

PIECING TOGETHER A GRAY PATCHWORK: THE FORMATION OF FEMININE  
IDENTITY IN GEORGE EGERTON'S *KEYNOTES* AND *DISCORDS*

By

LISA HAGER

A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2001

Copyright 2001

by

Lisa Hager

To Noel

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank a number of people, without whom I would never have finished or even begun this project. I owe a great debt of gratitude to my family, who has supported me in all of my endeavors whether I liked it or not. I am also indebted to my fellow graduate students in the English Department at the University of Florida, especially my very good friend Julie Sinn and the Quilters, for supporting me as can only those who are in the same boat. Thank you also to Jayson Akridge, who has listened ever so patiently and sensitively to my every neurotic obsession about this project. Last but most definitely not least, I thank the faculty and staff of the English Department and, in particular, Dr. Chris Snodgrass and Dr. Pamela Gilbert, whose guidance challenged me to become a better writer and scholar.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iv
ABSTRACT .....	vi
CHAPTERS	
INTRODUCTION .....	1
PIECING TOGETHER A GRAY PATCHWORK: THE FORMATION OF FEMININE IDENTITY IN GEORGE EGERTON'S <i>KEYNOTES</i> AND <i>DISCORDS</i> .....	2
CONCLUSION .....	30
LIST OF REFERENCES .....	31
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH .....	33

Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School  
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

PIECING TOGETHER A GRAY PATCHWORK: THE FORMATION OF FEMININE  
IDENTITY IN GEORGE EGERTON'S *KEYNOTES* AND *DISCORDS*

By

Lisa Hager

August 2001

Chairperson: Dr. Chris Snodgrass  
Major Department: English

The publication of George Egerton's *Keynotes* (1893) and *Discords* (1894) caused quite a stir among the Victorian reading public and literary critics. In these two volumes of short stories, Egerton pushed the limits of English sensibilities with her frank treatment of women's sensuality and sexuality, and her critics responded strongly to both the subject and style of this cultural boundary crossing. Egerton's fiction is intertwined with a notion of mixing the unmixable—literally turning life upside down. Hence the scandalousness of Egerton's fiction comes not only from her explicit discussion of women's experiences of desire, but also from her willingness to undermine the stability of discursive constructions of women's subjectivity containing that desire. Between and within *Keynotes* and *Discords*, Egerton develops a mixed feminine subjectivity that exceeds traditional Victorian feminine subjectivity by moving toward reciprocal relationships with gender, racial, imperial, and class Others. Her largely white, upper-class, and English female protagonists do indeed fit the unitary and coherent model of

Victorian subjectivity to a great extent, but Egerton challenges this model of subjectivity by showing the limits it places on women's ability to participate in reciprocal contact with the Other and the possibilities once women's subjectivities begin to resist its unitary and static nature. The first story of *Keynotes*, "A Cross Line," and the last story of *Discords*, "The Regeneration of Two," occupy important positions in Egerton's project of moving her white, English, upper-class, Victorian woman toward a sense of self that would enable her to be more than Victorian femininity allows. The two stories form a double gesture with "A Cross Line" recuperating women's awareness of their subversive potential within Victorian feminine identity and "The Regeneration of Two" exploring how far that potential may be realized within Victorian culture. As she develops her model of women's subjectivity, Egerton attempts not to radically break with Victorian femininity but instead to smudge the edges that confine women so strictly within the position of non-subject. They are the women with gray gloves; they are the women who move on the edges of the discursive construct of feminine subjectivity and constantly push those edges as they move toward a space that allows for the expression of their own desires, not the desires that men would grant them. Egerton's insistence on the mixed nature of her art and the women depicted in that art thus undermines any attempt to construct a stable, unitary identity—the black and white of the self and Other continually blend into a patchwork of infinite grays.

