retrogressive. He ruled the parish with an iron hand” (“The Marriage” 6). As observed from his portrayal, Father O’Sullivan has dominance over the life in town, in politics, code of behaviours, and in the implementation of these codes in society in the name of the Church. Defining him as “an iron hand,” Egerton implies the strictness of his rules and his power of determining the borders of an individual’s freedom. In support of her argument, she demonstrates the rules of O’Sullivan with regard to personal relationships and social occasions:

Dancing, cards, cup-tossing (divination by tea-leaves), the keeping company of man and maid, were all alike “occasions of sin,” the subjects of violent denunciation from the pulpit. Woe betide the luckless boy or girl caught walking out together. They ran the risk, if they persisted after due cautioning, of being “called” from the altar after High Mass. He exacted all dues, at a scale fixed by himself – five per cent on a marriage portion in all cases. (“The Marriage” 6)

The main objective here is to exemplify the fact that the Father does not only do his spiritual duties but he is also in charge of controlling the attitudes of especially young girls and boys in the society. All kinds of social activities and events where people can come together and interact are labelled as sin and banned by him. It is striking that women and men have no chance to socialize or to learn each other outside of marriage. They are always under surveillance and expected to act within the social borders drawn for them; they have no personal freedom or rights to act in their free will. Father O’Sullivan himself makes sure that they do not flirt with each other by patrolling around the town. Obviously the most important part of this process is the acceptance of these rules both by men and women. The residents of the town passively obey what they have been taught and ordered; and do not even dare to question the situation. In a matter of fact, they consider it normal, which is mainly resulted from the internalisation of these ideals. Although neither women nor men are happy about the restraint, notions of sin

and punishment, indeed, enable this internalisation process and provide auto control (Rosen 20-24).

What Egerton opposes and tries to reveal through this story is that “the concepts of culture, civilization and Christianity become suspect as instrumental in the destructive “domestication” of man's spontaneous instincts through manipulation of socially fabricated concepts of guilt, bad conscience, and sin” (Jusová “George Egerton” 31-32). It is the conscience of Mary that constrains her from seeking for happiness and true love; it is the perception of sin that prevents her from leaving everything she has been taught in the convent for months and from following her desires. Egerton ingeniously portrays Mary’s inner thoughts, and conveys how she partially regrets because of committing a sin by only walking a few minutes with Corporal McNaughton and talking to him for the first time about their love to each other, which has emerged from the very first sight without even talking once, and also portrays how she partially questions the situation and commands:

[...] all thrilled her virgin senses with a new meaning and a terrible fear – fear of sin in thought, in word, in deed. She had meant to confess that evening. Years of training in a daily examination of conscience, which precluded very natural thought on sex or its workings as occasions of sin, rose up like warning gnomes in her soul – making every thought on the natural process of human nature an immodesty – aye, even the contemplation of her own fair body a thing to be ashamed of. (“The Marriage” 10)

Through unveiling the mind of Mary, Egerton in fact clarifies her argument that under the name of religion and the concept of sin, especially women have been kept away from their free will and sexual desires. Women are distanced from their own nature; they are made to think of their bodies as a symbol of shame and sin. In his article “The Volcano and the Cathedral: Muscular Christianity and the Origins of Primal Manliness,” David Rosen argues that the Christian understanding of love that defends worldly love is “unholy” is not accurate since these feelings and sexual instincts are a part of our body, which is also created by God (17-25). However, instructed through a notion of conscience, women have been forced to hide their real feelings, their natural instincts and thoughts; as Egerton puts it in the story, “[f]ear of sin bred fearsomeness of the soul; the imperative call of nature became an evil to be fought against, as a ghoulish luring to death and damnation” (“The Marriage” 2). The writer struggles to express that although sexual desire or feelings are natural consequences of being a human, people

have been detached from this desire as if these are not given to them as a part of their creation.

Questioning, of course, lies at the heart of this ‘back to the self and nature’ process. In the most general sense, Egerton explicitly transfers her challenging ideas about the orders of religion with respect to sexuality in her *Discords*: “[a]ll systems of philosophy or treaties of moral science, all the religious codes devised by the imagination of men will not save you – *always you must come back to yourself*” (64). Obviously, she declares that all these regulations about sexuality are man-made and hence artificial; thus, if women want to be free and empowered, they should return to their nature and instincts where they can find their true identities. In the scene while Mary and Corporal McNaughton are having a short conversation, the writer puts forth her idea of true woman by giving the reader a glimpse of the moment of pure happiness when they both forget about their roles in the society and seek for their feelings: [t]heir looks met, and the triumphant joy in his broke down the trained restraint of her eyes and lips, so that the real woman, a thing of responsive sex and natural instincts, revealed herself in a sudden glory of emotion” (“The Marriage” 9). Yet, people who witness this scene “brought [Mary] back to the realities of her position” (9) by judging her behaviour and criticising her possible relationship with the Corporal. This social pressure is obviously one of the most significant factors, which affect her future choice of marriage.

Egerton also reinforces her ideas about the artificiality of these rules by the fact that “occasions of sins” can be forgiven through marriage; and to get married, of course, people need to apply to Father O’Sullivan, to take his consent and, clearly to pay him sharply five per cent of their dowry “not a penny less” (“The Marriage” 5). Apart from economic income he provides through marriages, which is a highly contradictory profit for a person whose primary duty is to guide people through the path of faith and spirituality, O’Sullivan also makes use of marriage institution as a way of keeping people under control. According to Christianity, marriage is a holy occasion; however, it is not in terms of love and pleasure but in terms of reproduction and of spreading the religion and expanding the hegemony of Britain since it is considered as a “missionary work [...] that contributed to the British Empire” (Fasick 93). Therefore, the major and

only aim of marriage in Victorian Period is to form families, which will function as agents that protect the Victorian values and enable the maintenance of the Empire.

Family institution, being considered as the nucleus of a society, has always been the first step to apply gender roles as Anthony Fletcher argues in his essay “The Protestant Idea of Marriage in Early Modern England”: “[f]rom the Hebrew society of the Old Testament [...] the family had been at the centre of a system of institutionalised male dominance over women and children which extended outwards from the household to society in general” (162). That is to say, performing these socially and religiously constructed duties of men and women in the family and teaching the borders of a gender to the children from a very young age enable them to internalise the responsibilities specific to their sex. Hence, when a person goes beyond his/her socially accepted role, s/he has to face with sin and punishment. These are the beliefs that create self-control in the individual; accordingly, if s/he wants to be approved by the community, s/he has to perform her/his task. Egerton pictures some scenes for the readers regarding how girls are expected to act in the community; she demonstrates the girls in the town market: “[t]here was little greeting between the men and women who were flocking into town to buy and sell. The girls kept close to their mothers and spoke little, watching the noticeably few young men with shy eyes, or a furtive smile that peered through narrowed lids and veil of lashes” (“The Marriage” 2). As understood from the depiction, young girls are taught to talk less and not to present themselves without the guardianship of their mothers or some other elder relatives, which is also observed in social gatherings where “[s]hy young girls, with the permission of their parents, declared for a glass of “the sherry wine” or “the port,” as the case might be, in response to the invitations of cousins back on a visit from America” (“The Marriage” 3). Accordingly, young ladies cannot have any free act without the control of their parents. In a society where acceptance and approval is highly essential to earn a living and to survive, people have been made to act in accordance with social and behavioural codes not as a result of their free will but as a result of religious and social oppression. This is also the case when it comes to the arranged marriage of Mary as “Egerton often focuses on the social and economic reasons as to why women marry” (O’Toole *The New Irish Woman* 7).

According to the ideals of this epoch, the main duty of a woman is to be an obedient and submissive wife to a man from a better class; for instance, “Homer’s heroine is the superior of modern women both because of her greater physical grace and because of her willingness to admire and wish for a strong man as a husband” (Fasick 98). As can be perceived from this idealization, being a good and capable wife is not sufficient but a woman has the duty to find an accomplished man to marry. Proper education, indeed, is one of the most significant ways to have a more profitable marriage in which women can have a chance to experience upward social mobility. This is one of the most crucial parts of the setting of this story that Egerton wants to give her reader a message with respect to the aim of women’s education. Although Mary falls in love with a corporal, it is not an acceptable rank for her father, Mr. Moylan. The writer demonstrates the mind-set of her time about marriage through the fact that as a retired police officer, Mary’s father does not approve her love for McNaughton and says: “D’ye think I paid my money to have ye educated and brought up like a lady for ye to demean yerself with a common policeman, to make yerself the talk of the parish?” (“The Marriage” 13). As observed, he does not want her daughter to get married to a police officer who is in the same status once he was, which proves that it is the duty of a common Victorian man or woman to climb social ladders (Houghton 185-188). Egerton also reflects the content of the education that women of the time have received in a critical way: “[g]irls of her class in Ireland receive strangely unfitting education – of housekeeping they know nothing, but they nearly all play well, have an expurgated knowledge of the French classics, a smattering of Italian, a little painting, and are exquisite needleworkers” (“The Marriage” 12). She sets forth the public opinion with regard to the education of women and arranged marriage through widow Ryan who stands for the general mind-set of Victorian women. She presents the widow’s approach in the scene where she sees Mary and McNaughton together:

the widow Ryan, who dropped the beads she was telling with somnolent piety, in a horrified realization of the damning fact that Mary Ascension Moylan – who had hundred “lost to her” education, with eight hundred more to go with her when a match was found – was standing in immediate nearness to a common policeman, and he a black Protestant into the bargain. (“The Marriage” 9)

The writer’s use of quotation marks for the phrase “lost to her,” in fact, puts the emphasis on the general public idea that money spent on the education of women is just

waste because it has no aim or it provides no return if the girl cannot find a good match. When it is analysed within the context of Egerton's perspective, which always defends the education of women and development of their minds, she does not actually criticise the content or type of the education; it is the aim of this education that she highly criticises. She invites the reader to see the bigger picture and to understand that women are not trained to improve their knowledge or to be freer but for a better marriage in which they will be trapped in their petticoats and drawing rooms as indeed the most important servant of their houses and husbands.

At this point, it is important to be aware of the fact that in most of these *well-arranged* marriages, couples do not know each other before they get married; and, their fate is decided by some other people who do not concern about their happiness or sorrow (Goodman 50-51). This is also the situation Mary experiences after she is seen with McNaughton. When Mr. Moylan is informed about Mary's conversation with the Corporal, he immediately wants his daughter to marry an appropriate match; and, it is one of the important issues Egerton highlights within the scope of this story that only one aspect of marriage is taken into consideration by Mr. Moylan, as every Victorian mind would do. That aspect is, of course, the prosperity level of the *opposite party*, which is an intentional term I would like to use since Mary's marriage is presented more like a business agreement by Egerton in her description of arrangement with these carefully selected words: "Moylan discussed the advantages [...] fought every issue bit by bit, and contested every inch of debatable ground" ("The Marriage" 21-22). With such a depiction, she obviously attempts to unveil the social curtain in the eyes of her readers, and wants to enable them to question that marriage is an institution that have its basis in the hearts of people not in their pockets or bank accounts. Therefore, "[b]y opposing here and on other occasions the principle of disciplining human bodies through moral institutions and by objecting to intrusions of the bourgeois state in all fields, including the production of populations" (Jusová, "George Egerton" 32), Egerton tries to present a ground for her readers, on which they are able to ask same questions to themselves since most of them have also experienced the same situation.

On the other hand, the writer successfully portrays a family for the reader as an ideal Victorian family, of which Mary can be a part. To reveal that in this idealisation, money and upward class mobility are the only things that count, she depicts as follows:

The old doctor was really only a “vet” and a horse-dealer, and his wife, a strong farmer’s daughter, a connection of her own. But the sons all had professions, and the daughters had married well into a better class. They rode well, danced well, were brilliant musicians; these accomplishments, with pretty faces and witty tongues, brought them into contact with the smaller Protestant gentry and such military men as were stationed at the depot. It had cost a good bit to make two doctors and an attorney, and dress three girls – to help them to find their husbands, and give them a good send-off when they did. (“The Marriage” 17)

The family mentioned in this quotation is the household of Jeremiah who is arranged as the match of Mary by Father O’Sullivan. Although it has been a hard task and money consuming process, they have accomplished their social duties as an ideal family and climbed the social ladders in the best way they could. In this era, “wealth alone was hardly enough to make a Victorian respectable. He had not only to be rich but to be a gentleman; so that the struggle for money in the middle class was complemented and to a considerable extent motivated, by the struggle for social advancement” (Houghton 185). It explains why they have to have social abilities such as riding, dancing, and playing instrument in addition to an acceptable amount of dowry. With respect to this mission, each member of Jeremiah’s family has done his/her part in this advancement; male members have achieved it by means of education and female members have achieved it by means of marriage. Clearly, it is more profitable and acceptable for a traditional Victorian family to spend money for clothing of their girls instead of spending it for their education. When the expectation of men from women is taken into consideration, as Jeremiah puts into words: “I want the money, I haven’t thought of her; but I hear she’s nice-looking enough” (“The Marriage” 23), male perspective seems more reasonable, indeed, because men do not want to marry educated and liberated wives who can question their positions and demand more rights.

In contrast to the above given social ground, as Purdue and Floyd emphasizes in their introduction, New Woman writers “create[d] a new identity for themselves through the construction of this new female [...] – one that projects power and freedom” (X). Accordingly, being one of the most influential names of this movement, Egerton also aims to present women characters who have the ability to question, to perceive, and to



create awareness. She wants to enlighten her readers about this kind of problematic rules of the society and religion through her characters and “mental development of [her] central character[s]” (Harris 1409). The conversation between Mary and McNaughton about love marriage without the permission of anybody or any institution brings along awareness with regard to their position and their socially constructed destiny. Although he is eager to rebel against the norms and to choose happiness over mission, understanding of fate and duty reveals itself:

[...] “I wished I could take you in front of the saddle an’ quit all the bother, an’ ride somewhere where the law could bind us, an’ a man and woman to live to their likin,’ without priest or person sayin’, ‘Ye must be my way of thinkin’ if ye want to be together’; that’s what I keep sayin’ to meself every minute of the day. An’ you?” The note of revolt in his voice set her heart beating, as a martial air and the tramp of marching feet [...] But her eyes darkened as a terrified child’s [...] “He would that. An’ the priest would. An’ yer fortune! God help us, if it wasn’t for the fortune, I’d defy them all. (“The Marriage” 8-9)

With this scene, the questioning process begins to come to the fore; through the thoughts and inner voice of Mary, Egerton attracts the attention of the reader and invites them to be a part of this process. Addressing some rhetoric questions about the situation of Mary, she aims to evoke the conscious and conscience of her reader: “[w]asn’t she going again, to be offered with her money as a match to some man she’d never seen? [...] She’d sacrificed love when it came to her, cast it aside for the fiction of duty – she was a poor weak thing” (“The Marriage” 17). By providing such a debatable ground, and addressing a question to the reader, the writer seeks the reality under the surface and wants her readers to face the realisation that “marriage [is] a healthy physical and psychological fulfilment of masculine desire” (Goodman 47) in which women are just the objects of male gaze. Mary, for instance, is aware of her situation and the entrapment she has been experiencing; yet, her notion of social duty prevents her from acting against the orders.

Another significant instance through which Egerton tries to put emphasis on the questioning and awareness process is the scene when Mr. Moylan engages in domestic violence against her daughter. Treated as a commodity in the hands of her father and prisoned at home to be kept away from McNaughton, Mary reveals the hypocrisy in the behaviour of her father. She expresses her awareness with respect to his father’s relationship with widow Ryan, without marriage bondage. Being conscious of her

surroundings, Mary questions her father for the first time and rebels his oppression when she is accused of being disgraceful: “[t]here is no disgrace worse than that you put upon me yourself” she cried with desperate courage. “Don’t think I haven’t known what’s said ever since I was home last. The poorest place in the town would be decenter for me than my own home” (“The Marriage” 13). It is a significant protest in the name of Mary because it is the first and the last resistance of her throughout the story. In this scene, Egerton presents the reader that women are capable of analysing and comprehending their environment however, they need to voice these thoughts to resist the inequality they have experienced. Yet, the response she gets as a result of this protest is domestic violence; Mr. Moylan slaps her in the face. In this case, the writer frankly wants to inform her readers that questioning the patriarchal ideas and behaviours and resisting a them will not be an easy task to follow; there will always be oppression and obstacles on this path but it is the only way of achieving success.

Nevertheless, as O’Toole states in her argument, Egerton “frequently describes women whose lives are barren because at a crucial moment they were not courageous enough to defy public opinion” (“Keynotes from Millstreet” 151); therefore, she presents Mary’s inaction and discouragement because she wants to illustrate the possible consequences of the choices one may make. Although Mary even questions the authority of Father O’Sullivan in her mind when he intervenes the fight that she and her father have as follows: “[i]t was vague sense of revolt against the tyranny of priest and woman alike, as coming between her and this man whose blood ran in her veins; and who, whatever his faults, was her own mother’s husband” (“The Marriage” 14), she cannot express her opinions out loud since she has no courage to talk about her feelings and ideas anymore. In spite of Mary’s silence, Egerton gives voice to her inner thoughts and reflects the idea that “society, particularly state and church authorities, should not interfere with individuals’ personal decisions” (Jusová, “George Egerton” 42).

In conclusion, through the story of Mary Ascension, Egerton reflects the concept of marriage with regard to the power and authority of religion in Victorian society. Since she “specializes in catching a brief moment in the life of one of her protagonists – a mood or incident that influences future action” (O’Toole 152), she presents the moment of Mary and her lack of making a statement for the sake of her emotions. The writer

reflects Mary's questioning and awareness with regard to her position even in the very last scene: "and she stopped involuntarily. Where was she going, and what was she about to do?" ("The Marriage" 24). This moment of hesitation is given as the last chance of Mary to give up and to make her own choice. However, being afraid of committing any sin or standing against God's words, "she followed passively to the sound of the triumphant church bells, dominating all the sound in the Irish town – even those that love makes in the heart of man and maid" ("The Marriage" 24). When Mary's questioning, awareness, and inaction are taken into consideration, it brings one to the idea that Egerton attempts to enlighten her readers about the fact that although questioning creates awareness, awareness is not functional when one cannot give voice to it. Therefore, it is crucial for women to give voice to the problems and inequality in words to make people realise that they exist; she suggests that this is the only reasonable way for women to obtain their freedom.

## “AN EMPTY FRAME”

The woman experiences desire within her mind and body that enables her to cross the boundaries of time and place.

--Lisa Hager, “A Community of Woman”

Legally, socially, and culturally, marriage has been a key social institution. It has organized kinship, social and economic life, and day-to-day governance in Western cultures, and it has grounded the subordinate place of women.

--Christina Simmons, *Making Marriage Modern*

In order to promote intellectual and sexual freedom of women, George Egerton opposes all kinds of boundaries that can restrict women for the sake of socially constructed and accepted gender roles. As a New Woman writer “who reflected [her] concerns about women’s limited role in society” (Purdue and Floyd IX), she strictly criticises marriage institution arguing that it is based on a false conception of the period’s marriage criteria. “An Empty Frame” is one of her stories through which she reveals the importance of love and affection in a romantic relationship and how the absence of these feelings in a marriage can create a sense of futility in both the lives of women and men. Published in *Keynotes*, it is a significant story in terms of reflecting Egerton’s attitude towards the perception of marriage in Victorian minds. As also discussed throughout the analysis of “The Marriage of Mary Ascension: A Millstreet Love Story,” the writer demonstrates that Victorian people think of marriage as a kind of business agreement based on materialistic standards (Harris 1407-1409). However, she criticises such manufactured criteria and norms by defending that marriage and the bond it creates can only be accepted through the will of a woman and it should be on the basis of love. Egerton criticises the idea of “familism” (O’Toole, *The Irish New Woman* 10), which defends that the needs of a family as a group should be over the needs of an individual; and, she challenges “[the Victorian] culture that instate[s] sexual continence and familism [...] as a means to a sustainable future” (10). In accordance with her rejection of social and legal bounds of the marriage and her adoption of instinctively driven sexuality, “An Empty Frame” will be discussed in terms of the relationship between the characters of

the story. The aims here are to project the negative effects of an arranged marriage on both woman and man, and to present the female protagonist's path to awareness through questioning.