## INTRODUCTION

The publication of George Egerton's *Keynotes* (1893) and *Discords* (1894) caused quite a stir among the Victorian reading public and literary critics. In these two volumes of short stories, Egerton pushed the limits of English sensibilities with her frank treatment of women's sensuality and sexuality, and her critics responded strongly to both the subject and style of this cultural boundary crossing. As Gerd Bjørhovde notes in *Rebellious Structures*, Victorians were "as shocked by the way she wrote as by what she wrote" (129). In particular, critics and readers like focused on the liminality of Egerton's fiction. In his 1894 review of *Keynotes* in *The Academy*, William Sharp notes, "There is a sense . . . That life is 'topsy-turvey [sic]'" (142). For this reviewer, the indeterminate aspects of *Keynotes* disturb the boundaries that normally regulate and control Victorian society. Egerton's fiction is intertwined with a notion of mixing the unmixable – literally turning life upside down. Hence the scandalousness of Egerton's fiction comes not only from her explicit discussion of women's experiences of desire, but also from her willingness to undermine the stability of discursive constructions of women's subjectivity containing that desire. Between and within *Keynotes* and *Discords*, Egerton develops a mixed feminine subjectivity that exceeds traditional Victorian feminine subjectivity by moving toward reciprocal relationships with gender, racial, imperial, and class Others.

## PIECING TOGETHER A GRAY PATCHWORK: THE FORMATION OF FEMININE IDENTITY IN GEORGE EGERTON'S *KEYNOTES* AND *DISCORDS*

Much current scholarship on Egerton has tended to see the indeterminate nature of the feminine subjectivity mapped out in *Keynotes* and *Discords* as a problem rather than the central concern. In looking at feminine identity in the two books, scholars have both praised and problematized Egerton's use of essentialist discourse and left relatively untouched the double gesture that Egerton makes through the two volumes. Lyn Pykett views Egerton's use of essentialism positively, noting that "Egerton does not simply reproduce this essentialist discourse, she also appropriates and interrogates it" (168). For Pykett then, Egerton's essentialism works not to maintain traditional notions of feminine subjectivity but instead subversively uses essentialist discourse to challenge those notions of subjectivity. However, Laura Chrisman disagrees on the subversiveness of such a move and argues, "it was precisely through collusion with, and not in opposition to, hierarchical notions of ethnic and cultural difference, that feminist identity was articulated" (45). While I am not necessarily arguing, as Chrisman does here, that Egerton was formulating a specifically "feminist identity," Egerton's work, like any other Victorian's, does operate within late-Victorian discourses of racial and cultural privilege. Although these viewpoints do reveal important aspects of Egerton's project in *Keynotes* and *Discords*, both attempt to fix Egerton's position as either subversive or conservative and, in doing so, set up a false dichotomy between the two. And as in her own life, Egerton's position is hard to entirely determine; she always makes a seemingly contradictory gesture toward both the shocking and the conventional. If, instead,

Egerton's movement toward a mixed feminine subjectivity grounded in mutuality with the Other becomes a process of constructing what Judith Butler terms in *Gender Trouble* an "Intelligible" identity, then Egerton's feminine subjectivity is simultaneously both conservative and subversive (23). Her largely white, upper-class, and English female protagonists do indeed fit the unitary and coherent model of Victorian subjectivity to a great extent, but Egerton challenges this model of subjectivity by showing the limits it places on women's ability to participate in reciprocal contact with the Other and the possibilities once women's subjectivities begin to resist its unitary and static nature.

For Egerton, this subversion does not entail the absolute rejection of Victorian constructions of feminine identity but rather a certain mixture of the subversive with the conservative within that identity. As Laura Marholm Hansson (Laura Mohr) notes regarding "Her Share" in *Discords*, "the style is full of tenderness, perhaps even a trifle too sweet. It affects one like a landscape on an evening early in autumn, when the sun has gone down and twilight reigns; it seems as though veiled in gray, for there is no color left, although everything is strangely clear" (91). A playwright herself and the wife of the Swedish writer Ola Hansson, Marholm Hansson here notices how Egerton's women are always creatures of the twilight, that infinitesimal liminal moment when day and night meet—a gray light that is neither one nor the other. In late-Victorian fiction, this sort of indeterminacy takes on the additional valence of an association with the liminality of the modern woman. Even a decade before the publication of *Keynotes*, early New Woman writer Olive Schreiner connected modern writing with grayness. Schreiner explains in her preface to *Story of an African Farm*:

But, should one sit down to paint the scenes among which he [the colonial writer] has grown, he will find that the facts creep in upon him. Those brilliant

phrases and shapes which the imagination sees in far-off lands are not for him to portray. Sadly he must squeeze the colour from his brush, and dip it into the grey pigments around him. He must paint what lies before him. (30)

Through the voice of a male nom de plume, Schreiner here connects liminality with grayness. It is a very normal association to be sure, but the association only works if, as with Schreiner and Egerton, their fictional is seen as that which cannot be a “pure” flight of fancy because its mixed nature precludes it from having any sort of purity. Egerton’s thoroughly mixed woman therefore represents not a purely “new” woman but a woman whose movement between the new and the old calls attention to the impossibility of being purely either.

In structuring *Keynotes* and *Discords*, Egerton destabilizes the genre boundaries that divide the short story and the novel so that her books become hybrids of both, blending the intense focus of the short story and the larger breadth of the novel so that she can develop her mixed feminine subjectivity within both genres. The novel’s ability to make broader social statements merges with the short story’s specificity, and the mix allows an author who claimed that “the long book was not my pigeon” to trace her women’s collective movement toward subjectivity without a total denial of difference (“A Keynote to *Keynotes*” 59). Through this hybrid form, Egerton was able to get away from many of the well-sedimented conventions of the Victorian novel and do something that she felt had yet to be done in fiction as a whole: “I realized 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. In that, I think I succeeded” (“A Keynote to *Keynotes*” 58).

Although Egerton is working from an essentialist notion of woman, and man for that matter, she leaves her construction of woman decidedly incomplete. For, if Egerton was writing “as she knew herself to be,” she acknowledges that she writes woman from her own specific viewpoint and not from some totalizing universal distance (“[A Keynote to Keynotes](#)” 58). Hers is only one vision of woman’s possibilities, of what could be found in the terra incognita, and even that vision is made multiple through her many different yet similar women. In each story, Egerton’s keenly sensitive and intelligent late-Victorian upper-class woman reappears with certain important variations that mark the development of the theme. As critics of Egerton’s own time noted, the author “chiefly aims at painting the kaleidoscopic nature of women. The lawless, unconventional, passionate type is repeated several times, under different guises” ([Rev. of Keynotes in The Bookman](#) 87). Laura Marholm Hansson also comments on this repetition of Egerton’s central subject in both collections: “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). Although she is repeated in every story, Egerton’s woman is always repeated with a difference. That simultaneous similarity and difference allows Egerton to depict the development of a mixed feminine subjectivity through the multiple women of each volumes’ stories. Hence while the books may be collections of short stories, the stories themselves have a relationship as a larger whole. They connect with one another through the periodic repetition of various motifs, such as Norwegian setting, hypersensitive female protagonist, and women’s wildness; however, each individual story has its own particular note to add to the chord of women’s subjectivity. Both volumes include the repetition of these motifs within their stories, but

the books differ in their overall tones. The stories of *Keynotes* largely concentrate on the moments when women set the tone for their lives, whereas the stories of *Discords* mostly concern themselves with moments when women are in fundamental conflict with their feminine role in Victorian society. Egerton links *Keynotes* and *Discords* together so that the two volumes themselves act as movements in a larger symphony, but retain their distinctness within that symphony.

This patchwork identity is the work both within and between Egerton's first two books, *Keynotes* and *Discords*. The first story of *Keynotes*, "A Cross Line," and the last story of *Discords*, "The Regeneration of Two," occupy important positions in Egerton's project of moving her white, English, upper-class, Victorian woman toward a sense of self that would enable her to be more than Victorian femininity allows. Although Egerton did not intend for "A Cross Line" to be at the beginning of *Keynotes*, the story's scandalous subject of an extra-martial affair made her publisher and readers alike focus on the story as the keynote of the book. Egerton herself had positioned the story last in the table of contents that accompanied the book's manuscript, but publisher John Lane decided that it ought to be first. Thus while Egerton envisioned "A Cross Line" as the culmination of *Keynotes*, her readers read the story as its beginning. However in either position, the story occupies an important place in the collection and works to represent what Egerton is doing in *Keynotes* as a whole. These "key" stories in both of the books function as overture and finale respectively and, as such, "A Cross Line" and "The Regeneration of Two" provide a framework for understanding the variations presented in each of the other stories as Egerton moves her women away from a unitary sense of self toward a more indeterminate and temporary self. The two stories form a double gesture

with “A Cross Line” recuperating women’s awareness of their subversive potential within Victorian feminine identity and “The Regeneration of Two” exploring how far that potential may be realized within Victorian culture.