The story is about an unnamed heroine as Egerton generally prefers in order to present "the archetypal 'Everywoman' and 'Everyman' and suggesting that psychological crises dramatized in the [...] stories could represent the conflicting emotions of any wife and any husband where the individual particulars of name, class, race, country, socio-economic-academic background are irrelevant" (Dutta 24). The setting of the story is "a typical boarding-house bedroom" (*Keynotes* 123) but the whole discussion and questioning process actually take place in the mind of the heroine. The story begins with the description of an empty frame which is "a simple, pretty little frame, such as you may buy at any sale cheaply [...]and yet it stand[s] on the middle of the bedroom mantelboard" (*Keynotes* 123). With the introduction of the female protagonist, the reader understands that she finds love letters written between her husband and another woman. However, instead of worrying or sorrowing, she begins to think about her own experience with her ex-lover whom she has had an affair before she gets married to her present husband. She has flashbacks about her love affair and the letters she has exchanged with the man; and, this incident leads her to question her marriage and the reason why she has got married to her husband. Through this questioning process, the reader is introduced to the ex-lover by means of the protagonist's mind. He is, as she implies throughout the story, an unconventional man in terms of his opinions about the marriage institution. He is against any kind of obligation imposed by the society as he explains, "[he] cannot, [he] will not bind [himself] to [her] by any legal or religious tie" (*Keynotes* 126). Yet, in the course of her rumination and questioning, the protagonist reaches a solution that she has made the mistake of her life by choosing a husband who is suitable for her in terms of social and economic criteria of the society but not suitable for her heart. She has a conversation with her husband about the letters he has exchanged with his lover and tells him how she thinks and feels as a result of this experience. At the end of the story, although both wife and husband are aware of the fact that they do not love each other, the reader observes that they still maintain their marriage as if there is nothing to be considered since divorce is not a socially appropriate action to take with respect to the conventions of marriage in Victorian

society. The idea of nothingness, at this point, uncovers itself in the form of an empty frame symbolising “the emptiness of the woman’s marriage without love” (Faltejskova 27). In her dream, her face expands and covers the whole empty part of the frame, but of course, with the restriction of its edges indicating that she is still limited within the borders of the society.

In a general framework of the story, the heroine’s decision lies at the heart of the story since it is the reason why she has been experiencing infidelity and disappointment in her marriage. When the story is analysed, it is apparent that her rejection of the lover’s proposal emerges from social oppression and standards of the period. Since Victorian society is established on duty-based dynamics, each person and gender in the public has some specific roles in accordance with their social or economic position. For instance, a middle class or upper-middle class woman is expected to stay at her home and to be a perfect wife and mother to maintain the traditional family unit of Britain; on the other side, to survive in harsh conditions of the time, a working class woman is obliged to work in men’s domain with less wage (Young 1-5). As a *natural* consequence of these duties attributed to the genders, the protagonist is expected to marry a man who is socially and economically suitable for her since she is a middle class woman. To fulfil her task in the society, she is required to be a part of an *appropriate* marriage which is defined by the Victorian ideals as “a legal contract that obliges a husband to provide money for basic necessities and a wife to give sex, do housework, mind kids, and to go wherever he [chooses] to take her. Legally, and practically, too, the cards are stacked in his favor. He earns the money, and he has the power” (Bird 58). As observed, members of the Victorian community are supposed to act within the social roles, which are constructed for them in compliance with the mentality of the society.

Marriage is an institution where both men and women are presumed to behave in accordance with the conditions and norms given to them. As an individual experiencing and witnessing this situation in her society, Egerton intends to reflect the negative consequences of the limitations imposed upon both sexes. She presents the idea of free love, without the borders of any social, economic or religious bond, through the proposal of the heroine’s ex-lover: “I love you, I worship you; but you know my views. I cannot, I will not bind myself to you by any legal or religious tie. I must be free and

unfettered to follow that which I believe right for me” (*Keynotes* 126-127). It is clear that the writer reflects her own ideas about love and affection in the character of the male lover. Obviously, she rejects any kind of external intervention and argues that love should be based on emotions and desires; it is between two individuals and no one or no institution has the right to justify or to condemn it. She challenges the restrictions that can suppress natural instincts of individuals or prevent their free will and action. She strongly defends that marriage should be regarded as the union of two spirits with sexual desires, not as the tool of reproduction as Victorian minds have perceived it; and, she opposes the idea “concerning the deployment of Victorian strategies for disciplining women’s bodies and sexualities [...] for the purposes of the British Empire’s management” (Jusová, “George Egerton” 27-28). Egerton’s main argument here is that the individual and his/her freedom in every domains of the society – in particular economic independence of women, sexual freedom, free education etc. – should be above any social or political institution. As a New Woman writer who promotes sexual freedom of women without any legal or religious bonds, to support her argument from the perspective of women, she intentionally focuses on the oppression and unrest that women have experienced before getting married and also through the marriage. While this oppression is evident before the marriage process in Mary Ascension’s story, Egerton presents the same oppression and the perception of duty-based gender roles through the protagonist’s marriage in this story.

As Wendell V. Harris puts emphasis in his article “John Lane’s Keynotes Series and the Fiction of the 1890’s,” (1968) Egerton frankly brings forward and defends the idea that “the institution of marriage [is] corrupted by society’s demand that women trade on male sexual desire to achieve security for themselves [...and she also uses] an incredibly idealized heroine to present the thesis that marriage constitutes an unnecessary and degrading bondage” (1408). What Harris highlights with “women trade” is that marriage in the Victorian Period is more like a mutual business agreement rather than a field of feelings and desires; and the woman to be married is not the subject but the object of this agreement. Accordingly, these mentioned “incredibly idealized heroines” can be observed both in the character of “The Millstreet Love Story,” Mary Ascension Moylan, who has been a submissive and obedient daughter although she is forced to give up her love and to get married to a man she does not even know; and also in the

character of “An Empty Frame,” the unnamed heroine, who has chosen social norms over love and has maintained her marriage although she has been cheated. Egerton manifestly reveals the reason why the heroine has chosen her present husband instead of her lover in the following quotation: “[a]nd she had replied [to the lover] “No!” and in her loneliness of spirit married him [the husband] who seemed to need her most out of those who admired her” (*Keynotes* 127). As can be deduced, her choice is not guided by her heart or instincts; instead, she has followed the teachings of her society and her gender role. The word “need” is quite significant here in terms of projecting the position of a Victorian woman that since she has no right to speak or act freely, she wants to have control over something or somebody at least in the domestic sphere (Purdue and Floyd 9). Accordingly, instead of a free-spirited lover, the heroine prefers choosing a husband, who is socially in need of her. Therefore, it can be interpreted that the behavioural codes and social conventions of the time are so internalised by the people that both women and men feel the urge to act in accordance with their roles and cannot accept anybody who lives his/her life without the restriction of these norms as observed in the protagonist’s rejection of her unconventional ex-lover. Notwithstanding, the protagonist suffers a loss when she compares and contrasts the *incomes* and the *outcomes* of her marriage; the lack of success she has experienced enlightens her about the true aim of a marriage. She becomes aware of the fact that her husband is in love with another woman while she is also in love with another man.

This consciousness enables her to realise that she is not the only one who is forced to make choices in accordance with the society’s expectations but all women are in the same position. She understands that her “apparently unique personal problem [is] the problem of all women, [is] indeed a social and political problem” (Mies 7). Therefore, Egerton presents the abovementioned idealised and internalised roles also in the character of the lover of the protagonist’s husband. In the conversation the protagonist and her husband have about the husband’s affair, before he explains that he is rejected by the lover, the protagonist says, “[s]he wrote such an awfully nice letter, you know, wished –” “You all sorts of happiness [...] and hopes you’ll meet in a better world?” He rises to his feet and stares at her in dumb amazement. How could she know?” (*Keynotes* 128). By contrast with his idea that she might have read the letter, in fact, she just makes an assumption about the most probable answer the lover can give since she has also



experienced the same situation with her ex-lover. As a woman who has already paved this way, she can understand the position and thoughts of her husband's lover because it is the response of a typical Victorian woman, who is afraid of breaking traditions and following her desires (Harrison 157). She can also predict the way the woman will behave throughout her life: ““Nice girl!” I don't doubt it; and she will be an awfully nice woman, and under each and every circumstance of life she will behave like an awfully nice person” (*Keynotes* 129). When analysed in detail, it is evident that the heroine actually depicts herself not the other woman; through these two women, who seem to be opponents, Egerton attempts to introduce the irony that no matter in which position they stand, women are one and the same. They can understand each other, indeed, because they have to behave in the same manner, which is enforced by the socially constructed gender roles of the Victorian Period. For that reason, the writer defends that “the commitment to fight against male dominance, against all humiliation and ill-treatment of women, and against continuing inequality of the sexes [should create] a new feeling of sisterhood among women” (Mies 7) in order to challenge and most importantly to change the social position of women.

On the other hand, through her protagonist, Egerton attempts to reflect the unfavourable consequences of “[a] cowardly refusal to follow one's soul-mate, as in the short [story] “An Empty Frame”” (Vicinus 14). She argues that rejecting true love and choosing a socially suitable match instead is an inaccurate action to take since it is against the human nature and desires. She defends the idea that an individual's happiness depends upon whether s/he seeks for the fulfilment of his/her passions and free soul; and, insists that if this satisfaction is not provided, it leads people to have an aimless and desperate life. She proves her point by presenting the remorse of the heroine in the conversation she has after she has learned her husband's affair:

Jealous! Do you think I cried because I was jealous? Good God, no! I cried because I was sorry, fearfully sorry, for myself. She – with a fine thin contempt – would have suited you better than I [... and] I – with a catch of voice – with a great man might have made a great woman; and now those who know and understand me [bitterly] think of me as a great failure. (*Keynotes* 129-130)

She is obviously disappointed since she has finally faced the consequences of her decision to choose duty over love. With the statement “think of me as a great failure,” Egerton implies the mentality of the heroine with regard to her marriage; the first detail

she thinks about in this situation is the perception of others concerning the success or “failure” of her marriage. It brings the reader to the idea that it is a typical representation of Victorian mind, which gives utmost importance to the judgments of society and considers marriage as a business in which one can profit or suffer a loss (Matthew 163-170). However, the writer especially emphasises the sense of futility and unhappiness the protagonist has to face and cope with since she strives for creating awareness in the minds of Victorian women. With this aim, she presents her women characters as role models by means of whom the women of the period can observe the mistakes and be able to comprehend their situation in the society. However, characters are not the only tools of Egerton; she also employs innovative techniques and symbols to criticise the conventions.

Egerton’s criticism and opposition to all mainstream ideas of Victorian Period, “ideological positions, [and] disrespect for conventional morality [...] are [also] reflected in her numerous formal innovations” (Jusová, “George Egerton” 41) such as her preference of flashbacks and stream of consciousness instead of a linear time order. As Jusová indicates, “[i]nstead of chronologically following the gradual progress of her character’s growth, Egerton prefers to render impressions of individual moments in a woman’s life, favoring such moments that abruptly (rather than gradually) shift the direction of the character’s life” (“George Egerton” 41). When “An Empty Frame” is analysed, it is evident that although the body of Egerton’s heroine gets stuck into the present time in a boarding-house bedroom, her mind goes back and forth in time, remembering her old love and the letter written to her by the ex-lover. As the story goes on, she recalls her memories related to him in the course of the present events she has been experiencing. It is important to notice that instead of reporting the past actions, Egerton makes her characters talk directly through flashbacks as can be observed in the flashback scene when the ex-lover talks about his feeling to the heroine: “I kiss your hands, – such little hands! I never saw the like; slim child-hands, with a touch as cool and as soft as a snow-flake!” (*Keynotes* 126). Therefore, Egerton’s use of flashbacks as an alternative to the linear course can be perceived as a resistance to mainstream ideas she challenges in every form or field. She makes no intervention or mediation in the narration of the protagonist, which can be interpreted as a reflection of her challenge against the interventions implemented on marriages by the society.

On the other hand, the “shift” and change that Jusová implies is obvious in the story when the heroine has to make a decision for her future. The writer presents to the reader how the heroine’s life has evolved as a result of the decision she has made in a specific period. Such situation can be observed in many stories of Egerton since she gives utmost importance to the choices that determine the future of her characters (Vicinus 18), indicating women have to take the responsibility of making their own decisions if they want to live a fulfilled life. When the protagonist goes back in time and thinks about her ex-lover’s commitment and admiration to her and how she has rejected his love, “[h]er inner soul-struggle is acting as a strong developing fluid upon a highly sensitized plate; anger, scorn, pity, contempt chase one another like shadows across her face” (*Keynotes* 125). She feels devastated and foolish because she has rejected and ignored her love letters, “the words that decided her fate” (*Keynotes* 126); as a consequence of her choice, she has to face a path of life that is based upon the artificiality – in love, in marriage, and in society.

Another tool used by Egerton for criticism is the representation of Victorian dressing style through the analogy created between clothes and prison. She proves that her aim is to display the social limits that reveal themselves either in the form of clothes or in the form of social norms and roles. She intentionally and successfully employs her words for the depiction of her heroine’s undressing as follows: “in a second she has freed herself from its ensheathing; garment after garment falls from her, until she stands almost free [...] slips her naked feet into fur-lined slippers, with a movement that is somehow the expression of an intense nervous relief from a thrall” (*Keynotes* 124). As can be observed, especially with the use of word “unshathing,” the writer associates the clothes of her heroine and the feeling of entrapment; moreover, she supports her opinion with the phrase, “almost free.” It is obvious from the description that Egerton considers the traditional and fashionable clothing style of this era as a prison where women are kept within strict borders of norms and under social control. The same feeling of being trapped can also be observed with the idea of “relief from a thrall” when the heroine takes off her shoes; this phrase is significantly important to reflect Egerton’s perspective on the fashion imposed by the society. She associates women with enchained slaves who are forced to act under the control of their masters, in the case of women, under the control of male desire.

Another important point to focus on here is that Egerton, in fact, gives some hints about the social position of her heroine with this depiction of clothing “garment after garment” because in Victorian Era, middle class and upper class women, “[s]triving for the fashionable waist size of eighteen inches, [...] wore whalebone corsets, put on in two halves and then laced tightly up the back. For much of the century, women also labored under the weight of five or six layers of petticoats underneath their bell-shaped skirts” (Ashby 59).



Figure 1: Victorian Fashion for Women (Ashby 59)

Therefore, it is clear from the depiction of her clothes that the heroine of the story is either from middle or upper-middle class.

The last tool that Egerton interestingly but skilfully employs to present the borders of the society and the feelings caused by these borders is the image of an empty frame, which is “a simple, pretty little frame, such as you may buy at any sale cheaply; its ribbed wood, aspinalled white, with an inner frame of pale-blue plush; its one noticeable feature that it [is] empty. And yet it [stands] on the middle of the bedroom mantelboard” (*Keynotes* 123). Within this context, it can be interpreted that the empty frame symbolises the marriage of the heroine since it still continues to exist in spite of its emptiness. Monika Faltejskova also argues that “[t]he empty frame that unifies the narrative used to hold the picture of her lover [and] Egerton uses the frame as a symbol

for the lover's absence and the emptiness of the woman's marriage without love" (27). As its depiction suggests, it does not have any specific feature that can distinguish it from other typical or, with a more appropriate term, traditional marriages; however, it still maintains its existence although there is not love, loyalty or affection in it. Nevertheless, it provides the moment of awareness for the heroine:

Unlike other fin de siècle writers, such as George Moore, Oscar Wilde and Ernest Dowson, Egerton [is] not influenced by French Decadence, but by the virtually unknown Scandinavian realists. For them she absorbed the value of describing the minutiae of the moment – the tiny, seemingly irrelevant impressions that remain after emotionally important events, such as the look of the grass or the pebbles on a path. (Vicinus 18)

As also argued above, the object that recalls that moment of the heroine is the empty frame in this case. All her past memories and her questioning of the decision she has made come to the front when she stares at the frame. It is a significant detail that through the end of the story, she throws the frame into the fireplace after she has discovered and faced her mistakes. With respect to this action, it is a symbolic move employed by Egerton to indicate the awareness the heroine has experienced. Notwithstanding, her dream presented at the end of the story is highly suggestive: "her head is wedged in a huge frame, the top of her head touches its top, the sides its sides, and it keeps growing larger, and her head with it, until she seems to be sitting inside her own head, and the inside is one vast hollow" (*Keynotes* 131). Within the scope of this frame and dream metaphor, Egerton suggests that all of the borders and limitations are in fact constructed in the minds of individuals. Therefore, as long as women continue to internalise and to accept these artificial restrictions implemented by the patriarchal discourse, there is no chance of standing against these ideals or of changing them. Yet, the protagonist's choice to burn the frame at the end can be taken as a hopeful step led by her awareness. Obviously, Egerton suggests a new position to her protagonist who actually has a strong and unique character unlike the Victorian prototype.

From the very beginning of the story, Egerton introduces the protagonist through her complicated feelings and incomprehensible thoughts, which she does not express directly and not expect others, especially men, to perceive them. She frankly defends the idea that male mentality is not comprehensive enough to understand and appreciate a woman's intellect and feelings; she tells her husband: "I have a bit of a complex nature;

you couldn't understand me if you tried to, and better not try!" (*Keynotes* 130). The writer clearly presents her heroine as a manifestation to the general opinion that dominates the Victorian Era. According to this opinion, man's brain is more developed and qualified compared to woman – whose brain is considered as limited in intellect and skills (Helsing, Sheets, and Veeder 77). Within the frame of the mind-set of this period, it was an accepted fact that "not only were women physically inferior to men, but in contrast to received opinion, their sensory acuity and, consequently, their intellectual ability were less developed than previously believed" (Soloway 115). However, Egerton criticises this perception with regard to gender through despising the husband's intelligence and praising the wife's senses and wit. Within this context, it is a striking and rebellious action for a woman writer to present such aware and self-esteemed woman protagonist in an epoch when it is highly believed by both men and women that a capable and busy female brain is linked with "psychological disease" (Moseley 6).

Furthermore, Egerton does not confine herself to only stating that woman's brain is not limited or inferior but she also claims that women are mentally superior to men, and she supports her argument by means of employing free spirited and gifted woman characters who are able to question the circumstances they experience and to make their own decisions. Most of the time, these women are presented to have dominant personality although they are perceived as "weak" by the male characters as also observed in this story: "[y]ou love me; I know it, you other half of me. You want me to complete your life, as I you, you good, sweet woman; you slight, weak thing, with your strong will and your grand, great heart; you witch, with a soul of clean white fire" (*Keynotes* 126). What her ex-lover qualifies as weak is clearly her body not her mental abilities or senses; on the contrary, he emphasises her strength with the indications of "strong will" and "great heart." Especially, his reference to "witch" can be interpreted as the indications of the heroine's superiority as it symbolises strength and ability of women in Egerton's stories. As Martha Vicinus argues in her article "Rediscovering the 'New Woman' of the 1890s: The Stories of 'George Egerton,'" Egerton aims to project the superiority of womanhood by drawing an analogy between the untamed and unpredicted nature of women and the supernatural abilities in witchcraft (12-20). Therefore, although witchery is a notion, which has been considered as evil, the writer uses it as a

way of praising womanhood and women's power. She generally makes her male characters admit their inferior position in many of her short stories, including this story: "[b]e with me, work with me, share with me, live with me, my equal as a creature; above me, as my queen of women" (*Keynotes* 126) and he also says "I will kneel to you" (*Keynotes* 127). Through the devotion and expression of her lover, the writer aims to reverse the traditional gender roles and to put man in a lower position that he is ready to serve the heroine. Egerton clearly employs such strategies and expressions to criticise the stereotypes and mentality of her time; she prefers to put her female characters into the subject position to give them a proper and specific personality.

To put it plainly, Egerton does not objectify her heroine by presenting her as a traditional and common submissive Victorian woman but portrays her as a strong character who has a personality peculiar to her 'self': "[h]er face is more characteristic than beautiful. Nine men would pass it, the tenth sell his immortal soul for it" (*Keynotes* 124-125). It is a significant detail that the writer chooses the word "characteristic" to depict her heroine; it can be interpreted that with reference to the use of this adjective, Egerton distinguishes her protagonist from the typical women of the period and emphasises her unique personality traits. She basically gives her an identity that differs from the general female notion of the dominant male perspective; and can only be perceived by some men who are able to see the true nature of a real woman. Obviously, she puts emphasis on the intellectual and unique beauty of her character; and, "Egerton's resistance to the bourgeois ascetic ideal of feminine behaviour and duties" (Jusová 34) is evident throughout the story by means of the representation of the heroine.

To be more specific, the writer reflects the mental capabilities of the woman by mirroring them in her physical appearance: "[t]he eyes tell you little; they are keen and inquiring, and probe others' thoughts rather than reveal their own. The whole face is one of peculiar strength and self-reliance" (*Keynotes* 125). Obviously, she is not a woman whose existence is dependent on her husband; on the contrary, she is a conscious woman who is self-confident and aware of her abilities and strong spirit. It is important to note that the writer employs the words "strength" and "self-reliance" to depict her character since they are the adjectives generally used to define men. As can be observed

from the depiction, the heroine has a remarkable character that one cannot easily comprehend from the surface of her social appearance. Egerton clearly implies the “untamed spirit” of her heroine with this portrayal as she always defends that a true woman has a spirit, which is untameable, and unpredictable for the superficial minds of traditional Victorian men (Pykett 15-20).

To sum up the whole idea either directly presented or implied throughout this story, Egerton’s main argument is that “the existing version of morality imposed by public institutions needs to be replaced with a new kind of individual and communal ethics” (Jusová 42). For that reason, people should not accept the intervention or oppression of any social or political institutions; on the contrary, the main aim of life should be the fulfilment of personal desires and passions without the bondage of anything or anybody. Through *the moment of consciousness* of her unnamed heroine, the writer addresses all women in her time and suggests that “there can be no equality between women and men in the workplace [or in any social, political, or economic place] if there is not a change in the traditional roles of men and women in the family” (Wallace 47). As discussed in the stories of this chapter, Egerton criticises the marriage institution since it is the keystone of the family institution where the socially constructed roles and conventions are initially imposed on the individuals. However, the heroine of this story suffers from her inaction as it is also observed in the case of Mary Ascension of “The Millstreet Love Story.” When the protagonists of both stories are analysed, it is clear that Egerton proves her point that awareness alone is not sufficient to make a difference in the society or in particular in the minds of individuals. From her perspective, a woman primarily needs to take action and to eliminate the limits in her mind in order to follow her true nature and to fulfil her desires. In this way, she can have sufficient power and confidence to create a change first in her personal life and then in her society and its social conventions. Nonetheless, the burning scene of the frame presented at the end of the story can be interpreted as an act that may lead the protagonist to overcome her inaction and to take the necessary responsibilities in the name of her personal desires and emotions.



**CHAPTER II**  
**AN UNTAMED SPIRIT SEEKING FOR SEXUAL**  
**LIBERATION: “NOW SPRING HAS COME: A**  
**CONFIDENCE” AND “A CROSS LINE”**

Craving for liberation and empowerment, New Woman writers attempt to reflect the subjugated role of women in society and to employ free-spirited and self-confident heroines to guide Victorian women in their path to realisation and emancipation. With this aim, they “created a distinctly different body of literature [...] although New Woman writers did not always agree on solutions to the problems that faced them, their texts did engage with common themes like marriage reform, social activism, motherhood, equality in education, sexual freedom and greater career opportunities” (Purdue and Floyd IX). As a remarkable defender of women rights and sexual freedom, Egerton presents to her readers self-esteemed and conscious heroines who have the ability to think in critical ways and voice their thoughts without hesitation. She creates her works first for herself and then for all Victorian women who could find themselves in her stories, through which they would be able to question their positions and rights and to reach an ultimate awareness (Middlebrook 141-146). In accordance with this idea, the major aim of this chapter is to analyse the stories “Now Spring Has Come: A Confidence” and “A Cross Line” with regard to the new type of woman who is capable and aware of her strength and rights, in other words, a woman who has the control of her self. Besides, Egerton’s criticism of ideal Victorian woman and her ways of challenging this idealization will be discussed throughout this chapter.

## “NOW SPRING HAS COME: A CONFIDENCE”

Because she is condemned to know only the factual contingencies of life, she makes herself the priestess of the Ideal.

--Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

Let woman remain what Nature has made her: an ideal woman, the companion and lover of a man, the mistress of the home.

--Hugh Stutfield, “Tommyrotics”

George Egerton’s semi-autobiographical short story “Now Spring Has Come: A Confidence” was published in 1893 as one of the most recognized stories in which she aims to reveal the artificiality of Victorian ideal woman and to encourage the women of the period in order to create a new identity based on freedom and autonomy. It is important to note that this new type of woman presented as the protagonist of the story is not a utopic idea; on the contrary, she is based on Egerton’s experiences as reflected in the story. This sense of reality enables readers to associate themselves with the protagonist and to perceive the possibility of achieving the idea of freedom. Moreover, Egerton reinforces this idea through the use of *unnamed* characters which give the story a touch of universality suggesting that liberated and self-sufficient woman is possible for all only if the socially constructed and imposed patriarchal discourse is eliminated. With this aim, the idealization of woman, Egerton’s resistance against these Victorian ideals, and the literary techniques she employs to emphasise and supports her argument will be discussed throughout the analysis of this story. Before examining in detail, it may be appropriate to give a summary of the story for a better understanding of the analysis.

“Now Spring Has Come” is about an *unnamed* woman who falls in love with an *unnamed* author who writes the *unnamed* but “very bad book” (*Keynotes* 47) she reads. She is deeply affected by the story the author presents; she does not take the story as “a possible experience [but] as real” (*Keynotes* 48). That is why she begins to feel very compassionate about the author of this book even without seeing him in person or

having any information about him. In order to find the author and to tell him that “one human being, and that one a woman, [has] the courage to help him” (*Keynotes* 48), she starts an investigation about this mysterious author whom very few of her acquaintances know about. As a result of her research, she is able to find his address; hence, this information enables her to write a letter to him. After a few letters, this interest and passion becomes reciprocal and they both fall in love with each other on the basis of the ideas they have shared through their letters. Finally, they reach a decision that they will meet in autumn in an *unnamed* Norwegian town, which is unfamiliar to both of them. Therefore, the lack of naming the places or characters can be considered intentional as the writer aims to remove the sense of belonging to set her characters free from any kind of boundaries.

Through her voyage to the town, the woman frequently portrays nature around her and her own nature depicting herself as a free spirited woman who is different from other women as she declares: “I, whom, as you know, think as little of starting alone for, say, Mexico, as another woman of going to afternoon tea” (*Keynotes* 50). She makes various comments on “untrue feminine” (*Keynotes* 50) as she puts it, and criticises the general views of the society on gender roles throughout the story. When they finally meet in the town, a part of their conversation, as she mentions, is also about this topic that she especially presents the reader to show that their affair is not only based on instincts and passion but also on their world views and shared ideas. After one day they have spent together, their love for each other becomes stronger and they do not want this relationship to come to an end. However, since they have to go back to their cities and lives, communicating via letters becomes their only way of maintaining their relation; and, they decide to meet again in the same place in spring. Letters are exchanged until spring time keeping their memories and love alive through “a long winter” (*Keynotes* 65).

Nevertheless, the coldness in nature around them also affects the warm feelings in their hearts. On their next date, this realisation awakens them to a relationship in which they begin to see their differences and deficiencies. As a result of the change in nature of their relationship as in nature around them, they mutually decide to move on with their lives with no more attachments to each other. The man tells her that he is going to burn

the letters he has received from her by creating a heartbreak in the woman since her words are her world as she implies: “I was thinking and crying inwardly over my letters. Such letters! – one only writes once like that, I think” (*Keynotes* 73). It almost proves that it is the mere idea of her love and passion what she attaches importance to, not the bodily existence of the man. On the other hand, she feels quite happy as she considers this love story as an experience beginning with her passion and ending with her will. At the very last scene of the story, the reader mourns for the ending of spring and the loss of the woman as she buries her letters in grief as she explains: “I had a grand burial all by myself. I dug a deep, and laid all my dreams and foolish wishes and sweet hopes in it” (*Keynotes* 75). However, in spite of the loss, the burial can be considered as the element of hope since earth has the ultimate power of regeneration. When different attitudes of the female and male characters towards the letters are considered, it can be suggested that Egerton implies the destructive nature of man through the choice of burning which indicates the eternal abolishment of the letters compared to the burial which indicates regeneration.

In this respect, it is clear that Egerton gives a hint about her protagonist and the essence of her love affair from the very beginning of the story, with its title. As the title “Now Spring Has Come: A Confidence” suggests, she approaches woman from two different perspectives in this story. The first one is from an essentialist approach that links nature and women as implied in the first part of the story’s title “Now Spring Has Come.” The representation of nature through seasons and the burial of the letters directly brings one to the idea that Egerton may create a connection between nature and human nature, specifically the nature of woman in this case. It is a generally accepted perspective that “[i]n many of her writings Egerton mobilizes a discourse of nature to explore women’s heterosexuality (and, usually, their reproductive urges)” (Heilmann 103) as it is also observed in this story. Presenting her story with the title “Now Spring Has Come”, the writer establishes a first impression that is directly connected to nature. The analogy reflected in the title implies that the time for regeneration and blossoming has come; like it brings life to nature, it will awaken the nature of woman and her spirits through love. As the story continues, the reader can more easily grasp the notion that this love story is constructed on the cycles of nature. In accordance with the change in seasons, feelings also change and evolve affecting the nature of woman.

Encountering the book of the male author around springtime, the protagonist spends her whole summer through exchanging letters with the man. It is apparent that the revival of nature is linked to the revival of the feelings and passion of the woman. As Lynn Pykett argues in her book *The Improper Feminine* (1992), “Egerton tends to represent woman as a pre-cultural primitive, bound to the mysteries and cycles of nature” (166) supporting the idea that this love story has a circular essence. In this sense, spring can certainly be taken as the beginning of the cycle in the story, which is also a foreshadowing for the fate of this love. With the summertime, the reader observes an arousal of feelings both in the woman and man proving that vitality of nature echoes itself in the characters of the story. As a consequence of this passionate desire to see each other, they meet in autumn which can be considered as the most dense season in terms of their love and passion. Since they meet in person for the first time, both the protagonist and the man perceive the opposite sex in the form they imagine and desire each other through the letters, as confessed many times by the female character through the end of the story (*Keynotes* 68-73).

The connection between the cycles of nature and the cycles of their love also reveals itself in the progress of this love as they discuss the time of their next date: “‘I will come back’, I said, ‘when the winter is over!’ ‘Ay, but winter is long, or it used to be!’ ‘No matter, I will come with the spring!’” (*Keynotes* 61). Through their first date, the woman repeatedly emphasises that she will see him “[w]hen spring comes!” (*Keynotes* 62;64), which can be considered as the symbol of the importance attached to the natural cycle. In this context, winter can be approached from two different perspectives with regard to the meaning it carries symbolically. The first one is from an essentialist point of view, which suggests as romantics discuss that nature and its process directly affects human nature and the behavioural and emotional patterns of individuals (Oerlemans 31-33). Hence, winter and passivity it brings along is associated with the alienation and distancing of the characters; as winter causes hibernation and the death of many creatures in nature, it also affects their love and emotions resulting in *death* of their love. From the second point of view, on the other hand, the emphasis put on the duration of the winter can be interpreted as such that creating a change in the emotions and thoughts takes a long process. Therefore, Egerton may indicate through this winter metaphor that altering and modifying the ideas of the society with regard to gender

based social roles and norms is a long and toilsome task to achieve. However, once this progress is completed, time for regeneration and productivity will come and enrich the social and intellectual perspectives of the society as spring brings vitality and fertility to nature.

In parallel with this idea, when the relation between nature and their love is taken into consideration, it is inevitable for this love to be affected by the coldness and harshness of winter. She makes some implications with regard to the toughness of winter in her nature: “all the years of my life were not as long as that weary winter” (*Keynotes* 64), obviously indicating that as Egerton connects her woman character to nature, the changes occurring in nature directly have an impact on the woman and her own nature. To further argue the issue, “her identification of woman with nature, and even her apparently disruptive insistence on the primacy of female sexual feeling, combine to reinscribe woman in an essentialist discourse in which women’s lot is determined by physiology, and woman is a creature who is by *nature* affective and ‘affectible’” (Pykett 168). Although it is apparently an essentialist approach to woman, Egerton considers it as a way of liberating woman and of making her superior by favouring nature in the culture/nature dichotomy in which culture is represented by patriarchy. The ongoing effects of winter on the feelings and senses of the woman character is metaphorically presented when they meet again in winter: she says, “[s]pring is later up there; perhaps some of the winter’s frost was still in the atmosphere, for something froze it on my lips, I felt a curious stiffening in my face, and the touch of his hand did not thaw me” (*Keynotes* 66). Proving the argument presented by Pykett in the above given quotation, this depiction of her feelings reveals that the woman is “affectible” with the touch of nature; hence, she is not independent from it.

To be more specific, the fluctuations in her feelings and her state of mind show parallels with the changes in nature and according to the ideas of the protagonist it is the way it should be; she says, “I am glad he was too honest to hide his startled realization of the fact that autumn and spring are different seasons, and that one’s feelings may undergo a change in a winter. I do not see why I should resent that” (*Keynotes* 70). Therefore, as all living creatures come to life, and die in compliance with the cycle of nature, their love, as a dependent part of nature, also completes its cycle and comes to an end. When

they meet in spring, since the cycle has already completed, nothing is alive in them with respect to their love and passion. At this point, one can reach a conclusion that although this analogy between nature and woman is an essentialist way to position woman, Egerton takes it as a subversive tool to deconstruct the idea of nature positioned as subjugated and abused. Through this love story, the reader can easily observe that from the very beginning of the story to the very ending of it, the woman character is able to act and decide with her free will. It is indeed a method employed by Egerton to restore nature, which has long been marginalised and labelled as inferior by patriarchal discourses, with “an idea of nature enriched by urban tension and complexity, made vibrant by sexual expressiveness, made strange by irony, slang, and archaism” (Dowling 449). The writer employs the woman character of this story as an agent to represent her free spirited and true idea of the feminine, who is not inferior or subjugated, but on the contrary, liberated and empowered by her nature and instincts. It is also remarkable that unlike French decadents influencing British writers through the idea that “the traditional association of the female body with nature [proves] that women [are] incapable of artistic agency” (Hughes 851), Egerton presents through the letters of the woman that this connection between woman and nature, actually, improves the artistic and literary skills of women since it revives emotions and passion. Through this nature analogy presented in the story, the writer reveals that embracing the *so-called* inferior, as she praises primitivism since it is the unconstructed and socially non-restricted version of an individual (Pykett 164-170), women are to discover the emancipated and *untamed* self, who is capable of achieving everything they desire.

On the other hand, when the second part of the title “A Confidence” is taken into consideration from the perspective of New Woman, it can be seen as a sign referring to her main character as a New Woman who has self-confidence and self-sufficiency; she is, in that sense, a typical representation of New Woman “who demanded, or took, new freedoms in the public arena, such as living apart from her family, spending her own money, and travelling alone” (Vicinus 13) as observed through the protagonist of the story. In the introduction part, while the writer gives a flashback about the childhood of the woman, she depicts her as “[a] girl with a pair of unusually bright, penetrating eyes” (*Keynotes* 45). Similar to this one, “unusual”, Egerton intentionally uses adjectives indicating difference for many times to define the woman character and her love story

as in the following quotations: “[a]n extraordinary thing to do [...] but the whole thing was rather unusual” or “an awkward little schoolgirl” or “[i]t was all so different, you know” (*Keynotes* 55; 60; 67). Repetition of such words indicating dissimilarity highlights the idea that the protagonist is different from the submissive and obedient Victorian women who try to fit in the general stereotype established for them. In this way, Egerton refuses the perception that being unusual one in the society is problematic; but she rather encourages women to see and praise the difference since it creates diversity and richness as can be deduced from the protagonist’s experience: “[e]very moment was delightful; we were making discoveries [...] we were both unconventional, and were shaking hands mentally all the time” (*Keynotes* 56). She clearly enjoys being extraordinary and encountering dissimilarity, because it is a way to explore the unknown. When the sources of her distinctive character is analysed, they are certainly her recognition and self-confidence originating from these discoveries, and her awareness of the intelligence and capacities she has. In its very core, it is significant to trace the root of this realization through the life of Egerton as she reflects it in the story through the autobiographical elements she has used.

When “Now Spring Has Come” is technically argued, it is apparent that the story acquires a semi-autobiographical quality with Egerton’s use of her personal experiences. It is significant to reveal the elements of reality in the story that the writer’s love affair with the Norwegian writer Knut Hamsun “provide[s] the basis of her story” (Nelson 7), since he strongly influences her artistic style with respect to the use of realistic elements. In addition to this, the very first quality that implies the autobiographical characteristics of “Now Spring Has Come” is Egerton’s choice of first person narrative. D’hoker, as one of the critics who maintains that the narrator of the story is the “prototypical heroine” (536) of Egerton, arguing that the writer employs first person narrator to actualize her characters and to prove the possibility of independent woman, hence, “in “Now Spring Has Come”, the I-narrator rebels against the laws and morals that prevent women” (D’hoker 532). Therefore, with the help of her narrative style, she removes any kind of mediator and pulls the reader into the story through her conversation-like narration. The writer’s expression of her situation and feelings such as the one in which she says “[t]ell you how it was? That is not very easy; pathos may become bathos in the telling” (*Keynotes* 46) gives the reader an impression that she is



having a chat with them about one of her memories. As observed by means of first person narrator, Egerton aims to reflect the factual details giving the sense of reality that can lead Victorian women to perceive the achievability of this new type of identity created by the concept of the New Woman.

In the most general sense, she draws parallels between her life and her characters with the aim of manifesting that women's liberation is not an unattainable idea but on the contrary, it is the reality she has been experiencing. She gives some details or hints to create a connection between the identity of her own self and her protagonist as follows: "[o]h yes! I was wretchedly thin. Odd how things strike one. I once saw a representation of Holberg's *Stundesløse* in Copenhagen" (*Keynotes* 67). It is a noteworthy fact that she emphasizes her size since she is described as thin and little by many writers such as Laura Marholm Hansson, who says, "[a] little woman in every imaginable mood, who is placed in all kinds of likely and unlikely circumstances: in every story it is the same little woman with a difference" (65). In another one she says, "[w]ere you ever at the Scandinavian church in the Docks?" (*Keynotes* 74) indicating her experiences in Norway, or she puts emphasis on the similarities between herself and her character regarding their intellectual perspectives: "[d]id we not talk about anything? Of course we did, – Tolstoi and his doctrine of celibacy; Ibsen's *Hedda*; Strindberg's view of the female animal, – and agreed that Friedrich Nietzsche appealed to us immensely" (*Keynotes* 71). Her mention of Nietzsche is another element that directly links Egerton to her protagonist because it is unusual for a regular Victorian woman to have a discussion over him since his works will be translated into English three years after the publication of this story. Such references intensify her ties with her character; hence, indicating her intellectual capacity and profundity. Giving specific details, real names, and locations with regard to the setting of the story creates a familiar environment for her readers and incites them to discover their own potentials and free spirits.