In “A Cross Line,” Egerton’s female protagonist ultimately reaffirms the boundaries that separate her from gender, racial, imperial and class Others because she remains locked in a unitary identity that prevents exchange in kind with any Other. Yet from the beginning of “A Cross Line” Egerton sets up her female protagonist as a mixture of elements that have the potential to move her toward a heterogeneous identity. The first view of the woman immediately emphasizes her varied nature: “A woman sitting on a felled tree turns her head to meet its [the sound of the grey man’s whistle] coming, and an expression flits across her face in which disgust and humorous appreciation are subtly blended” (*Keynotes* 9). The mix of contradictory reactions in the woman’s facial expression establishes her as both a creature of contrasts, who feels the traditional and subversive responses to such a scene. This woman is capable of appreciating and enjoying something beyond the easy pleasure of similarity and symmetry; she likes difference and can respond to the incongruity of the grey man’s whistle and their pastoral surroundings with fitting ambiguity. Yet, for all of her seemingly disruptive potential, this woman remains tied to a unitary notion of feminine subjectivity; she remains “a lady decidedly” with all traditional Victorian racial, imperial, and class distinctions of separation from Others that the term implies (*Keynotes* 13). The woman in “A Cross Line” may step outside the borders of English whiteness through the non-English color of her “slim brown hand” and “her skin [that] looks duskily foreign” in contrast her light-colored gown, but she remains English and white under that tan

(*Keynotes* 12; 15). As she tells her lover, the female protagonist of “A Cross Line” cannot be touched by another in any meaningful way; she is, in her own words, “written in black letter to most” (*Keynotes* 32). In remaining “Victorian woman” in the assumed sense of the term, she remains unable to have any contact that would acknowledge mutual need with a gender, racial, imperial, or class Other.

The most obvious way that this woman returns to the boundaries of Victorian femininity is through her relationships with her husband and her lover. Although the lady’s husband is not her intellectual or even spiritual equal, she clearly desires him on a physical level and does not have any understanding of how such a relationship confines her. Such an oafish and harmless man as her husband can never mentally satisfy this woman because “There is a singular soft monotony in his voice; the organ with which she replies is capable of more varied expression” (*Keynotes* 19). This simple man can never hope to understand the subtle mixture of his wife’s mind, but he enjoys their relationship because she understands him and does not mind that he may have loved another before their marriage. He complements her on her easy ability to deal with such situations like a man: “being married to you [this woman] is like chumming with a chap!” (*Keynotes* 25). For her part, she takes pleasure in their sexual relationship and enjoys it a great deal when he “carries her off to her room” (*Keynotes* 26). Hence while her varied nature may reveal how unsuitable her husband is, the woman does understand the effect of this relationship on her own mixed potential. Egerton explores this effect by returning to this marital situation later in *Keynotes* with “An Empty Frame.” In this story, the woman realizes that another woman would have suited her husband just as well. She has given up the man with whom she might have surprised even herself because he would not marry her:

“the fact that you could put her [her husband’s earlier lover] on the same level, that if it had not been for a mistake she would have suited you as well, made me realize, don’t you see? that I would have done some one else better!” (*Keynotes* 130). With the right man, she could have surpassed even her own dreams of her potential’s realization. This woman understands what the woman in “A Cross Line” does not even consider; she understands her own potential in the right relationship – a relationship that explicitly would not include marriage. She tells her husband that “‘I’—with a catch of the voice— ‘with a great man might have made a great woman; and now those who understand me [bitterly] think of me as great failure’” (*Keynotes* 130). While the woman in “An Empty Frame” has also already made her mistake, she at least comprehends her own potential and the extent to which her husband precludes the development of that potential, whereas the woman in “A Cross Line” seems willing to forgo any search for her true soulmate or even to pursue a single life in which her mixed nature would be unfettered by the constant presence of such a man.