Throughout the story, Egerton also gives various hints with regard to the identity of her male character and the factuality of the story. She attaches a couple of autobiographical features to her male character that immediately reminds us of Knut Hamsun. First of all, the male character is a writer whose book belongs to "[o]ne of the modern realistic school, a *tendenz roman* [about] the passionate pain, the hungry yearning, all the

tragedy of a man's soul-strife with evil and destiny, sorrow and sin" (*Keynotes* 47-48). It is quite intriguing that to define her male character's book, Egerton chooses an expression as "the hungry yearning" that immediately recalls Hamsun's famous book *Hunger* (1890), which was translated into English for the first time by Egerton (D'hoker 541). To further argue, it is mentioned in the story that the male character is from Norway but he is also described as "an American bison or a lion" (*Keynotes* 54); besides, Egerton writes "he was going away to glean material for a new book; that he would burn my letters, - it was safer and wiser to burn letters" (*Keynotes* 73). Such depictions draw parallels with Hamsun's life since he is also a Norwegian author and traveller who spends a period of his life in the U.S. and collects his writing materials from the experiences he gets from the places he has travelled such as Denmark, Germany, Russia, Turkey, and the Middle East (Ruud 241-252). A more specific detail is the burning of her letters, which also finds its parallel in Hamsun's life, as he prefers to burn his earlier writings to open a new page in his life (Knaplund 165-169). In the light of all the ideas discussed above, it is reasonably apparent that "Now Spring Has Come" is based on Egerton's personal experiences; and, it is crucial since it indicates the possibility of achieving a more independent and autonomous life for woman.

However, limiting the story's success and fame within the borders of her relationship with Hamsun or her life experiences would be rather unfair to Egerton's unusual and outstanding ideas with respect to woman and the literary techniques she employs to reflect these ideas. When technicality of the story is analysed, one can observe the use of a very recent narrative device of the period: the stream of consciousness technique, which is an innovative style used by Egerton long before it is highly discussed and praised by Virginia Woolf as it has been discussed in the introduction in detail. By means of this literary technique, she aims to exceed the limitations of traditional writings of the era. In order to reflect the recalling of past memories and to depict the transitions of past and present times in the mind of her character at the same moment, she uses this technique. Thus, as Elke D'hoker and Stephanie Eggermont argue in their article "Fin-de-Siècle Women Writers and the Modern Short Story" (2005), "[i]n Egerton's short stories, [...], aestheticist techniques such as stream of consciousness and symbolism serve to highlight her feminist (or protofeminist) ideas" (298) as is the case in the story. The writer employs this technique to reflect the childhood period of the

woman character as she aims to go back in time to reveal her *untamed* and free spirit. In the introduction part of the story, she presents a scene in which a child later on the reader observes she is the woman character lies “flat on her stomach on the floor, resting her elbows at each side of a book” (*Keynotes* 45). In the following scene, Egerton presents almost the same scene but this time, the woman is an adult and she recalls her past:

Strange how some trivial thing will jog a link in a chain of association, and set it vibrating until it brings one face to face with scenes and people long forgotten in some prison cell in one’s brain; calling to new life a red-haired girl, with sherry-brown eyes, and a flat back, pacing a nursery floor in impatient endeavour to get a fractious child to sleep, – ay, her very voice and her persistent mixing of mocking-bird and spring-time. So muses the child twenty years after, as, past her first youth, with only the eyes and the smile unchanged, she lies on a bear-skin before the fire on a chilly evening in late spring, and goes over a recent experience. (*Keynotes* 46)

As can be observed, the reflection of two different periods of the protagonist’s life in the same scene presented through her mind creates fluidity in time sequence. The flow of her past memories and her childhood plays an important role in the story as an element that unveils the inner thoughts of her. This is a method through which Egerton targets to release the suppressed and untold feelings and desires of a character. As she explains in “A Keynote to *Keynotes*” (1932), by way of stream of consciousness she wants to reach “the complexes and inhibitions, repressions and subconscious impulses that determine actions and reactions” (Egerton 58). In this case, the writer uses the flow of thoughts to give a background for the free spirit of the woman.

In another scene, the reader encounters with another flow in time sequence as the protagonist describes her present self with her childhood self:

I wait with an odd feeling that I am outside myself, watching myself as it were. I can see the very childishness of my figure, the too slight hips and bust, the flash of rings on my fingers, – they are pressed against my heart, for it is beating hatefully, – ay, the very expectant side-poise of head is visible to me some way. It flashes across me as I stand [...] (*Keynotes* 52)

Obviously, Egerton depicts more than the appearance of her character in this scene; although the protagonist’s body is in the present time, her mind sees and perceives herself as her child version. Through reflecting her flow of conscious, Egerton actually uncovers the inner psyche of the protagonist as she always employs “free indirect discourse and interior monologue to achieve a more accurate rendering of the inner

thoughts and hidden desires of her female characters” (D’hoker and Eggermont 301). Therefore, as can be understood from the use of stream of consciousness technique in previously mentioned scenes, the writer employs this method as a way of expressing the untold and the unknown with regard to the female instincts and desires. This technique enables Egerton to voice and reveal the woman from the perception of a woman. Through this female gaze, she presents the true nature of woman exceeding the limits of the roles assigned to women by the patriarchal ideology and discourse of the time. She leaves the conventional ground of Victorian ideal woman and creates a new ground where the social borders between genders are blurred and almost disappeared. Therefore, the use of stream of consciousness makes her way of expressing her ideas unique and different compared to the traditional styles of the period.

Leaving technical qualities aside, when the story is analysed from a social and cultural point of view and what has been accepted *normal* in the society, Victorian Era is one of the strictest periods of time in terms of social norms and roles. To be more specific, gender roles have an important place in the construction of British society and of ideal womanhood and manhood. According to these roles, two different spheres are constructed: domestic sphere for women and outside world for men; “[t]he Victorian ideal of womanhood [centre] on marriage and the home. Woman’s mission in life [is] to be the guardian of moral, spiritual and domestic values.” (Harrison 157). The patriarchal discourse of the era artificially constructs a space for woman in which she is expected to act in accordance with the task she is assigned to; “[a]ccording to generally accepted middle-class views, or rather, views generally accepted in the middle classes, marriage and motherhood [are] the careers marked out for women by nature, and their own homes furnished the fullest scope for women’s abilities” (Holcombe 3). Ideological indoctrination of such gender based roles and limitations in women’s space have functioned as an obstruct before women since it prevents them to take place in man’s domain including educational places, work places, and places of socialization.

To challenge and to go over these socially originated limits, Egerton employs mostly public places or spaces with no borders, which are generally accepted as hybrid places by some critics (Jusová “George Egerton”; O’Toole “George Egerton’s”). As an Irish woman writer who has had the experience of travelling to and living in various

countries in three different continents, she observes that boundaries and borders are all socially and politically constructed notions. Therefore, in her stories, she “favours in-between spaces as settings for her stories: steamers, transatlantic ships, boarding houses and temporary lodgings, crowded streets, abandoned gardens, and the woods” (Jusová, “George Egerton” 43). By this way, she aims to loosen the bonds of her characters with the social norms and to give them a hybrid space where they are able to act without any limitations. One can trace the footprints of such hybridisation also in “Now Spring Has Come” since the characters decide to meet in an unnamed town, which is not familiar to either of them. Besides, both of them take their trip by ship as one of the scenes from the voyage describes by proving Jusová’s argument: “I slept on board, and early the next morning, it was Sunday, I stood on deck watching the coast as we glided through the water that danced in delicious September sunshine. I was happily expectant. At dinner hour we passed a fjord [...]” (*Keynotes* 51). Obviously, Egerton gives her character the chance of meeting new and different people who may belong to any class, race or culture through the use of ship.

To further argue, the characters check into a hotel where they do not have any attachments. The following quotation is taken from the scene when the woman is in her hotel room: “I sat or rather lay in an arm-chair at the window, and watched the water and the ships. It was getting dusk, the luminous dusk of the north [...] [t]he fjord was full of lights from the different crafts at anchor, and the heaven full of stars” (*Keynotes* 57). When looked at in detail, it is apparent from Egerton’s use of descriptions such as “the different crafts at anchor” and “the heaven full of stars” that hybrid places like ship or hotel room provide social interactions for her characters through surrounding them with various types of people. As O’Toole argues in “George Egerton’s Translocational Subjects” (2014), the term “migrancy” referring a journey with no destination or leaving point “helps to describe the careers of Egerton’s characters, since it stresses fluidity rather than fixity” (829). Therefore, the lack of naming the places or characters can be considered intentional as the writer aims to remove sense of belonging to set her characters free from any kind of boundaries. Through these hybrid places, she encourages her woman character to follow her passion and instincts in an environment where she does not know or is not known. In the most general sense, it can be asserted

that Egerton favours translocational characters and hybrid places as a method of liberalising woman and their long hidden instincts.

In parallel with this idea, Egerton presents the reader a protagonist who is obviously much more independent and self-confident compared to traditional Victorian woman; she is able to act in man's domain with the help of the hybrid spaces employed by the writer. Unlike the traditional women of the time who accept the roles constructed for them, she questions the position of women in the society and the validity of these roles. She talks about inferior position of women and the religious and cultural factors causing that:

It seems as if all the religions, all the advancement, all the culture of the past, has only been a forging of chains to cripple posterity, a laborious building up of moral and legal prisons based on false conceptions of sin and shame, to cramp men's minds and hearts and souls, not to speak of women's. What half creatures we are, we women! — hermaphrodite by force of circumstances, deformed results of a fight of centuries between physical suppression and natural impulse to fulfil our destiny. Every social revolution has told hardest on us: when a sacrifice was demanded, let woman make it. (*Keynotes* 48-49)

Through this monologue, Egerton directly refers to the patriarchal discourse that considers women inferior to men. By using the words “creature” and “hermaphrodite” she puts emphasis on the fact that women are situated in the periphery and excluded from the male dominated centre by the patriarchal oppression. She reflects the slave-like position of women in the hands of male domination that “[c]onfined by the masterful male subject to passivity and repetition, woman in patriarchy is a prisoner of immanence” (Maier 279). Besides, her frank reference to the clash between biology-based roles of women and natural instincts is the evidence of her criticism to Victorian conventions, which confine woman within the domestic sphere and the duty of reproduction. She objects to the principles of behaviour on the basis of the idea given in the aforementioned quotation that “moral and legal prisons based on false conceptions of sin and shame” (*Keynotes* 48). The main argument she offers by means of her protagonist's questioning is that these standards do not have their roots in nature; on the contrary, they are shaped and imposed on people by the male authority. She argues that the artificial rules and traditions restrain especially women from communing with their true essences: “[i]sn't it dreadful to think what slaves we are to custom? I wonder shall we ever be able to tell the truth, ever be able to live fearlessly according to our own

light, to believe that what is right for us must be right!” (*Keynotes* 48). As remarked, she proposes that concepts of tradition, rights and wrongs, norms, and roles are “false” ideals established and practiced with the idea of keeping woman under male control.

To go against these obligations and expectations of the society, the writer employs the child metaphor throughout the story in order to give her characters a sense of freedom by attributing them an independent role exceeding the social rules and norms of the patriarchy. She makes frequent references to the idea of childhood as she depicts the characters: “I called him a great child. I think we were both like two great children; [...] He cried laughingly: ‘you say I am a great child, you are a child yourself when you smile!’” (*Keynotes* 55-56). Such attributions to childhood can be thought as a yearning for the past when neither women nor men are surrounded with boundaries or limitations that shape their personalities and ways of life. Egerton uses the image of child as nostalgia; as a tool to subvert socially constructed gender roles since in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, “children were viewed as autonomous beings rather than mere extensions of a patriarchal family” (Austin 75). The idea of childhood acts as an element that deconstructs the existence and responsibilities of woman and man as adults. Being freed from the roles attributed to them, Egerton’s characters in the story create a private space for themselves where they can live their love without limitations or norms; they intentionally reject adulthood as presented: “he denied that I was old; I was like a little girl, but a remarkable little girl” (*Keynotes* 57). Obviously, the rejection of adulthood is actually the rejection of all constructed ideas which restrain the true nature and potentials of the self. It is even more noticeable when their relationship comes to an end. Since they are to turn back their own social environments and lives, the childhood period is replaced by the adulthood that requires responsibilities and being a part of social constructions: “I had lost that buoyant childishness that was so attractive [...] I did look older than in autumn!” (*Keynotes* 68). Hence, it is the mere notion of freedom and autonomy that Egerton utilizes through the concept of childhood. Considered as a part of the romantic phenomenon of English Literature, childhood reflects the pure and untouched nature of an individual (Austin 75-77). On that account, the writer may use the child metaphor to present the essence of self and the idea of being independent from the patriarchal discourses and social boundaries of the time since the child metaphor is

employed as a way of escaping from the realities and conventions of the period (Austin 75-77).

Apart from these artificially constructed limitations, Egerton also takes the reader's attention to the hypocrisy of patriarchy that degrades women for their actions and attitudes in the social domain while praising men for the same notion. At this point, she creates an analogy between woman and nature to stand against the ideal of man that associates himself with culture in nature/culture dichotomy and aims to subjugate and tame the primitive (Dowling 448-450). Arguing that both women and nature are being destroyed by patriarchal authorities, the writer claims men are the ones who make decisions and wars in accordance with their own benefit, and, women and nature are the ones who suffer from the consequences of these decisions. She explains it very "hotly":

And yet there are men, and the best of them, who see all this, and would effect a change if they knew how. Why it came about? Because men manufactured an artificial morality; made sins of things that were as clean in themselves as the pairing of birds on the wing; crushed nature, robbed it of its beauty and meaning, and established a system that means war, and always war, because it is a struggle between instinctive truths and cultivated lies. Yes, I know I speak hotly; but my heart burns in me sometimes, and I hate myself. (*Keynotes* 49)

Indeed, while she is talking about crushing nature and robbing its beauty and meaning, she also refers to woman's body, which is abused, oppressed and destroyed by men. This analogy is a reflection of Egerton's argument that defends woman has *terra incognita*, which argues that like an unknown land in nature that is full of uncertainties and dangerous natural phenomena, women are also full of unknown abilities and uncontrollable phenomena therefore "men do not want to give women the ability to act free since they are afraid of what they cannot control" (Pykett 177). Also, the woman character refers to this argument by highlighting the fact that traditional female identity is not an organic concept but it is a result of stereotyping process, which is equipped with duties the society expects from women. Hence, women who exceed the limitations of their roles or do not satisfy the expectations of society are to be labelled as witch or hysteric and othered. This approach is also questioned by the protagonist; she says, "[h]ow many of the follies and frailties of women are really due to hysterical rather than moral irresponsibility is a question. You see there is no time of sowing wild oats for women; we repress and repress" (*Keynotes* 65). Egerton clearly opposes the ideal



Victorian woman stereotype, which is obedient and passive, through her character's rumination on such inequality and injustice practiced over women. She argues that woman, as a human being, has the right to be imperfect or unrestrained living as her instincts lead her; not in a way she forces her spirit to fit in a socially constructed *ideal*.

By means of her protagonist, Egerton highly criticises the conceptualization and idealization of womanhood since she considers it as the way of patriarchal discourse to objectify female body and behaviour. As Sarah E. Maier discusses in her article "The Importance of Being George" (2004), "[Egerton's] fiction calls for the open resistance to the imposition of ideal womanhood onto real women because it is both degrading and debilitating to woman's [capabilities]" (279). Accordingly, she highlights the distorted nature of being a female through her protagonist's criticism of the so-called ideal woman as follows: "the untrue feminine is of man's making; while the strong, the natural, the true womanly is of God's making" (*Keynotes* 50). Egerton apparently disapproves such misrepresentation and confinement of women in the name of idealization by criticising the stereotypes that put women in this or that constructed space. She presents the negative effects created by this idealization process through the end of the love between her characters as the woman comments on the difference of the attitude of the man compared to his earlier thoughts:

To put it in his words: 'I came as a strangely lovely dream into his life.' Probably the whole mistake lay in that. He thought of me as a dream lady, with dainty hands; idealized me, and wrote to the dream creature. When I came back in the flesh, he realized that I was a prosaic fact, with less charming hands, a tendency to leanness, and coming crow's feet. His look of dismayed awakening was simply delicious. (*Keynotes* 70)

That is to say, the tendency of men to imagine women in an idealized form creates a disappointment when they meet the women in their real forms; or from the other perspective, the ideal woman concept prevents women from revealing their true nature and identity causing a life based on artificial constructs. To argue the representation of such adverse impacts of the idealization of womanhood in a more general framework, "[t]his fictional reflection upon the literary status of woman as the object rather than the true subject of prose, although addressed to a particular moment in her story, might as easily be Egerton's commentary on women's idealization in male-authored fiction" (Maier 280). To further claim, she opposes the objectification of women in the hands of

male gaze both in the fiction and in the real world arguing that women are not properties or objects that can be shaped by the will of men; on the contrary, they have the right to be the subjects of their own lives. They are autonomous individuals who have the necessary intelligence and skills to make their own choices as the protagonist questions the reason of such restrictions: “why can’t we do as our hearts bid us? We have one short life, and it is spoiled by chains of our own forging in deference to narrow custom” (*Keynotes* 61-62). Apparently, Egerton does not only criticise men but she also criticises women who accept and internalize such an inferior position originated from these artificially implemented social norms. Therefore, she prefers to employ independent and free-spirited woman characters in her stories to guide women in the process of questioning and in the rejection of these false conceptualizations.

At this point, it is an important detail that the first depiction of the protagonist is given through a session of reading: “[...] resting her elbows at each side of a book she is reading” (*Keynotes* 45). Besides, it is not a coincidence that she has first encountered with her lover while she is picking books and ordering papers for herself as she describes in a mythical explanation: “three old ladies who spin our destinies were in want of amusement, so they pitched on me. They sent their messenger to me in the guise of a paper-backed novel with a taking name” (*Keynotes* 47). As also observed by means of the conversations the characters have throughout the story, Egerton reflects reading as the first step to realization. Like most of the New Woman writers, she also suggests the use of novels and short stories to educate woman, to enable them questioning their environment and position, and to make them aware of their power. Therefore, she frequently depicts her characters in reading sessions or in a discussion over a book or an author because “ [a]s New Woman heroines read texts, like outside readers read New Woman heroines as text, each “reader” becomes aware of his or herself as both a member “of the social present” and conspiratorial insider to another “present,” offered through the text in hand” (Moseley 51). In other words, the representation of women as readers in Egerton’s stories puts emphasis on the importance of education to raise capable and autonomous individuals who are able to question and voice the inequality experienced for ages.

In addition to reading, another feature of the protagonist with regard to the characteristics of New Woman is her frankness and freedom in the issues of sexuality. Reflection of sexual instincts and desires in the literary works of the New Woman is one of the most discussed and criticized notions with regard to the writers of this proto-feminist group since it is a taboo in the Victorian Period. However, Egerton's works deliberately "[insist] on the primacy and autonomy of women's sexual feeling [...and] directly [challenge] the repressive hypothesis of the dominant discourse on female sexuality" (Pykett 166-167). According to her opinion, explicit representation of sexual feelings in literature is a tool that reveals the true nature of women, which has been hidden and suppressed for ages by patriarchal authorities. She defends the idea that what has existed should not be ignored or kept under oppression; on the contrary, these realities should be praised since they are granted to us as a part of our nature. For that reason, she frequently employs sexually liberated woman characters to celebrate this natural gift. Besides, "[a]lthough liberated protagonists in New Woman fiction often remain celibate or maintain free unions while remaining childless or conveniently dying in childbirth, Egerton's women characters assume full responsibility for their sexuality" (O'Toole 835). It is also observed in the case of this story through the emphasis put on the free will of the protagonist as she herself explains, "I had felt no breath of it as maid, wife, or widow; my heart had been a free, wild, shy thing, jessed by my will" (*Keynotes* 53-54). *Will* is the keyword in this statement because it refers to the woman's autonomous self that needs no control or borders, an idea through which Egerton argues that the spirit and heart of a woman cannot be kept under control by the limitations of any norms. To further argue, she promotes the use of natural instincts as a subversive tool against the male dominated discourse and "[she] seems to consider women's instincts and desires capable of resisting (and possibly even subverting) the repressive and manipulating effects of civilization" (Jusová, "George Egerton" 35).

In accordance with this idea, she demonstrates some scenes in the story where the sexual tension between the two characters is explicit in its pure form as the woman character describes it: "I believe from the moment he came into the room, all the best of me went straight to him" (*Keynotes* 59). As understood, Egerton provides such scenes to reflect the true woman who enacts her desires and her instincts. In another scene, she presents her protagonist's perspective towards a kiss from a female gaze:

Did he kiss me? Oh, yes. You see I wanted to sift this thing thoroughly, to get clear into my head what ground I was standing on. So I let him. They were merely lip-kisses; his spirit did not come to mine, and I was simply analysing them all the time. Did I not feel anything? Yes, I did – deeply hurt; ah, I can't say how they hurt me! They lacked everything a kiss, as the expression of the strongest, best feeling of a man and woman, *can* hold. How do I know? My dear woman, have you never dreamt, felt, had *intuitive experiences*? I have. (*Keynotes* 69)

It is one of the most striking scenes the writer presents for her reader, it is the perspective that makes the story different from the mainstream literature of the Victorian Period. Through the depiction of this love *experience*, Egerton reveals her aim of using literature as a subversive tool against patriarchy: she shifts the perspective from the male gaze and puts the female gaze in the centre of her narrative. As a result, the reader encounters a kissing scene, which is not as romantic as described in the traditional love stories; instead, the woman character considers and analyses it as an experience. It is a technique Egerton generally employs in her stories using emotional affairs to liberate her woman characters; she presents them as the subjects of their stories not as the objects of some other male characters (O'Toole, "George Egerton's" 835-836). With her unconventional and able women characters, she aims to challenge the traditional gender roles and to create "a direct threat to social mores – this is a strong woman who will do as *she* pleases" (O'Toole, "Keynotes from Millstreet" 150). Accordingly, as observed in the above given quotation, she frankly demonstrates her *true* female idea to encourage the women of her period.

To further argue the use of sexual elements in the story, Egerton also uses the symbol of hand to imply sexuality and secret desires. Recurrent images of hands in her stories represent the erotic desires and potentials of her woman characters (Stetz 48). As Jusová indicates "Egerton's awareness of the attention paid to sexual fetishism in late-Victorian psychiatric discourse" (*The New Woman* 69) demonstrates itself in various stories either in the form of hand obsession or the feet obsession. In this case, it is the hands she puts emphasis on throughout the story as follows: "I was so glad my hands were pretty, – pretty hands last so much longer than a pretty face" (*Keynotes* 55). Hands are employed as elements that sexually attract attention of the opposite sex and the protagonist uses her hands to appeal to the eye of the man as she tries to make them look more beautiful and attractive. She says: "I went upstairs, washed my hands and puffed them with sweet

smelling powder, and then when I went down again and sat and waited I clasped them up over my head to make them white” (*Keynotes* 58). The salient idea in this context is that the woman intentionally pays attention to the appearance of her hands bringing the reader to the idea that Egerton uses hand symbolism as a way of woman empowerment. From the perspective of the writer, hands are the tools of control over men through which women are able to drive men’s instincts out of control by exchanging the master and slave positions; “[w]hile many of her female characters find this kind of sexual “power” over men uncomfortable, others unconsciously or deliberately manipulate it to their or other women’s advantage” (Jusová, *The New Woman* 70). Considering the attention paid to the hands by the woman, it is clearly a deliberate attempt to have control over man, and she is well aware of the irresistible power of hands.

Another point highlighted with regard to hands is the size. As noticed in many of her stories, Egerton gives detailed descriptions of the hands of her characters in terms of size, shape, and colour; and in this particular story, she especially underlines the size of hands indicating a sexual connotation as in the following quotations: “I tighten my small fingers in his great hand” (*Keynotes* 62) and “such a glad man, with glad eyes, glad smile, and outstretched hands” (60). Hands can be regarded as a metonym for sexual allure and arousal experienced by the protagonist. They are the agents through which the writer gives her character a chance to reveal her erotic desires; they function as a way of expression. On the other hand, the fragility and smallness of the woman’s hands, described as follows: “[h]e said my hands were ‘as small as a child’s’” (*Keynotes* 55), signifies that although “erotic fetishism [is generally employed] as a substitute for women’s “genital lack,” Egerton seems to stress the quality of men’s lack of control over women’s sexual attraction” (Jusová, *The New Woman* 69). Therefore, hand symbolism is employed by the writer as another way of emancipating the long hidden and suppressed sexuality of woman as well as her endowment to manipulate and control men by means of her irresistible sexual power over men. The representation of sexuality and sexual elements is, indeed, Egerton’s method of subverting and challenging the *so-called ideal* Victorian woman.

To conclude all the ideas discussed in this story, George Egerton employs not only unusual woman characters but also innovative techniques to challenge the social

conventions and boundaries of the Victorian Age. To prove her fight against the limitations, she exceeds the traditional narrative techniques and employs new or unusual materials such as stream of consciousness, sexual fetishism, hybrid places and characters in her stories. She intentionally introduces “the actions of [her] unmarried middle-class women [who violate] the codes of what was construed as ‘natural’ or ‘normal’ femininity” (Liggins 19). Her main argument to introduce such unusual woman characters is that Victorian women need to become aware of their situation and inferior position in the society. In a period when literature plays an important role in the creation and construction of woman’s conscious, she aims to use her writings as subversive agents to challenge the false conceptions created by the patriarchal discourse. Therefore, she considers literature as a way of improving the questioning skills of woman and a path to awareness. From this perspective, it is apparent that “Egerton’s texts represent the progressive affirmation that if today’s reality is resultant from the social codes and mores of the past, then the future can be revisioned through a continuation of the melding of feminist idealism to progressive, modified realism through the depiction of woman’s experience” (Maier 278). Hence, in accordance with this aim, she creates an alternative and innovative literature in which all the customs such as domestic sphere of woman, traditional romantic love stories, submissive and restrained woman characters, and all the taboos with regard to sexuality are challenged. Although she presents a love story for her readers, she does not do that as it generally appears in Victorian novels and novellas. Unlike most themes observed in love stories of the period, there is not any social class issue, arranged marriage or happy ending in her love story; on the contrary, the writer presents her readers a love story that starts with the will and passion of a woman and ends in the same way. In other words, the story is about a woman who has the confidence to make her own choices and lives with the consequences of her choices, which is the main idea discussed throughout this chapter. In conclusion, Egerton suggests that women have the necessary courage and skills to stand against the injustice they have experienced for ages; hence, they should get beyond the limits provided for them and create their own realities and norms based on their *natural self*.

## “A CROSS LINE”

It was an attractive face, very gentle and womanly,  
and yet there was something disillusioned and  
unsatisfied about it.

--Laura M. Hansson, *Six Modern Women*

The New Women novelists, writing at the end of  
the nineteenth century, developed a rhetoric of  
domestic feminism, a method of protofeminist  
subversion usually confined to the domestic space.

--Elizabeth M. Walls, “A Little Afraid of Women  
of Today”

Published as the first story of Egerton’s sensational book *Keynotes*, “A Cross Line” has been one of the most discussed and criticised stories of the writer due to the extramarital affair and explicitly eroticized dream scene it presents. Although she insists on this story to be the last one in *Keynotes*’ table of content as the culmination of her book, the publisher John Lane placed it as the first story to create a more striking effect on the Victorian reader (Stetz 35). When all the woman characters introduced in the book are taken into consideration, the story can be considered the first one in which the female protagonist frankly articulates and experiences her sexual desires. Although this frankness is criticised by many critics, it is the perfect reflection of Egerton’s project of revealing the woman with all her strength, weakness, and long-hidden sexuality. In this story, she demonstrates a typical New Woman who can go fishing by herself, criticise and question her position, smoke, and embrace her sexuality. However, it is important to note that “[w]hen Egerton’s female characters have the most agency to choose what sort of life they want to lead and what role their sexual desires will play in that life, they remain always inside the system that they seek to challenge” (Hager, “A Community of Women” par.5). That is to say, by way of subversion, she aims to deconstruct the present values of the time and reconstruct them in accordance with her ideal womanhood that is “the strong, the natural, [and] the true womanly” (*Keynotes* 50). She depicts the representation of this subversion through the female protagonist of “A Cross Line” since she behaves freely although she is a married woman with her socially

constructed gender role. Accordingly, this analysis aims to focus on the New Woman identity functioning within the restrictions of patriarchal discourse and the expression of her sexual desires. For a better analysis of the story, brief information about the plot may be appropriate for a more detailed comprehension of the representation of a New Woman character.

The story is about the extramarital love affair of an unnamed middle class woman who seeks the fulfilment of her sexual desires. As observed in all the stories published in *Keynotes*, Egerton typically does not name her character in order to give them universal identities; “she leaves out the characters’ background and names altogether and starts the story by describing ‘a man’s’ voice and ‘a woman’s’ facial expression” (Faltejskova 27):

The rather flat notes of a man’s voice float out into the clear air, singing the refrain of a popular music-hall ditty. There is something incongruous between the melody and the surroundings [...] A woman sitting on a felled tree turns her head to meet its coming, and an expression flits across her face in which disgust and humorous appreciation are subtly blended. (*Keynotes* 9)

It is the moment when the protagonist of the story and her extramarital lover meet while she is fishing near the lake located in the woods. Throughout the story, the reader comes across some scenes similar to this in which the protagonist takes some free time for herself and wanders around the woods and meadows without the companion of any man or woman despite the fact that she is married. As observed from the statement “disgust and humorous appreciation are subtly blended,” the protagonist is represented with her unique tastes. Lisa Hager suggests that “[t]he mix of contradictory reactions in the woman’s facial expression establishes her as capable of appreciating and enjoying something beyond the easy pleasure of similarity and symmetry; she likes difference” (“A Community of Women” par. 9). From the beginning of the story, the heroine is presented as an unconventional woman in terms of the traditional Victorian woman identity. The writer, instead, presents her to the reader as a typical figure of the New Woman with a “busy brain” (*Keynotes* 9) and autonomous behaviours. She has intellectual conversations about literature, gender roles, and social norms both with her husband and her lover; she reads and criticises literary works of the time as understood in the scene she has a chat with her husband about a writer: “[y]es it is a book makes one think. It would be greater book if he were not an Englishman; he’s afraid of



shocking the big middle class” (*Keynotes* 19). Obviously, it is not a quotation that only proves the intellectual capacity of the protagonist but also through her heroine, Egerton actually reflects her own opinions about the traditional Victorian writing. According to Jusová, in this specific conversation, the writer reflects her “own sentiments towards English culture” (*The New Woman* 50) that is overly confined with the restrictions of the social, religious, and literary disciplines of the time.

As the story goes on, the criticism on the middle class shifts to the marriage institution through the comparisons the protagonist makes between her husband and her lover. Since she is flattered by the compliments of the lover, she wants to evaluate and understand what she means to her husband and tells him:

Woman: “[o]ther men who cared for me told me things about my eyes, my hands, anything. I don’t believe you notice”

Husband: “Yes I *do*, little one, only I think it.”

Woman: “Yes, but I don’t care a bit for your thinking; if I can’t see what’s in your head, what good is it to me?”

Husband: “I wish I could understand you, dear!”

Woman: “I wish to God you could! Perhaps if you were badder and I were gooder we’d meet half-way. *You* are an awfully good old chap; it’s just men like you send women like me to the devil!” (*Keynotes* 24)

She clearly does not ask for a good and proper husband or for being a traditional wife whose duty is to make her husband happy and to keep her house neat and tidy; on the contrary, she demands love from her husband and seeks the fulfilment of her sexual desires. This demand is explicitly given in the story in the form of a dream in which the protagonist sees herself dancing salaciously in an Arabian setting. It is one of the most quoted and argued scenes of the story due to its frankness that has deeply shocked the Victorian reader, which will be analysed in the following discussions in detail. Therefore, the interest and compliments of the lover clearly attract the heroine; she makes some more visits to the woods for fishing, which is taken as an analogy by some critics indicating that the man is hooked by the sexual attractiveness and wit of the protagonist (Dutta 26-27).

Towards the end of the story, the reader witnesses an agreement between the heroine and her lover. He asks her to run away with him and tells her that if she does not accept

his offer, she should “*hang something white on the lilac bush!*” (*Keynotes* 38). When the day he mentions arrives, the writer presents to the reader the conversation between the protagonist and her maid Lizzie about being a mother and Lizzie’s illegitimate child who has died at a very young age for an unmentioned reason. Through this conversation, Egerton implies that the protagonist is pregnant; and, at the very last scene, we see her while hanging a child shirt on the lilac-bush. The critics interpret the end of the story in two different ways; the first perspective defends that “this adventurousness, this rebellion, this waywardness [of the protagonist] is transformed into wifely conformity by her approaching motherhood” (Dutta 28). That is to say, her subversion of her position as a wife into the domestic sphere is terminated by her choice of becoming a mother. Ann Ardis also suggests that the heroine “return[s] to convention” (116) by preferring being a married mother instead of following her sexual desires. On the other hand, the second perspective defends the opposite idea and suggests that “[t]he heroine’s adulterous sexuality is eventually sublimated [...] into passionate maternal devotion, a narrative manoeuvre, recurrent in Egerton’s fictions” (Ledger 100). The critics who defend this perspective argue that the heroine intentionally and consciously chooses motherhood in order to prove her free will of shifting the focus of her desires. According to Nicole M. Fluhr,

By instructing Lizzie to hang up a child’s nightshirt, the protagonist indicates how the coming child is already taking the place of her lover, and the way in which her husband disappears from the story indicates that his already tenuous position will be further eclipsed by the newcomer – just as his reduction to “the thrust of his spade” exemplifies his marginal and irritating role in helping to produce the child his wife will bear. (257)

Obviously, the changing position and standpoint of the protagonist is regarded as her power of creating and nurturing which is one of the superior qualities of women compared to men within the context of Egerton’s appraisal of womanhood. The absence of both male characters also provides a basis for the defenders of the second perspective referring that although the reader is not informed about the father of the child, the protagonist thinks of them as necessary tools for achieving her motherhood, nothing more nothing less.

Another important detail to focus in this sense is the fact that Egerton does not give names to either male characters but she prefers to give a name to the maid, Lizzie;

through the identity of her and her childbearing out of wedlock, she demonstrates the idea of motherhood as a way of solidarity among women: “previously focused on her husband and would-be lover, she now becomes occupied with her mother and maid” (Fluhr 257). The writer uses this shared motherhood identity as a bridge between the mistress and the maid as clearly given in the story when “the mistress, who is a wife, puts her arms around the tall maid, who has never had more than a moral claim to the name, and kisses her in her quick way” (*Keynotes* 43). Despite being from different classes or origins or positions, experiencing the identical emotions and status connects them and strengthens the idea of sisterhood between these two women. Leaving all these discussions over the reason and the sub-meaning of her choice of motherhood aside, it is apparent in a general sense that “[w]ith its plot based on casual adultery, its references to unwed mothers, and its flattering portrayal of a woman who drinks whiskey, goes fishing alone, and smokes cigarettes, ‘A Cross Line’ flung up a red flag to John Bull [the well-known Victorian conduct book writer] that guaranteed attention for the whole book” (Stetz 36). This can be regarded as the frank representation of the influence created by the New Woman in the Victorian Period.

When the general Victorian mind is taken into consideration, there are strict and precise distinction between the roles of women and men. As also discussed in the introduction and the first chapter of this study, each gender has its own specific duties to fulfil and marriage is accepted as the keystone of the social order and stability. It is the only acceptable access to sexuality; and, sexuality is regarded as a “missionary work” (Fasick 93) for the future of the British Empire. In a society where people’s sexual desires are suppressed and ignored for religious and social reasons, it is not a surprise that Egerton’s criticism of marriage institution and her explicit writing of especially a woman’s sensuality have horrified the whole society. Similar to the heroine of “An Empty Frame,” the protagonist of this story also thinks marriage as an entrapment in which she is expected to complete some tasks; she wants to run “away from the daily need of dinner-getting and the recurring Monday with its washing, life with its tame duties and virtuous monotony” (*Keynotes* 27). Through this representation, Egerton criticises the duties assigned to the genders within the concept of marriage as many New Woman writers have done. The approach of the New Woman to marriage has been

criticised by most male authors of the period due to the differences in their standpoints as Chantal Cornut-Gentile D'arcy explains:

[...] not only female writers in the first decades of the nineteenth century, but Victorian women in general, could only see marriage as a source of limitation, even of imprisonment. As a matter of fact, economic adjustments apart, marriage in the nineteenth century imposed very few obligations or changes in life-style on men – their everyday life, including their sexual practices, could continue much the same as before. To women, on the contrary, marriage meant a severe code of behaviour, a restriction of their freedom as individuals, both in the home and out of it. Consequently, it is not at all surprising that male and female writers should have depicted marriage in such different, and even contradictory, ways. (169)

The abolishment of individual and sexual freedom and women's enslavement under the control of marriage is among the main ideas criticised by Egerton, particularly in this story. She argues that all these rules and conventions are artificially created by the patriarchal ideology to limit women's potential in every domain of the society.

According to her perspective, women can only explore their inner self through the discovery of hidden yearnings; and "women should discover their real selves and be true to themselves even if to express their inner desires means to abandon traditional marriage or motherhood" (Faltejskova 28). With this aim, she attacks the idea of *ideal woman* of the period suggesting that it is a concept created by the patriarchal mind which knows, in fact, nothing about the true nature of woman: "Egerton, rebelling against the womanly ideal, seek[s] to tear aside the veil of convention and hypocrisy in order to reveal the real woman beneath" (Boumelha 85). Reflection of her attitude against this idealization of womanhood is recurrently presented in the story through the monologues of the protagonist in which she generally questions and censures the attitude of both women and men as follows: "he has fashioned a model on imaginary lines, and he has said, 'So I would have you!' and every woman is an unconscious liar, for so man loves her" (*Keynotes* 31). By putting emphasis on the artificiality of these ideals through the use of the word "imaginary," the writer shows that the notion of womanhood has been conceptualized by the demands and dreams of the masculine mind. Considering the traditional idea of woman as a production of the patriarchy, the protagonist demonstrates men's tabooing of *the woman*: "when a Strindberg or a Nietzsche arises and peers into the recesses of her nature and dissects her ruthlessly, the men shriek out louder than the women, because the truth is at all times unpalatable, and

the gods they have set up are dear to them” (*Keynotes* 31). The ideal woman, in this case, is represented as an untouchable phenomenon especially from the male gaze since it is *man’s creation*. Taking the attention to “the gods,” Egerton clearly questions the religious aspect of the construction of these gender roles. In this sense, as also referred in the story of Mary Ascension, she asserts that religion, too, is constructed by the cultural concepts and ideologies, which are indeed in favor of men (Jusová, *The New Woman* 58).