Although the woman in “A Cross Line” chooses not to understand how much her husband limits her, she does have an extra-marital affair with a stranger whom she meets while fishing alone and who appears to be more her intellectual equal. However, she remains untouched even by her lover because she cannot acknowledge her need for the Other. Her lover is more like the protagonist and has the ability to appreciate her mixed nature. Throughout the story, the descriptions given to his appearance all include a gray element; both of the times that he appears in the story his “gray-clad figure” and “cold, gray eyes” are noted (*Keynotes* 11). Although Egerton never describes the man’s mind, his gray outward appearance implies a certain modern, almost feminine, indeterminacy

that can at least begin to appreciate the complexity of the female protagonist. He can listen to her tell him about herself, but he cannot touch her emotionally. He, in the woman's words, does "not misunderstand me" (*Keynotes* 33). The affair cannot hold her, and she quite matter-of-factly tells her lover that what she does not like about his vision of running away on his yacht together is that he would be there. She prefers "the freedom, the freshness, the vague danger, the unknown" (*Keynotes* 27). He is not the writer of "Now Spring Has Come" whose novel of "all the tragedy of a man's soul-strife with evil and destiny, sorrow and sin, [bit] into my [the female protagonist's] sentient being" and who captures her emotional as well as her intellectual imagination (*Keynotes* 49). Despite his inability to comprehend the full extent of her eternally shifting nature, the gray man is able to refrain from making the sort of assumptions about her mind that would fix her in a subordinate role. However, compared with the women who follow her in both volumes, this woman cannot go outside of herself enough to understand how valuable not being misunderstood can be. She has yet to understand the value of desire for Others: "I have been for myself, and helped myself, and borne the burden of my own mistakes. Some have chafed at my self-sufficiency, and have called me fickle,—not understanding that they gave me nothing, and that when I had served them their moment was ended, and I was to pass on" (*Keynotes* 32). Though she can give to Others, this woman never receives anything from them. She remains closed off to any sort of mutual relationship and cannot desire anything from anyone because she does not understand the possibility of a feminine identity that allows contact with the Other without subordination. This woman feels that she must remain within herself or else she will lose what little independence by acknowledging her dependence on another. She may have

“caught” her lover like the woman in “The Little Grey Glove,” but she cannot understand the value of her catch. She cannot admit that she “could learn to [with a rush of color]” love him after she has “learn[ed] to think of [herself] as a free woman again” as does the woman in the other story (*Keynotes* 120; 121). No matter how much the man in gray may feel “an infernal want,” she has yet to experience active desire for him (*Keynotes* 33). Even from her lover, the female protagonist remains closed off to mutual exchange because of her refusal to allow herself to experience desirous need for the Other.

Egerton further explores and then recuperates the disruptive potential of the female protagonist’s desire within a unitary Victorian feminine identity through the imperialist discursive separation between the woman and racial Others. The only point in the story in which the female protagonist does experience desire, the often-discussed clouds passage, is grounded in an eroticization of the imperial Other that prevents the woman from understanding the subjectivity of that Other. In this passage, the woman experiences desire within her own mind and body that enables her to cross the boundaries of time and place. She experiences this desire, the need for the Other, outside the bounds of Victorian society. The woman imagines a fantastic vision of herself dancing before men of the ages: “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” (*Keynotes* 27). Here, Egerton seems to be portraying how this woman does not need a man to enjoy the eroticism of her own body. For although the female protagonist does include men as audience members in her fantasy, her focus on her own erotic experience of her body undermines the traditional power of the male viewer. She mixes the experience of her own erotic body with the desire to view that body – she herself takes

pleasure in seeing her own body as she dances. However, this daringly sexual and sensual passage, which plainly discusses a woman's enjoyment of her own body, is begun by an escape from the confines of English cultural space and Victorian time: "Someway she thinks of Cleopatra sailing down to meet Antonio, and a great longing fills her soul to sail off somewhere too,—away from the daily need of dinner-getting and the recurring Monday with its washing, life with its tame duties and virtuous monotony" (*Keynotes* 26-7). As her mind crosses the boundaries of time and place, she closely connects the flight of her imagination with a flight from the domestic space of Victorian femininity. The foreign past becomes a space where she is not locked into playing a certain role and can begin to experience desire. Her desire thus takes the form an Arabian horse who takes her swiftly from the boring everydayness of Victorian England:

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 her steed of flowing mane and satin skin, and uncouth rhythmical jingle with a feverish beat a song to the untamed spirit that dwells within her. (*Keynotes* 27)