On the other hand, the writer puts the blame also on women for the acceptance and internalization of these artificial values, which suppress the true feminine identity. She discusses that although all women have their own essences, which are peculiar to their personalities, they feel the obligation of fitting in the ideal woman model of the male gaze since they do not want to be excluded from society. The protagonist of the story suggests that

They [men] have all overlooked the eternal wilderness, the untamed primitive savage temperament that lurks in the mildest, best woman. Deep in through ages of convention this primeval trait burns, – an untamable quantity that may be concealed but is never eradicated by culture, the keynote of woman’s witchcraft and woman’s strength. But it is there, sure enough, and each woman is conscious of it in her truth-telling hours of quiet self-scrutiny; and each woman in God’s wide world will deny it, and each woman will help another to conceal it, – [...] (*Keynotes* 30)

Women’s tendency to hide their capacities and power can be justified under the circumstances they have experienced. Being dependent on men’s economic and political power, they are obliged to disguise as the typical woman demanded by the forces of Victorian society. Egerton herself mentions this situation in her writing about the *Keynotes*; “I recognised that in the main, woman was the ever-untamed, unchanging, adapting herself as far as it suited her ends to male expectations; even if repression was altering her subtly” (“A Keynote to *Keynotes*” 58). Despite their capabilities and potential of subversion, the passivity of women against these gender impositions is highly criticised by the writer. She objects the suppression of woman and her natural forces by this cultural male hegemony; and, as understood from the alteration she mentions in her writing, she warns women about the danger that this stillness of women may lead the internalisation of these conventions by creating permanent damage in their independent and untamed nature. Therefore, she suggests that instead of repressing the

internal power, woman should use it to subvert her position in the society and to manipulate the societal assertiveness they have suffered for ages.

The argument Egerton brings forward in this context is the subversive potential of woman's social position. Her life and writing career is the clearest example she presents for the Victorian women since she writes about the taboos of the time, "corrects men's myths about women and tells hitherto unarticulated stories about [...] woman" (Fluhr 245) by using a male nickname. Although culture and its extensions force females to repress their true selves, and in particular their sexual desires, she asserts that women have the necessary abilities and strength to overcome this restraint;

Egerton seems to consider women's instincts and desires capable of resisting (and possibly even subverting) the repressive and manipulating effects of civilization [...] This assumed ability of women to resist on an instinctual level the repressive effects of civilization, along with their knowledge that femininity is a cultural product, provides common bond among Egerton's women that transcends all social barriers. (Jusová, *The New Woman* 59)

Of course, it is a process that requires awareness about both the status and potential power of women; and, Egerton always defends that awareness follows questioning. For that reason, she generally introduces heroines who do not only question their current situations or problems but also make general evaluations and comments on the circumstances experienced by all women. In "A Cross Line," for instance, while the protagonist is thinking about her restless spirit constricted by her marriage, she exceeds the limits of her own individual problem and makes an assessment in a broader scope in order to indicate that it is not a personal problem but a shared one:

[a]nd her thoughts go to other women she has known, women good and bad, school friends, casual acquaintances, women workers, - joyless machines for grinding daily corn, unwilling maids grown old in the endeavor to get settled, patient wives who bear little ones to indifferent husbands until they wear out, - a long array. She busies herself with questioning. Have they, too, this thirst for excitement, for change, this restless craving for sun and love and motion? (*Keynotes* 29)

This quotation gives the reader a general framework for the position of women in the Victorian Period despite the differences in their personalities, classes, social or economic status. Through this questioning and generalization of the problems, Egerton aims to raise awareness among her readers implying that all women suffer from the consequences of the restrictions imposed by the patriarchal ideology. Hence, this shared

agony can be used as a subversive tool to create solidarity among women, which is the only way to stand against the barriers surrounding women in every field of the society. Egerton constructs solidarity in the story through the relationship between the mistress and the maid and she employs the notion of motherhood as the shared situation. From the perspective of the defenders of the New Woman, it is significant to note that “[t]he solidarity of wife and mistress or of virgin and whore, is often recognised as a crucial element in the struggle against the double standard of sexual morality” (Boumelha 64) since it refers that regardless of their status, women share the same oppression and suffering. Therefore, the writer suggests that women should demand and obtain sexual, economic, and social freedom and social rights not for a specific group based on their economic or political power but for every person in the society.

Accordingly, Egerton supports her argument by employing marginal female characters in terms of their sexual preferences, skin colour, or sometimes even their ethnicity. For instance, she frequently makes reference to gypsies by associating gypsy culture with the rejection of conventions. She aims to escape from the cultural constructions through “describing bewitching, assertive, and confident women who trespass the domestic space and yearn to join gypsy culture” (Jusová, *The New Woman* 62). As a reflection of her appraisal of marginal cultures, she recurrently defines the protagonist as a “seated figure with its gypsy ease of attitude” (*Keynotes* 11). Moreover, she gives similar descriptions of the woman also from the perspective of the lover who calls her as follows: “[y]ou seem amused, Gypsy!” (*Keynotes* 22). Although such description can be perceived as an insult by the traditional Victorian middle class, the protagonist takes it as a compliment since being identified with gypsyism keeps her distance from the customary woman identity. It is clearly the symbol of freedom and unorthodoxy implied by the protagonist’s lover as “free gypsy nature of [her]” (*Keynotes* 34). Through such descriptions, Egerton intends to highlight the differences of her heroine in contrast with the traditional values of gender roles.

With this aim, she also employs colour symbolism in the portrayal of the protagonist by frequently mentioning “her slim brown hand” and “her olive skin” (*Keynotes* 11; 41). In opposition to the generally accepted idea with respect to the superiority of the white European race (Hall 6), she glorifies the other that is marginalized and oppressed by the

dominant Victorian culture. As a part of her objection to the idealised woman and sense of beauty, Egerton prefers to introduce the attractiveness and the difference of her character as follows: “she has a cream-colored woolen gown on, and her skin looks duskiily foreign by contrast” (*Keynotes* 15), and describing her hand in a sexualised way: “stretching out her hand, of a perfect shape but decidedly brown” (*Keynotes* 14). Obviously, it is strategy employed by the author to prove the idea that the ideal beauty or the perfect woman does not exist in a stereotype; yet, each woman has her own particular essence and identity. Therefore, she criticises the stereotyping of woman since it is based on abolishing the subjectivity and individual traits of woman.

In a more specific argument of this stereotyping, Egerton opposes the categorisation of woman on a social and sexual basis such as *angel in the house* or *fallen woman*. She considers these etiquettes as the tools of patriarchy taught and imposed on woman in order to repress her potential and freedom of expression. D’arcy suggests that “[f]ollowing the steps of Zola and Maupassant in France, of Knut Hamsun in Norway, and of Ola Hansson in Sweden, George Egerton – a woman! – [is] one of the first British writers to deal with sexual matters in such an overt way” (168). For this reason, she is highly criticised by the traditional Victorian critics and readers. However, she rejects the criticism defending herself that it is the basic instinct of human nature originated from God. Hence, she prefers presenting God’s creation instead of the man-made traditions and constructs as she supports in her project of “celebrating [nature and] the precivilized as superior” (Jusová, “George Egerton” 37). As a reflection of her argument, she presents a dance scene in her heroine’s dream in the story, which is a scene criticised and condemned by the conventional Victorian minds. It is indisputably the *key* scene of the story in which Egerton explicitly demonstrates the sexual desires of her heroine. The dream is depicted almost two pages long by Egerton to emphasise its significance; the most crucial part of the dream is as follows:

She fancies herself in Arabia on the back of a swift steed. Flashing eyes set in dark faces surround her, and she can see the clouds of sand swirl, and feel the swing under her of his rushing stride; and her thoughts shape themselves into a wild song, – [...] a song to the untamed spirit that dwells in her. Then she fancies she is on the stage of an ancient theatre, out in the open air, with hundreds of faces upturned toward her. She is gauze-clad in a cobweb garment of wondrous tissue; her arms are clasped by jeweled snakes, and one with quivering diamond fangs coils round her hips; her hair floats loosely, and her feet are sandal-clad [...]



She bounds forward and dances, bends her lissome waist, and curves her slender arms, and gives to the soul of each man what he craves, be it good or evil. And she can feel now, lying here in the shade of Irish hills, with her head resting on her scarlet shawl and her eyes closed, the grand, intoxicating power of swaying all these human souls wonder and applause. She can see herself with parted lips and panting, rounded breasts, and a dancing devil in each glowing eye, sway voluptuously to the wild music that rises, now slow, now fast, now deliriously wild, seductive, intoxicating with a human note of passion in its strain. She can feel the answering shiver of emotion [...] she stands with outstretched arms and passion-filled eyes” (*Keynotes* 27-28)

The frank description and revelation of a woman’s lust and yearning for the fulfillment of her sexual desires have shocked the Victorian audience since it is one of the taboos of the period. However, it is one of the best portrayals of woman’s sexuality in terms of Egerton’s project of revealing the *terra incognita* of woman. It proves her discussion that although these feelings are repressed by the ideological tools of the patriarchy such as sin, orders, norms, and punishment, they cannot be erased and detached from human nature; hence, the true nature and desires of a woman can only be known and presented by a woman. By means of this dream, “Egerton not only describes her protagonist’s (sexual) desires, but portrays aggressively assertive sexuality (with allusions to promiscuity) in terms unacceptable for middle-class women” (Jusová, “George Egerton” 37). She employs the dream as a way of objecting and challenging the Victorian idealisation of woman as pure and moral beings. It is, on the other hand, significant to note that the setting of the heroine’s dream is not a familiar place or culture; Egerton prefers to use an Arabian setting. As Ardis argues, preference of a different and in a sense (from a European perspective) less civilised cultural context for the dream can be interpreted as a way of escaping from the culture and conventions of the Victorian Period (100). To be more specific, expression of the emotions and sexuality in an Arabian setting can also be interpreted as Egerton’s praise of nature and primitive as a rejection of the *so-called* civilisation established by man. Another significant detail in the dream is that she does not abstain from being the object of male audiences, in particular, not only one man but “hundreds of faces” (*Keynotes* 27). Through the description, the reversal of her role is observed; she is both the dancer and the audience of her own dance. The reader comprehends that she satisfies her desires in each roles. As Dutta states, “this fantasizing woman curiously blends within her self the polar identities of performer and voyeur. She is at the same time both the subject of this fantasy, narcissistically exulting in sensuous self-delight, as well as the object of

sensual/sexual gratification of the all-male spectators” (28). In a more general framework, Egerton suggests that woman has the ability to perform and fulfil her sexual desires both as the subject and the object of them. Hence, man can either be the objects and tools of sexuality for women or they can be ignored.

To conclude the discussion of this story, the heroine presented in “A Cross Line” is the representation of Egerton’s idea of New Woman who acts with her desires, makes her own choices, and uses men as her tools of sexuality and reproduction. Although she is a married woman, she does not refrain from the fulfilment of her desires; in this sense, she subverts and manipulates her position in society by breaking the boundaries of the domestic sphere. The heroine is aware of not only her sexual power but also her desire to be a mother (Faltejskova 27); and her preference of motherhood over eloping with her lover proves that she is conscious about her ambitions and behaves in accordance with her wishes. The absence of both her husband and her lover in the dream scene, and her position in the dream as both the object and the subject suggest that woman can experience sexuality without marriage and even without men. Obviously, Egerton reverses the culturally established gender roles and as opposed to the Victorian idea of woman as the tools of reproduction. She constructs her own discourse by using man and male body as a tool for the satisfaction of woman’s sexuality and will of motherhood.

**CHAPTER III**  
**MOTHERHOOD AND MARRIAGE AS A FREE CHOICE:**  
**“THE REGENERATION OF TWO” AND “AT THE**  
**HEART OF THE APPLE”**

Motherhood and marriage are among the most discussed and employed issues in Egerton's literary works due to their importance in woman's life and nature. However, as opposed to the general public idea of the Victorian Age defending a woman's main duty is to marry and breed and nurture her child (Fasick 93), the writer defends the idea that motherhood cannot be imposed upon a woman as a task to be completed within the marriage bondage in the name of the expansion of British Empire. On the contrary, it is a matter of personal choice which can only be evaluated and decided by individuals not by society or social institutions. According to Egerton's criticism of social institutions, marriage is the most problematic one in terms of the duties and responsibilities it brings to woman. She defends that marriage is a kind of prison for woman employed by the patriarchal authorities as a way of controlling woman's free and powerful spirit (Jusová "George Egerton" 28-29); hence, she suggests challenging these barriers. With this aim, she prefers to introduce sexual relationships without marriage and single mothers and their illegitimate children in her stories. In accordance with her argument, the main aim of this chapter is to reveal the New Woman heroines of the stories "Regeneration of Two" and "At the Heart of the Apple" in terms of the idea of motherhood and out-of-wedlock relationships presented in the stories.

## “AT THE HEART OF THE APPLE”

Unless one is androgynous, one is bound to look  
at life through the eyes of one's sex.

--George Egerton, “A Keynote to *Keynotes*”

Published in George Egerton's third book *Symphonies* in 1897, “At the Heart of the Apple” is one of the least known and discussed stories of the book, and there is not any source or academic study devoted to it. Although it does not take the literary attention it deserves, the story is very significant in terms of its representation of motherhood of a child-mother. Unlike the idea supported by many New Woman writers that motherhood is a restriction for women and hence it should be avoided, Egerton defines motherhood as one of the most important and efficient tool of women (O'Toole 151-153). She frequently presents her mother heroines as women with free will and choice; and, praises the idea of womanhood since it is the strength and ability of women to create and nurture a new form of life. Yet, she highly criticises the generally accepted Victorian perspective that “marriage and motherhood [are] the careers marked out for women by nature” (Holcombe 3). Her rejection of the traditional idea of motherhood as a duty reflects itself in her stories as also observed in this story. However, it is important to note that she presents this unconventional representation of mother in a Norwegian setting where she and her heroines can escape from the traditions and roles imposed upon women. Therefore, this study aims to analyse Egerton's representation of New Woman and New Mother from her perspective of motherhood. Before discussing the writer's free-spirited and wild heroine in a detailed way, it is useful to give brief summary of the story.

The story is about a girl named Evir who lives in an isolated house at a hill in Norway, where she has no chance to see people apart from the ones working in the house. She is described as an “unusual” and “wild” (*Symphonies* 183; 192) by the writer since she is not educated or shaped by culture and society. Her distinctive nature and primitive behaviours in terms of human affairs are presented as her superiority within the context of Egerton's praise of nature. As a girl who is full of passion to learn and discover her

environment and new things, she is frequently described while wandering around the woods and near the river. In one of these tours she takes to the woods, she meets an English boy. Since her master is an Englishman, she is able to talk to the boy. Captivated by her wilderness and isolation from everything, the boy decides to teach her how to read. This can be interpreted as the representation of the Victorian mind that as the civilised Englishman has the duty to teach and civilise the primitive (Houghton 340-342). This education process takes a summer and then she never sees him in her lifetime, which is a sign that the boy has been a tool for Evir to have an access to education.

The story's flow changes when a woman guest arrives at the house; it is the first time Evir sees a baby:

The woman chuckled softly, and pressed the object under her shawl more closely to her breast; a stir and faint cry resulted. "Thank you, Miss, it's my baby; I will take it with me!" Again, as once on the ice, the girl knit her straight brows in perplexity. "Oh! Peter has told me of babies; Anna's died. I've never seen the young things of men and women; may I look? I'd like to." (*Symphonies* 187)

It is a depiction, in fact, indicating her isolation from the society and people. This moment of encountering with a baby for the first time creates an alteration in her mind and her focus. She sets herself a goal to have a baby and with this aim, she does some research in her master's library. Learning she needs a man for having a baby, she continues her trips in the woods and to the river where she finally meets a man. Soon they become friends but, of course, their friendship is not a common one when Evir's lack of social relations are taken into consideration. The man calls Evir as *Huldre*, which is a kind of siren in mythology (*Symphonies* 190), indicating her wild spirit. As the story goes on, the reader observes the change in their friendship as a result of the man's sexual arousal. However, Evir rejects him and tries to escape; her reaction is likened to a "wild-cat" and a "wood-cat" (*Symphonies* 192; 193) by the man as a reflection of Egerton's project of revealing the wild and primitive nature of woman. Yet, she surrenders at the end; interestingly, in the following days her visits go on as depicted: "[a]fter that each day saw her boat tied to the flat stone; and on many silver nights, when the moon played hide and seek behind the errant clouds with her own reflection in the mirror of the sea, the girl glided noiselessly out from the island, and the man waited at the tent door" (*Symphonies* 199-200). Obviously, the writer reflects

Evir's pleasure of having a sexual affair with the man indicating the argument of Egerton in terms of "the naturalness of women's sexual energy" (Butler, Bundy and Bundy 33). After a fragmentation in time, the reader meets Evir as a mother at the age of 15; and, her master tries to cover this shame although there is not anybody in the place they live. However, she rejects giving her child away in her typical wild manner by attacking the owner of the idea as described: "[t]he girl laid the boy carefully down and "went" for her in the most literal way, with the instinct of a wild cat in defence of its offsprings" (*Symphonies* 210). Moreover, at the end of the story, the father of the male child comes back and asks for living together; she rejects his possession in the same manner, too by expressing her and hence Egerton's idea of marriage and the man: "[y]ou can't take what is me out of him!" with an exultant tone. "No, but I need not develop it. It is the me in him I love. I have no use for you. He satisfies me; and, besides, you are not the kind of man I would give a right over him; that is all"" (*Symphonies* 216). As she frankly conveys, she chooses to be a mother not a wife.

From the character of Evir, Egerton actually presents how it would be different if a woman has the chance to ignore society and to live independently from social norms. Within this scope, her representation of a New Woman, in particular, New Mother, through the heroine is the main focus of this analysis. As one of the representatives of the movement, Egerton "not only [rejects] Victorian values but also [breaks] away from the conventions" (Faltejskova 26); and, she introduces her heroines as women who are out of socially accepted manners. In accordance with her project of New and *natural* woman, she depicts Evir as an unusual and wild girl from the very beginning of the story. She is described as "untamed in the poise of her dart-like figure and easy movements; she suggested a wild doe" (*Symphonies* 183). This wilderness and the uncivilised spirit of the heroine is recurrently presented to the reader by the author to remind them to return to their nature. She also employs settings like woods, rivers, and hills to give her character a freer environment. As Martha Vicinus puts it, "Egerton [does] not equate nature with woman's nature, but rather [see] the outdoors as a freeing agent, providing the space and climate for personal growth" (XI). The environment Evir lives is the perfect representation of this free space that contributes to her character's independence from social bonds. Egerton presents her as a hope and role model for the new generations of women as follows: "this child woman, with her absolutely fresh,

unspoiled nature, all her basic instincts intact; a genetic creature, fashioned of the right ground-stuff for the renewal of life in man by the formation of new strong individuals” (*Symphonies* 206). As observed, the writer employs nature as an agent that shapes the personality of the heroine in a way that culture would never accept; woman’s distance from the culture and its tools, in fact, enables her heroine “to retain something vital, an energy [...] that lurks in the mildest, best women” (O’Connor 71).

As raised in nature and independent from the cultural and also religious codes, Evir lives her life in accordance with her instincts, the only guide for her in every situation she experiences. Following her nature, she is described as a “creature of instinct, pure and simple, quick with her natural impulses, always acting from them, uninfluenced by the system founded on social expediency; a young female animal with her basic instincts intact” (*Symphonies* 184). Egerton defends the idea that the established norms, gender roles, and social orders only complicate human relations and prevent them from experiencing a fulfilled life, which can only be achieved without the restrictions. Discussing that the repressed instincts and desires of people obstruct their happiness in life, she encourages her readers to stop being ashamed of their desires but to experience them. She presents Evir as a model for the readers in the scene she enters into the tent of the male figure who is presented as the father of the child: “[s]he stepped in, and sat down, without any trace of embarrassment, upon a camp stool, examining the things strewn about with alert, observant eyes” (*Symphonies* 190). As observed, she wonders about the inside of the tent to see and discover new things. Following her curiosity hence instincts, she is the true representation of Egerton’s idea of the true feminine.