Here, in this clearly non-English, non-Victorian time and place the woman can feel the passion that her daily life lacks. Through this experience of desire resulting from geographical and temporal movement, Egerton begins moving her heroine toward a subjectivity that does not require her to be a one-note character in the stories of men but instead allows her to be continually moving in and out of different subject positions. This woman represents the beginning of Egerton's refusal to lock her female protagonists into the role of the feminine in Victorian society: a role that requires women to be what Luce Irigaray terms "a body-object which is there, which does not move, which he can go back to whenever he likes" ("*Women-Mothers*" 49). However, this woman's movement is not

entirely liberatory because of her relationship to the imperial Other. In escaping to this land of desire, the woman positions the space of the imperial Other as “a signifier and repository of aestheticized eroticism” (Chrisman 55). Just as the woman in “A Shadow’s Slant,” the second story of “Under Northern Sky,” reveals her wildness when she meets a gypsy woman, so too does the woman of “A Cross Line” show that “untamable quantity that may be concealed but is never eradicated by culture, the keynote of woman’s witchcraft and woman’s strength” in her encounters with the foreign Other in the clouds passage (Keynotes 30). The woman in “A Cross Line” aestheticizes this encounter to the point that she does not even meet a single person, but instead sees “flashing eyes set in dark faces surround her” (Keynotes 27). She cannot see the humanity of the Other and does not, as does the woman in “A Shadow’s Slant,” experience a small moment of understanding where “Eye seeks eye—sympathy meets sympathy” between the self and Other (Keynotes 156). The woman in “A Cross Line” remains firmly locked within Victorian constructions of the Other as non-subject and cannot understand what such an Other can offer her. She remains always the lady of the house who is untouched by those who are not her own race and class. Thus, although the woman in “A Cross Line” does experience desire outside of Victorian unitary subjectivity, she returns to that subjectivity by refusing to understand the subjectivity of the imperial Other and cannot acknowledge the benefit to herself of mutual exchange with the Other.

The female protagonist’s inability to recognize the subjectivity of Others also inhibits the subversive nature of her relationships with other women. The woman constantly reasserts her privileged position in her relationships with other women and cannot acknowledge the subjectivity of those women. Immediately after she envisions

herself dancing erotically, the woman contemplates her interactions with other women and wonders if they too feel the wild sensuality as she does: “Stray words, half confidences, glimpses through soul-chinks of suppressed fires, actual outbreaks, domestic catastrophes, how the ghosts dance in the cells of her memory!” (*Keynotes* 21). This woman sees what conservative society would ignore. She knows how each of these women’s little rebellions signifies that all women have the potential and the desire to experience their bodies sensually and sexually even though society now manages to confine them. Other women have been able to find in this woman a strength and candor that they have desperately needed in their own lives: ““Women talk to me—why, I can’t say—but always they come, strip their hearts and souls naked, and let me see the hidden folds of their natures. The greatest tragedies I have ever read are child’s play to those I have seen acted in the inner life of outwardly commonplace women”” (*Keynotes* 28-9). Notably, however, this woman remains apart from the women she discusses; she has no story to share in turn with women who tell her the heartrending stories of their lives. Consequently, though she can appreciate the tragedy of the death of her unwed maid’s baby and use the knowledge of the other woman’s sorrows to understand her own pregnancy, she will not suffer as her maid has because she remains always in the position of the married, upper-class lady of the house. The maid is positioned in the narrative as a non-subject, as an animal: “The look in her eyes is the look of faithful dog, and she loves with the same rare fidelity” (*Keynotes* 41-2). The maid does not volunteer her story about her child, nor does she offer to show the keepsake box. Instead, her mistress commands by asking the unmarried maid if she ever had a child with the assumption that such a lower-class woman would naturally have been a mother: “she asks it with a quiet

insistence, as if she knew what the answer would be, and her odd eyes read her face with an almost cruel steadiness” (*Keynotes* 42). Not once does the lady of the house seem to understand the unequal power position in which she puts her maid when she asks about the maid’s child. She lacks the ability to alter her own viewpoint and see from the eyes of those whose circumstances differ from her own. While she sympathizes with the maid as a mother-to-be, she remains always the lady of the house: “the mistress, who is a wife, puts her arms round the tall maid, who has never had more than moral claim to the name, and kisses in her quick way” (*Keynotes* 43). The lower-class maid lacks any sort of subjectivity because the female protagonist cannot go beyond her own specific position to understand how she could need Others in any way.