In a more general framework, “Egerton appears to approve of those who go against social expectations and follow their instincts in matters sexual” (O’Toole, “Keynotes” 152). She argues that to practice sexuality, people do not need any kind of legal or social bondage but only passion and desire. According to her argument of sexuality, it is the basic instinct of human nature; therefore, it is not something to be ashamed of, on the contrary, it is necessary for the fulfilment of human desires. To prove her point, she presents her ideas on sexuality and social conventions through her heroine:

she [knows] their sex, noted the beauty of colour or form in the male, the duller garb of the female; the miracle of sex, underlying every natural law, its individual working in the propagation of the young, [is] no mystery to her, and consequently

no subject for prurient musing; but of love or marriage, moral or social laws, or the ordinary relationships of so-called civilised life, she [is] more ignorant than any savage. (*Symphonies* 183-184)

As observed, Egerton states that everything in nature should be left as they are since human ruins the order of nature. Sexuality, in this sense, is defined as one of the basic human instincts which is innate; yet, its interpretation and reconstruction by the society is problematic. As opposed to the other representatives of the New Woman Movement such as Sarah Grand, who seeks woman rights through “social salvation in ascetic morality, purity, and restraint” (Jusová *The New Woman* 52), Egerton rejects and challenges these notions as she considers them “the instruments of degeneration, alienating women and men from their “nature,” from their bodies and instincts” (52). Hence, this is the primary reason behind Egerton’s praise of what is primitive and wild.

She reflects her opinions and rejection of social orders also in her perspective towards motherhood and the socially accepted mother figure. She criticises traditional definition of motherhood since it is only acceptable and accessible for the married women within the borders of marriage. However, similar to the sexuality and sexual desires, motherhood is also one of the basic instincts and desires of women regardless of their position in the society. As Dowling states, “for George Egerton’s heroines, motherhood is a passion as intense as sex itself” (446). Therefore, it cannot be defined by the specific criteria or rules of the patriarchal ideology; it is an individual decision to be made by the woman herself. The writer reveals and supports her argument through the character of Evir, who clearly explains her choice of motherhood as a personal decision when she meets the father of the child: “[...] I am, sorry for many men like you; you haven’t learnt yet to divide women into the *mere women* and the *mere mothers*. I’d hate to share him, that is the truth; I’d be horribly jealous of interference” (*Symphonies* 217). Obviously, the heroine clarifies that she does not belong to the group of women who perform motherhood because the society expects them to do so; but, it is her passion to give birth to a new creation and nurture the child. In this regard, she considers the man only as a tool of reproduction whom she unfortunately needs to have a child. Yet, she does not demand or accept the man’s possession and she rejects any association with him:



you mistake when you say *ours*; *he is mine!* [...] Simply, you have no claim on him, that is all; he is mine absolutely. That is the compensation the world offers the woman if she'd only recognise it [...] I don't want to be claimed. I like it best so. I am one of the race of women, and they are many, to whom the child is first – the man always second. (*Symphonies* 215)

With her devotion to the idea of motherhood but the rejection of traditional position and duties of a mother, Evir is the perfect representation of Egerton's New Motherhood. By reversing conventional gender roles assigned to women and men, the writer subverts patriarchal ideology designing these roles based on biological characteristics. Egerton challenges the system within the system by applying the degraded position of woman to the man. Hence, she presents a role model for the Victorian women; a new type of mother who chooses to be a mother with her own will and desire, and rejects the protection and possession of a man.

Egerton criticises the generally accepted idea that "marriage and motherhood [are] the careers marked out for women by nature" (Holcombe 3) defending that a woman has the right to choose motherhood without being a wife as well as she has the right to choose marriage without being a mother. In her argument of motherhood, she actually focuses on a problem that is still discussed even in our modern world. She argues that by defining womanhood only through a woman's biological abilities, patriarchy degrades woman identity as being a tool and object of men's reproduction, and also aims to keep women under control through the marriage institution. Egerton opposes this idea imposed upon women and voices her refusal through Evir; she says, "[m]arriage does not attract me; indeed, except as a means of making me a mother when I chose, I would loathe it [...] It is me in him [the child] I love. I have no use for you. He satisfies me, you would only trouble me; and, besides, you are not the kind of man I would give a right over him" (*Symphonies* 216). She does not need the man to raise her child; she is the one in charge and has the right to reject the contribution of the man. In a more general framework, Egerton reflects her perspective towards womanhood and motherhood; she expresses woman's thoughts and inner world from a female gaze. In accordance with her project of uncovering *terra incognita* of woman, she reveals the strengths and abilities of woman. As Middlebrook argues, "George Egerton [is] a writer only secondarily. First and foremost she [is] a woman. In other words, she [writes] first for herself and then for such as would understand that self. She [writes] not because she

[wants] to “write” but because she [has] to write down woman’s world as she [lives] it” (142).

As a part of this project, Egerton also demonstrates the intellectual capacities and potential of woman. Depicting Evir as a wanderer who is open to learning and discovering, she uncovers the inner power of woman: “[s]he had never been so far from the island before, and the alert, seeking spirit of the child [Evir] had longed, yet feared, to explore surroundings” (*Symphonies* 163). It is significant to note that Egerton uses “fear” to depict her character’s desire of discovery since it can be associated with society’s perspective towards the ones who wants to exceed the limits presented to them and explore what is beyond the restrictions. The curiosity of Evir and her desire to discover can be interpreted as Egerton’s way of demonstrating woman’s pursuit of completeness (Pykett *The Improper Feminine* 165). This sense of completeness can be provided by love, motherhood, or acquisition of knowledge. In the story of Evir, the writer puts much emphasis on her search for discovering new information through the lessons she takes from the boy she has met on the coast, and on her potential to learn as she states: “[t]he keen, unspoiled intelligence of the child [Evir] proved intensely receptive. Her quick eye and ear, trained, perforce, for lack of other pastime, to notice each detail of the life of plant, and bird, and fish, in her surroundings, had developed a wonderful, visual memory” (*Symphonies* 179). Egerton proves that if women are given a chance to have a proper education as men, they can progress and canalize their potentials to make contributions in every field. She presents Evir and her progress through the superficial education she gets from an ordinary boy in order to reveal the capacity of a woman.

On the other hand, her distance from the typical modern education is given as her chance to live a freer life since her personality is not shaped by the teachings of a socially constructed religious and intellectual education. Her isolation from the society and all social and religious norms and orders is a strategy employed by Egerton in order to reveal how it can be different for a woman if there are no restrictions to limit her decisions and potential. As Pykett discusses, in Egerton’s works “True Womanhood is distinguished from, and opposed to, the traditional womanly role” (*The Improper Feminine* 158-159). Hence, in order to escape from these traditions, the writer employs

an alienated and isolated setting where the protagonist has no access to conventional education tools or the teachings of Christianity. Egerton displays the limitedness of her protagonist's connection to other people as follows: "[t]he faces of those three men [helpers] are the only strange ones she has ever seen, except that of Knut the Finn, who comes with a boat at times to sell crockery and tins" (*Symphonies* 166). Her limited relationship and contact with a specific number of people, indeed, enable her to develop a more unique and independent personality. It also provides her an environment where she is not judged or objectified by anybody or any social norm. Egerton specifically reflects Evir's distance from any kind of religion and religious teachings through the observations of the boy who teaches her how to read:

[h]e grew more and more amazed as he discovered that she was ignorant of the simplest relationships in life, or of religion except of the curious, half-superstitious, half-pagan form of it that Peter had evolved in his solitude or picked up in his wanderings, or half Biblical, such as she had gleaned from listening as Sigrid read aloud to herself on Sundays; and Sunday meant to her the day on which less work was done than other days, no more. (*Symphonies* 169)

Obviously, she has been raised in an environment, which is not typically constructed by the religious orders of Christianity; she does not have any religious or social borders that can limit the development of her personality and womanhood. She is described as "quick to laugh, quick to be grave, with no conscious personality, a thing of perfect health, sound in mind and body, all her appreciations unconfused by the scrapment systems of modern education" (*Symphonies* 207). Hence, the element of isolation is used to free the heroine's body and mind. Being independent from all the religious and social laws, Evir is able to follow her desires and instincts without any hesitation. She experiences her sexuality and desire to be a mother without any feeling of embarrassment since she only seeks the fulfilment of her natural desires as a woman. In this sense, she is the representation of Egerton's idea of True Womanhood as she lives her life and follows her most basic instincts without any limitation set by the society or Christianity.

To conclude all the ideas discussed in the analysis of "At the Heart of the Apple," Egerton uses motherhood and maternal instincts as "a potent source of female fulfilment and a way of exploring issues relating to women's economic dependency on men" (Liggins 17). In the case of this story, she employs the idea of motherhood as a way of

empowering woman and degrading male body as a tool of reproduction. She subverts the biological positioning of woman through reversing the gender roles established by the Victorian ideologies. The writer also portrays the inner world of a woman from a female gaze, which makes the representation of the character distinctive compared to the female characters presented by the traditional male perspective of the period. Defending that the *terra incognita* of woman can only be reflected by woman, Egerton reveals the intellectual and sexual potential of women. The use of isolation and the emphasis on the wild and primitive nature of the heroine can be interpreted as the writer's strategy to praise the untouched human nature, and to criticise the artificiality and restrictiveness of the socially established rules and conventions. All in all, Egerton introduces her heroine, and reflects her free choice of motherhood as a way of personal satisfaction in order to present a role model for the Victorian women and to encourage them to follow their own instincts and desires.

## “THE REGENERATION OF TWO”

Love is the supreme factor in the evolution of the world.

--George Egerton, *Discords*

“The Regeneration of Two” is published in 1894 as the final story of one of Egerton’s most famous books, *Discords*. Although it does not take much literary attention, it is a significant story in terms of reflecting George Egerton’s project of New Woman. As Vicinus discusses “Egerton was a part of a new generation of woman writers who discussed women’s ambitions, sexual desires and antagonisms toward men with remarkable frankness” (13). Hence, “The Regeneration of Two” directly reflects her radical attitude on women’s sexual liberation and the story of the protagonist, Freu, acts as an agent that proves a change in the traditional attitude of Victorian women is possible. It is the story of a transformation occurring in the character of Freu and also in the character of the Poet whose name is unknown throughout the story. The name of the story is the very first sign of the change to be reflected through two characters, namely Freu and the Poet. However, it is more appropriate to give a very brief summary of the story in order to understand the meaning and emphasis on the title.

The story is about Freu who is “scarcely beautiful but [...] undeniably striking” (*Discords* 163) woman. It is significant that Egerton, again, describes her heroine not with her physical beauty but with the impression she leaves through her characteristic features. She is a typical Victorian widow who has all she needs financially but she emotionally feels empty since she has no aim in her life. Her marriage, on the other hand, was not different as the protagonist criticises her marriage as follows: “because I married without understanding anything about it; I never cared for the master” (*Discords* 166). Obviously, she was not happy with her husband, either; and, she reflects the feeling of emptiness within the marriage through her comments on the traditional marriage: “I fancy there must be many marriages like that, in which the woman feels a dull resentment against the man because her love does not go with herself” (*Discords* 167). Such feeling leads her to question her life and reason of living;

this situation changes when she decides to take a walk through the coast where she aims to find a cove to isolate herself from the society. She encounters with a man around the cove; although the man is sleeping, she cannot just pass by but spends some time to watch the man. She watches him for hours wondering why she is not able to leave him and go her own way and she reached to idea that “there is something in the unconscious helplessness of his attitude that appeals to all that is womanly in her; perhaps it is just the unconsciousness” (*Discords* 173). However, when the man wakes up, they start a conversation and she learns that he is a Poet appealing to her senses and wit. They share their opinions about society and social norm and as he despises Freu because of her traditional Victorian look, she begins to question her identity and aim in the life. Egerton gives some hints about the real personality of Freu by describing her as follows: “[s]he is affectible to-day, stirred in the depths of her nature in the underlying wholesome woman that is there uncalled to life, for the warp is only external” (*Discords* 176).

After exchanging ideas with the Poet and despised by him, Freu’s questioning of life takes the stage of the story:

She considers herself as she sits there: her patent shoes are made by the best man in London; her muslin gown, with all its apparent simplicity, is fitted by Parisian fingers; and her hat is an inspiration of blossoms and lace from the Rue de la Paix. Her gloves are delicate to sight and smell and touch; and yet she would give all she possesses for one hour’s real happiness. (*Discords* 177)

As a result of such criticism about her life and social rules and norms, she decides to turn her inner self as she desires to discover her true nature as a part of *regenerating* her identity as a woman. This transformation period leads her to create a woman community of which members are oppressed and suppressed women under the patriarchal rules and its degradation of woman identity. When the Poet and Freu meets for the second time after years as a consequence of an accident the Poet has, he cannot even recognize Freu as a strong and capable woman who has got rid of her gown and other elements of Victorian fashion. However, it is the Poet himself who has changed in a more depressive and hopeless way this time by shocking Freu as she asks, “how is it you have grown less secure; how have you lost your grip of mother nature? Did your philosophy go lame on the journey?” (*Discords* 237) Now it is Freu’s turn to help the Poet and to enable him to transform into a more secure and conscious person, which can be

considered as an equalisation presented by Egerton for a specific purpose: to show equality in manner and in power to influence others by personal teachings. The story concludes with the love between Freu and the Poet; however, it is not a traditional love sealed by a marriage bond. On the contrary, she presents an agreement to the Poet; both of them will be free in this love and marriage is out of question:

F: “And if I should tire, and the song in me stifle, and the curse of my restlessness come over me again –”

P: “You will go, and I will wait until you weary and come home again!”

F: “And if my fancy waver – if I seek new eyes and new lips –” [...]

P: “You will be free to go”

F: “Free man?”

P: “Free man,” with pride, “and free woman”” (*Discords* 244)

Such conclusion as “free man and free woman” and the abolition of marriage bondage in the story directly represent Egerton’s project since “[h]er women are intensely self-aware, and struggle to honor the two parts of themselves – their free souls and their desire for self-fulfillment through love” (Vicinus 21-22).

As understood from the plot, the title of the story emphasises the renewal and re-birth of both characters by indicating that a revolutionary change is possible disregarding the roots of characters’ personality. With this aim, Egerton employs two different characters from different cultures and classes; Freu is a traditional Victorian woman who is a rich widow of some English gentleman while the Poet is implied to be a person who lives in Norway and does not give any importance to the rules and criteria of the society. As Sally Mitchell argues

[t]he basic quality of daily life for people in Victorian England rested on an underlying structure determined by social class and shaped by traditional ways of life in country, town, and city. English society in the nineteenth century was still highly stratified, although some of the old class distinctions were beginning to blur by the end of the period. (17)

Hence, it can be interpreted that Egerton particularly presents these two characters since she aims to prove that love should overcome all kinds of oppression and boundaries including culture and social classes. At this point, it is important to focus on the setting of the story since it can be evaluated as an escape from the Victorian Britain. According

to Lisa Hager, “[b]y setting this story in Norway, Egerton moves her utopia outside of England to the picturesque Norwegian countryside where the power of Victorian convention is decidedly weaker” (“A Community of Women” par. 20). The Norwegian setting can be considered as a hint which argues that the environment and society in Britain is not prepared or ready for such radical changes in the name of gender roles.

On the other hand, under the traditional appearance of the heroine, she is depicted as a character who has some questions in her mind both about herself and her surroundings. As generally observed in Egerton’s stories, Freu’s monologues are also given as a part of questioning process. The reader observes Freu’s hesitations about social norms even before she changes into a free spirited woman when she thinks about the affection between herself and the Poet: “[w]hy can’t,” she says softly, “his soul and my soul and the doggie’s soul loosen ourselves and float away in soul communion out of the barren loneliness of this old earth here?” (*Discords* 177). Her rumination over the issue can be taken as a sign of her potential to reject the boundaries put around women by the patriarchy based society. However, she still cannot completely evaluate her communication with the Poet whom she meets for the first time but has a deep conversation unlike the general first meeting of typical Victorian woman and man. Therefore, she questions the appropriateness of her situation and says, “[t]his is the first time, and you are the first man I have ever spoken to without a formal introduction; and,” with a quiver through her voice, “I don’t know why I am doing it now. It is not that you are too – too amiable” (*Discords* 182). Her statement actually acts as an agent that encourages women to follow their feelings since she does not stop having a conversation with the Poet although she is taught that it is inappropriate. It is a kind of manifestation presented by Egerton that one can learn her/his truth only by experiencing what the life presents her/him.

Through Freu’s path of self-discovery, religion is one of the most criticized component of the society from the perspective of woman identity. As David Thomson puts it, “[n]o interpretation of mid-Victorianism would be sound which did not place religious faith and observance in the very centre of the picture” (107); that is the reason of Egerton’s criticism of religion through the character of Freu. Criticism of morals and rules also comes with the criticism of religion since they are all interconnected and they compose



the society all together. Although it is a long statement, the following quotation should be given in order to reflect Egerton's perspective on religion and people's hypocrisy by misusing values such as being good or bad.

Look down to the market-places of the world, and watch the jugglers at play, - the jugglers of religion and morality. What a motley crowd of followers each one can claim, and how they applaud with satisfaction as the gilded balls are tossed before them! Look at the domes and spires and minarets of the houses of worship; listen to the preachers shrieking from the pulpits; listen how their voices roll out, and are lost in the chink of the money-changers' coins, and the clamor of the Bourse in the great squares. See, there comes a procession, headed by the cardinals who spend their lives in deciding theological quibbles as futile as the famous one of 'how many angels can dance on the point of a needle'! And as it passes on, with its mitres, and costly robes, and swinging censers, and waxen lights in silver candelabra, and trappings worth a prince's ransom, the crowd cry 'Alleluia' for the space of a second, only to return to their bartering and their 'Buy, buy, buy!' [...] I am the only true Church; in me seek salvation! [...] 'Do good for good's sake, without thought of heaven or fear of hell.'" (*Discords* 188)

Obviously, Egerton criticises the teachings of Church since she believes that they do not represent the true teachings and disciplines of the religion. Through the above given monologue of Freu, she considers that religion is socially constructed by the patriarchal ideology that only pays attention to the demands and happiness of white European males. For this reason, she depicts her characters as women who question first themselves and then their society as she wants to encourage the women of period to "re-imagine [womanhood and] motherhood" (Fluhr 245). Through a conversation between Freu and the Poet, Freu frankly gives her opinions about the limitations and suppression of the religion and society. She says, "[m]ost churches and all social law have tended to cheapen woman; and in some measure woman has been the greatest sinner against woman by centuries of silence" (*Discords* 235); it is indeed a criticism against both religion and woman. Egerton blames women to be silent against all the oppression and suppression they have experienced for centuries; according to her opinion, only if woman starts to question what they have been taught by religious and social institutions, they can be aware of the real power of woman.

To further her argument on this issue, Egerton speaks her manifestation about real womanhood through the mouth of her heroine, Freu. She presents the change in her thoughts after the regeneration process through the conversation between Freu and the Poet; Freu says: "[i]n teaching me to find myself, you taught me more than you thought;

and what you taught me I am trying to teach to others. A feminine *Umwertung aller Werthe*, a new standard of woman's worth" (*Discords* 235). Obviously, she does not only change herself but she aims to change other women in order to create a more aware and able generation of ladies; Egerton, at this point, actually reveals her aim and she considers that it can be achieved. She reflects her project as follows: "[w]oman has cheapened herself body and soul through ignorant innocence; she must learn to worthen herself by all-seeing knowledge. I have begun low down on the social scale, but I hope the seeds I am planting will grow into bigger trees, with wide-spreading roots" (*Discords* 235). Indeed, Egerton claims that women can only achieve freedom and rights through the struggle of women; and, the only way to do it is receiving education and voicing the problems of women, which can lead questioning and hence awareness.