As *Keynotes* progresses, Egerton returns to the woman-to-woman bond, and the women begin to learn the importance of other women as subjects in their own right. Increasingly in *Keynotes*, Egerton reveals how the identities of female protagonists are dependent upon their relationships with other women. In “Spell of the White Elf,” the seemingly independent woman acknowledges how other women make possible her life of both artistic and maternal fulfillment but also constructs them as less highly evolved than herself because they are creatures of emotion. As she tells the narrator about the woman whose child she now cares for, she both makes clear her appreciation for having the child that she was physically incapable of producing and her superiority to the child’s biological mother, whose hate for the protagonist was so strong as to make the child resemble the protagonist. Thus, though she grants the woman’s importance in her life, she simultaneously positions her as a lesser being: “Those narrow, poor creatures are capable of an intensity of feeling concentrated on one object that larger natures can

scarcely measure” (*Keynotes* 87). She also does the same with her housekeeper, whom she very much appreciates but also thinks of as a lesser, more emotional creature: “I have a treasure, too, in Belinda. She is one of those women who must have something to love” (*Keynotes* 88). This woman represents a progression from the woman in “A Cross Line” in that she can at least admit the value of other women to her subjectivity, but she still has yet to recognize their own subjectivity beyond being creatures of emotion. In the three-part “Under Northern Sky,” lower-class women are also instrumental in encouraging their mistresses’ movements toward subjectivity, but the lower-class women in this final story of *Keynotes* become more than just emotive supports through their abilities to understand what is required for their mistresses to continue that movement. “How Marie Larsen Exorcised a Demon,” the first story in “Under Northern Sky,” is the only story in the entire collection where the lower-class woman is the main character. Marie Larsen gains for her mistress “a rare, delicious, dreamless slumber” by using her storytelling to triumph over the drunken master of the house (*Keynotes* 147). She alone has the ability to do battle with the master and “[takes] the enemy by stratagem” (*Keynotes* 140). Marie is not just an emotional lower-class woman, but instead has the intellect to overcome the master through language. In “An Ebb Tide,” the concluding story, the cow-girl Gundrun enables the lady of the house to make the journey toward her future. The cow-girl may be the one who is the most emotional over the death of the master, but she also sees her mistress safely to the boat by instinctively “[watching] her steps” (*Keynotes* 186). Above all the townspeople that follow the woman to the waiting tug, Gundrun makes sure that her mistress can go on to “a brighter dawn” after the death of their master (*Keynotes* 192). By developing the bond between women throughout *Keynotes*, Egerton revises the

woman of the first story to begin forming a feminine subjectivity that invites more reciprocal exchanges with the feminine Other. “A Cross Line” thus lays the groundwork for Egerton’s further destabilization of Victorian unitary identity by beginning to investigate the possibility of mutuality between self and Other.

Although “A Cross Line” does ultimately maintain the power structures that it appears to disturb, the story did provoke a very strong reaction among its Victorian readers for its brazen challenge to Victorian codes of feminine propriety. As Margaret Stetz has argued, the story acted as an attention grabber for the rest of *Keynotes*: “With 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 that guaranteed attention for the whole book” (36). Despite the female protagonists’ recuperation of unitary Victorian feminine identity, this story still represents the beginning of Egerton’s development of a feminine subjectivity capable of reciprocal contact with the Other. *Punch*, in choosing this story for the basis of its “She-Notes” parody, cannot avoid acknowledging how difficult it is to contain the female protagonist in this story because she represents the beginning of Egerton’s slipping out of the confines of feminine identity. Unsurprisingly for a paper known for its harsh criticism of the New Woman, the parody expresses an obvious distaste for *Keynotes* and Egerton herself, whose transformation into “Borgia Smudgiton” alludes to her besmirching proper Victorian womanhood (“[She-Notes Part I](#).”109). Yet in making an issue of the woman’s slipperiness, “She-Notes” betrays the extent to which even this biting satire cannot control the women of *Keynotes* or its author in their desirous movements toward subjectivity. The protagonist is said to be a Satanic “water-snake,”