To sum up the argument discussed in the analysis of the story, Egerton challenges the concept of marriage and its limitations especially on women through the character of Freu. She openly criticises the idea of womanhood within marriage because according to the norms of Victorian Period, "[a]fter becoming a wife – a basic component of the female role – the woman becomes the center of the home, crowned with the virtue of faithfulness and responsible for harmonious coordination of house and family" (Epstein 21). Rejecting these socially constructed roles for the Victorian women, Freu represents the true female identity that Egerton aims to reveal through almost all of her heroines. However, it is important to pay attention to the setting of the story, since it hints that the environment in Britain is still not ready for this kind of radical rejections. Yet, still Freu's rejection of marriage and religious rules about the relationship between a woman and a man is presented as a discovery of her real identity regardless of the society and class she comes from. Therefore, the process of her "regeneration" is completed with her decision to follow her heart but still with no limitations since Egerton implies that the only way to become "a whole woman" (*Discords* 245) is through the discovery of true female identity that exists in the depths of every woman's nature.

## CONCLUSION

Here she comes, running, out of prison and off  
the pedestal; chains off, crown off, halo off, just a  
live woman.

--Charlotte Perkins Gilman

In spite of her rejection of any commitment to New Woman and her criticism of this movement as a popular and temporary tendency soon to be forgotten, George Egerton is accepted to be one of the most important forerunners of the movement. As indicated throughout the discussion of this study, the most important reason of this association is her project of reconceptualising female identity by questioning traditionally constructed gender roles. She opposes the subordinated position of woman and her suffering under the control of patriarchal ideologies. Generally focusing on the importance of woman's autonomy in every field, she often presents self-confident and free spirited heroines who are perfect representations of New Woman. When her life style and experiences are taken into consideration, she is also a role model of this new and liberated woman who has social, economic, and intellectual freedom. In this sense, her heroines actually reflect Egerton's own experiences and perspective towards womanhood. The argument presented in the analysis of her heroines is that according to Egerton's idea of true feminine, woman is superior to man in terms of her intellectual capacity and natural instincts. She argues that witchery, hysteria, and motherhood are the key factors that prove woman's real power and secure her superiority; that is why these notions are imposed on women either as unhealthy and morbid or as too praised to be criticised. Egerton suggests that it is a strategy employed by the patriarchal authorities in order to keep woman under control and to limit their abilities since they are afraid of facing woman's potential. Therefore, the writer's main aim is to deconstruct these established ideas about woman and womanhood and to reconstruct them in accordance with her idea of free woman who is able to voice her problems, question her status and challenge gender inequality in society, as well as traditional roles imposed on women by expressing her will and desires freely.

Within this context, the most important tool of Egerton is woman's sexuality, and also sensuality. She frequently takes sexuality at the centre of her stories as a way of subverting the general idea of Victorian Period that it is something sinful, something to be ashamed of. She, on the contrary, defends that sexuality is a part of human nature and a matter of preference that cannot be limited within the boundaries of social norms indicating that manmade culture can repress it through marriage or religious institutions but cannot abolish it because it is inherent. Rejecting the idea of marriage as the only access to sexuality, she also approaches motherhood from a very distinctive perspective compared to the conventional thoughts of her time. She argues that motherhood is one of the most significant abilities of woman in terms of the power of creation; however, being a mother cannot be a duty but it should be based on woman's free will and choice. In a more general framework, freedom is the *key* concept of Egerton's works since it enables her heroines to express their desires frankly and to reveal their true selves. Accordingly, she asserts that the only way of achieving freedom for women is to question and challenge all socially accepted standards. With this aim, as given and discussed in the analysis of the short stories in this study, she reflects this rejection of norms not only through the content of her stories but also through her use of experimental and innovative literary styles.

The fact that her works cannot be categorized in one literary movement proves that she is a distinctive figure at the *fin de siècle*. She is one of the first writers who use ellipsis and fragmentation in the plot of stories as opposed to the use of linear plot structure in the traditional writing of her time. Instead of presenting events or situations in a chronological order, she focuses on the present moment of her heroines and gives information about the background through the use of stream of consciousness technique. Flashbacks and flows of thoughts are Egerton's tools of conveying the deep meanings in her stories; for instance, in "An Empty Frame," the remorse of the heroine is expressed through the flashbacks about her ex-lover, or in "Now Spring Has Come," the reader can comprehend the unique and independent nature of the heroine through the flashbacks about her childhood. Preferring to convey her message not directly but through fragmentations, flashbacks, and an implied narration, Egerton aims to give her readers the freedom of evaluating and deducing, which can be interpreted as her way of making the Victorian women think and question the situation of her heroines, hence

themselves. In accordance with the ideas discussed above, the major aim of this study has been to analyse George Egerton's selected short stories and the heroines depicted in these stories within the concept of New Woman; particularly, it has focused on Egerton's idea of New Womanhood and sexually liberated female characters who either question or challenge all socially and religiously established norms of the Victorian society.

In the first chapter of this study, "The Marriage of Mary Ascension: A Millstreet Love Story" and "An Empty Frame" have been discussed respectively within the frame of religiously and socially constructed idea of marriage. The main focus in "The Marriage of Mary Ascension" has been the intervention of religion and religious institutions in private lives of individuals. Through the story of Mary, Egerton attempts to prove that the practices of Christianity is based on man-made rules and interpretations which are in conflict with the real creation of God: the essence of the human nature and instincts. She suggests that these problematic interpretations of the religion are the source of woman's subordination and suffering. In the case of Mary's arranged marriage, the reader observes that although she is in love with another man, she obeys to marry her match whose only interest is actually the money he gets from this marriage and Mary's being a socially appropriate wife in terms of education and beauty. At this juncture, it is also significant to note that Egerton's emphasis on education. As discussed in the chapter, she criticises the aim of education given to women by arguing that education should broaden the perspective of women and lead them to awareness and liberation instead of preparing them to be a diligent and obedient servants of men in a marriage. She objects the imposition of the idea that marriage and being a good wife and mother is the only aim of a woman; marriage is only acceptable if it is based on love and free will of a woman. Depicting Mary's sorrow caused by this arranged marriage, Egerton emphasises that religious and social institutions have no right to shape an individual's life based on economic and social profit. Therefore, women should question and reject the idea of arranged marriage, and marriage in general, to stand against oppression of patriarchy. As the final scene of the story reveals, obedience and inaction do not make a change in the position of women; on the contrary, they lead women to a life full of regrets and unhappiness as in the situation of Mary.

On the other hand, in “An Empty Frame,” the attention has been more on the social norms and how they negatively affect the lives of individuals. The main argument of the analysis of this story is that a marriage based on socially constructed criteria and duties is nothing but both an emotional and physical entrapment for women. The infidelity of the husband creates awareness in the mind of the heroine; she realizes her marriage and husband do not meet her expectations. Through the symbolic use of an empty frame, her mind goes back and forth in time reminding her how she has loved a man once. In this story the unconventional ideas on marriage are represented by the ex-lover of the heroine. Although he offers his unconditional love to the female protagonist, she does not accept his offer because he rejects marriage institution defending that love needs no social or legal bondage. Instead of the lover, she chooses her present husband since he is a socially and economically *appropriate* man to be married with. However, questioning comes in the form of an empty frame as a result of the husband’s extramarital affair, which enables the heroine to question the real values of love and marriage. As concluded in the analysis of this chapter, through this story, Egerton raises her doubts about the necessity of marriage as a legal bond; and, she asserts that marriage is a constructed institution to keep women’s potential and abilities under control. Hence, women should avoid traditional norms established for marriage, and prioritise her emotions and instincts to have a free and fulfilled life.

In the second chapter of this study, “Now Spring Has Come” and “A Cross Line” have been analysed within the frame of woman as a sexual agent. The main focus of this chapter has been the representation of female sexual desires from the perspectives of woman characters who are in different social positions. In “Now Spring Has Come,” Egerton presents to her reader a typical representation of New Woman; the heroine of the story is an intellectual and autonomous unmarried woman who can travel alone, make criticism on social issues and gender roles, and also have an affair with a stranger of her own free will. As discussed in the chapter, the story has a plot based on the circles of nature, which is intentionally employed by the writer as a means of creating an analogy between nature and woman. It is a reflection of Egerton’s focus on woman’s psychology and mentality through which she catches the fluctuations and changes of the thoughts and desires of her heroine. The argument presented here is that love is not a phenomenon that can be defined or shaped by the society; it is an individual and private

emotion which can be experienced and terminated only by the will of the individual, in the case of this story, by the will of the heroine. That is to say, Egerton introduces a new kind of love story, which is based on emotions and natural instincts of the female protagonist; and, in contrast with the love stories of the period, this love is not finalised with a happy ever after marriage. On the contrary, as the analysis of the story has been concluded, the love story is presented as an experience that starts and ends with the choices of the heroine suggesting that the only aim of love is the fulfilment of emotional and sexual desires.

In the analysis of “A Cross Line,” on the other hand, the main aim has been to reveal that although marriage can take woman under control and limit her behaviours, it cannot prevent women from experiencing her sexual desires. As in “Now Spring Has Come,” the heroine of this story is also a typical representation of New Woman who reads, makes literary criticisms, smokes, and acts with her desires; however, she is presented as a married woman in this story. Introducing New Woman characters in different social positions, Egerton aims to prove that woman has the power to exceed the limits constructed by the patriarchal authorities. Although she is a married woman, she can go out and have a walk in the woods and meadows without the companion of her husband, and she has an extramarital affair with a man who is not socially *appropriate* for her but is definitely her soul mate in terms of love and intellectual capacity. Nevertheless, the reader observes her sexual desires and fantasies through her dream in which she dances in an Arabian setting which is employed on purpose in order to provide an escape from the conventions of the Victorian Period. The absence of both her husband and her lover in this dream and her position in the dream as both the object and the subject prove that woman can experience sexuality without marriage and even without men. In addition to this, as her choice of motherhood over eloping with her lover in the final scene of the story implies that she does not need men anymore since they have completed their task as tools of reproduction. In a sense, as concluded in the analysis, Egerton reverses the patriarchal notion of womanhood as a tool of reproduction; and hence, through this story, she degrades man by subverting the traditional perspective and uncovering the potential and power of woman.

In the third chapter of this study, “Regeneration of Two” and “At the Heart of the Apple” have been analysed within the frame of motherhood and marriage as a choice of woman not as a duty assigned by the social norms. The common ground of these stories is woman’s will of being a single mother out of wedlock and the representation of these unconventional and free-spirited women in Norwegian settings, which are presented as utopic in terms of their detachment and distance from the society. In the analysis of “At the Heart of the Apple,” the main aim has been to reveal Egerton’s manifestation against the traditional position of motherhood, which is only available within the limits of marriage. As suggested in the analysis, the most significant detail to focus in this story is the heroine’s depiction as a savage and primitive being. Egerton intentionally describes her heroine as born and raised in a house at a hill located in Norway where she has no chance to see and meet people apart from her English master and the servants in the house. It is highly important to note that she has no knowledge about religion, society and hence social conventions, and in particular, about the established norms of womanhood. However, when she meets a baby for the first time by means of a guest visiting the house, she falls in love with the idea of being a mother and having a baby. Throughout the story, the reader observes that during her exploration of nature, she has come across with two different male figures in two different periods of time; first one teaches her how to read, and the second one makes her pregnant. As mentioned in the analysis, it is a strategy employed by Egerton in order to degrade men as tools; she assigns different tasks for these male characters and they disappear after they have completed their tasks. In the end of the story, the reader understands that she becomes a mother whose only interest is her child. Although the father of her child comes back to own her and the child, she rejects his demand by defending that he means only an access of a child for her, nothing more; and she is not a traditional woman but a mother by choice. The analysis has concluded that Egerton’s project of motherhood praises woman who chooses motherhood with her own will not because she is expected to fulfil her duty in the society; and accepts men as the unwanted but unfortunately necessary tools of reproduction.

The main focus in the analysis of “Regeneration of Two” has been to reflect Egerton’s approach towards motherhood as an individual choice of women and also her representation of a woman community that is consisted of unconventional women who



support each other through solidarity. It is the reflection of Egerton's utopic image of a community where women can behave freely without the need of any social orders or moral codes, choose motherhood only because they desire to be a mother, and men understand and respect the choices of women. In this sense, Egerton intentionally uses a Norwegian setting to imply that to construct a freer world for all, one needs to exceed the limitations of the traditional Victorian mind. With this aim, the protagonist is presented as a role model for the Victorian readers in terms of the alteration in her mind about the gender roles and norms of the society. She experiences a kind of shift in her thoughts with the help of a male poet who influences the protagonist through his criticism of the degradation of women. The analysis has concluded that as presented in the heroine's transformation, it is possible to change the mind-sets and to create a more equal society for women.

In conclusion, this study has attempted to present the analysis of George Egerton's selected short stories within the scope of her perspective towards New Womanhood and her project of *terra incognita* in which she puts emphasis on the female gaze since she defends that only woman can reflect the true nature of a woman. Although her literary works have been ignored for a very long time because of her decreased popularity in her later career, she has recently come to the forefront as one of the first examples of sexually and intellectually liberated heroines. The biggest and the most important difficulty experienced during the researches of this study is the limited number of the sources written about her and her works. In this sense, this study is the first to discuss and analyse the selected short stories of Egerton one by one; and also, it is the first time that "The Marriage of Mary Ascension" and "At the Heart of the Apple" are academically discussed in such detailed analyses. Moreover, although the number of the studies about her is limited around the world, in Turkey, there is no source or study about George Egerton and the New Woman. Therefore, among the academic studies conducted in the field of English Literature in Turkey, this is the first one written about Egerton and her literary works, and also about her association with the New Womanhood. This study has been expected to contribute to the analyses of Egerton and New Woman in the field of British Literature both in Turkey and all around the world; and, to pioneer further studies to be conducted in Turkey on Egerton's literary works, and on her perspective and reflection of womanhood.

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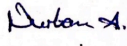
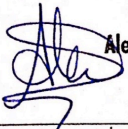
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	<b>HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ</b> <b>SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ</b> <b>YÜKSEK LİSANS/DOKTORA TEZ ÇALIŞMASI ORJİNALLİK RAPORU</b>	<b>Appendix 1.</b>
<b>HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ</b> <b>SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ</b> <b>İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞI'NA</b>		
Tarih: 21/10/2016		
Tez Başlığı / Konusu: The Rise of Female Consciousness in George Egerton's Selected Short Stories Within the Concept of "The New Woman"		
Yukarıda başlığı/konusu gösterilen tez çalışmamın a) Kapak sayfası, b) Giriş, c) Ana bölümler ve d) Sonuç kısımlarından oluşan toplam 130... sayfalık kısmına ilişkin, 17/10/2016 tarihinde şahsım/tez danışmanım tarafından Turnitin adlı intihal tespit programından aşağıda belirtilen filtrelemeler uygulanarak alınmış olan orijinallik raporuna göre, tezimin benzerlik oranı % 3...'tür.		
Uygulanan filtrelemeler: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Kabul/Onay ve Bildirim sayfaları hariç,</li> <li>2- Kaynakça hariç</li> <li>3- Alıntılar hariç/dâhil</li> <li>4- 5 kelimedenden daha az örtüşme içeren metin kısımları hariç</li> </ol>		
Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tez Çalışması Orijinallik Raporu Alınması ve Kullanılması Uygulama Esasları'nı inceledim ve bu Uygulama Esasları'nda belirtilen azami benzerlik oranlarına göre tez çalışmamın herhangi bir intihal içermediğini; aksinin tespit edileceği muhtemel durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim.		
Gereğini saygılarımla arz ederim.		21.10.2016  Tarih ve İmza
<b>Adı Soyadı:</b>	Nurbanu ATİŞ	
<b>Öğrenci No:</b>	N12223822	
<b>Anabilim Dalı:</b>	İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı	
<b>Programı:</b>	İngiliz Kültür Araştırmaları	
<b>Statüsü:</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Y.Lisans <input type="checkbox"/> Doktora <input type="checkbox"/> Bütünleşik Dr.	
<b><u>DANIŞMAN ONAYI</u></b>		
UYGUNDUR.		
		
<b>Y. Doç. Dr.</b> <b>Alev Karaduman</b>		
_____ (Unvan, Ad Soyad, İmza)		



Appendix 1.



HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
THESIS/DISSERTATION ORIGINALITY REPORT

HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
TO THE DEPARTMENT PRESIDENCY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Date: 21/10/2016

Thesis Title / Topic: The Rise of Female Consciousness in George Egerton's Selected Short Stories Within the Concept of 'The New Woman'

According to the originality report obtained by myself/my thesis advisor by using the Turnitin plagiarism detection software and by applying the filtering options stated below on 17.10.2016 for the total of 130 pages including the a) Title Page, b) Introduction, c) Main Chapters, and d) Conclusion sections of my thesis entitled as above, the similarity index of my thesis is 3.00 %.

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1. Approval and Declaration sections excluded
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I declare that I have carefully read Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences Guidelines for Obtaining and Using Thesis Originality Reports; that according to the maximum similarity index values specified in the Guidelines, my thesis does not include any form of plagiarism; that in any future detection of possible infringement of the regulations I accept all legal responsibility; and that all the information I have provided is correct to the best of my knowledge.

I respectfully submit this for approval.

21.10.2016

Date and Signature

Name Surname: Nurban ATIŞ  
Student No: N12223822  
Department: English Language and Literature  
Program: British Cultural Studies  
Status:  Masters  Ph.D.  Integrated Ph.D.

**ADVISOR APPROVAL**

APPROVED.

Y. Doç. Dr.

  
Alev Karaduman

(Title, Name Surname, Signature)



HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ  
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ  
TEZ ÇALIŞMASI ETİK KURUL İZİN MUAFİYETİ FORMU

Appendix 2.

HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ  
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ  
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞI'NA

Tarih: 21/10/2016

Tez Başlığı / Konusu: The Rise of Female Consciousness in George Egerton's Selected Short Stories Within the Concept of 'The New Woman'

Yukarıda başlığı/konusu gösterilen tez çalışmam:

1. İnsan ve hayvan üzerinde deney niteliği taşımamaktadır,
2. Biyolojik materyal (kan, idrar vb. biyolojik sıvılar ve numuneler) kullanılmasını gerektirmemektedir.
3. Beden bütünlüğüne müdahale içermemektedir.
4. Gözlemsel ve betimsel araştırma (anket, ölçek/skala çalışmaları, dosya taramaları, veri kaynakları taraması, sistem-model geliştirme çalışmaları) niteliğinde değildir.

Hacettepe Üniversitesi Etik Kurullar ve Komisyonlarının Yönergelerini inceledim ve bunlara göre tez çalışmamın yürütülebilmesi için herhangi bir Etik Kuruldan izin alınmasına gerek olmadığını; aksi durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim.

Gereğini saygılarımla arz ederim.

21.10.2016

*Nurbanu Atış*  
Tarih ve İmza

Adı Soyadı: Nurbanu ATIŞ  
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Appendix 2.

**HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
ETHICS BOARD WAIVER FORM FOR THESIS WORK**

**HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
TO THE DEPARTMENT PRESIDENCY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

Date: 21/10/2016

Thesis Title / Topic: The Rise of Female Consciousness in George Egerton's Selected Short Stories Within the Concept of 'The New Woman'

My thesis work related to the title/topic above:

1. Does not perform experimentation on animals or people.
2. Does not necessitate the use of biological material (blood, urine, biological fluids and samples, etc.).
3. Does not involve any interference of the body's integrity.
4. Is not based on observational and descriptive research (survey, measures/scales, data scanning, system-model development).

I declare, I have carefully read Hacettepe University's Ethics Regulations and the Commission's Guidelines, and in order to proceed with my thesis according to these regulations I do not have to get permission from the Ethics Board for anything; in any infringement of the regulations I accept all legal responsibility and I declare that all the information I have provided is true.

I respectfully submit this for approval.

21.10.2016

*Nurbanu A.*  
Date and Signature

**Name Surname:** Nurbanu ATIŞ  
**Student No:** N12223822  
**Department:** English Language and Literature  
**Program:** British Cultural Studies  
**Status:**  Masters  Ph.D.  Integrated Ph.D.

**ADVISER COMMENTS AND APPROVAL**

**Y. Doç. Dr.  
Alev Karaduman**

*Alev Karaduman*

(Title, Name Surname, Signature)

**ETİK BEYAN**

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