whose “unwashed” hands indicate her moral uncleanness (“[She-Notes: Part I](#)” 109). The obvious snake-in-the-Garden references aside, this description also reveals the extent to which it is difficult to keep hold of the women in *Keynotes*. Not only are the women slippery and snake-like, but they have the added slickness of the water, the fluid medium through which they move, because they are also water snakes. *Punch* also noticeably revises the ending and makes it quite a bit safer by having the maid run off her mistress’s lover. The dangerous bond between women is destroyed by making the man the center of attention instead of the shared maternal feelings with which the original story ends: “The grey man, after all, had his consolation” (“[She-Notes: Part II](#)” 129). In making this revision, “She-Notes” reveals Victorian patriarchy’s need to contain changing Victorian constructions of femininity that imply women’s right to piece together identities apart from their relationships with men. As the overture to such a project, “A Cross Line” continually points to but does not realize the possibility of a mixed feminine subjectivity. However, the story is only the beginning of Egerton’s project, which culminates in the final story of *Discords* going much further than the already shocking “A Cross Line.”

Published only one year after *Keynotes*, *Discords* both follows and departs from its predecessor. Egerton does continue her mapping out of a mixed feminine subjectivity through female protagonists, but the stories in this volume take a much darker turn. All but the last of the stories focus not on the triumphant *Keynotes* of women beginning to claim their own subjectivity, but on the tortured *Discords* between women’s needs for subjectivity and the denial of subjectivity inherent in Victorian femininity. As Hansson noted two years after its publication, *Discords* is very much about the pain of women’s position in Victorian society: “no book that I have ever read has impressed me with such

a vivid sense of physical pain . . . a woman who holds her trembling hands to the wounds which man has inflicted upon her, of which the pain is intensified each time that he draws near” (88). In a review of *Discords* called “Socio-Literary Portents,” an anonymous reviewer describes the collection as “a book of pain—a book written not in wantonness of spirit . . . but in tears and blood” (684). Surprisingly, however, for a book known for its anguish, *Discords* concludes with Egerton’s very hopeful utopia, “The Regeneration of Two.” Rosie Miles points out, as she looks at Egerton’s use of musical allusion in her literary art, “On the first page of the opening story in *Discords* a literal discord is printed in musical notation. On the page that opens that second part of the final story in the volume, ‘The Regeneration of Two,’ a resolution of this chord is printed: harmony is found in one of Egerton’s most utopian and positive stories in which she portrays the perfect union between a man and a woman” (251). In the context of *Discords*, Egerton’s use of the utopia seems out of place – a too happy ending for a too painful book. Yet, the author undermines any tendency within the story to create a fixed solution for the *Discords* of women’s subjectivities by using the utopic aspects of “The Regeneration of Two” to create an imaginative space where she can constantly reassert the impossibility of a static, unitary feminine subjectivity through contact with the Other. As Martha Vicinus has argued, the power of this story comes from “a need to imagine a better world where women work together and men understand and keep their freedom too” (23). In addition to Vicinus’ assertion that such forms allowed women writers “to subvert traditional form with utopian images, opening out the closed world of the realistic story to new, provocative, and unpredictable paths,” the utopia in Egerton is also space where the existing conventions of the realist story can be made unsettled and reworked to

disturb the power of those conventions to create the illusion of the “real” in fiction (21).

The subversion of mixing the utopia with a realist story implicitly requires a containment of that subversion inherent in depicting a separatist space that is not possible in everyday life. For while the female protagonist of “The Regeneration of Two” does indeed step outside the bounds of Victorian feminine identity in forming a “free-love” union with her poet and founding her commune for fallen women, the absolute perfection of her love and work takes this woman’s identity outside the realm of the possible and into the world of the imaginary. She may attempt to prevent the total romanticization of Norway as a place of escape by mixing her descriptions of its simple beauty with the practical demands of everyday life, but she does indeed move her utopia outside of England to the picturesque Norwegian countryside where the power of convention is weaker. Egerton can do what cannot be attempted in the real world: “Phantasmatic language allowed female aesthetes to describe actions forbidden to modern life . . . . The languages marked the characters as ‘other,’ different” (Schaffer 51). While Egerton can depict her female protagonist committing forbidden acts and having suppressed thoughts through her use of the utopia, she never makes those acts and thoughts fully available to real Victorian women. The woman in the story does indeed develop from a hypersensitive, bored, intelligent, upper-class, above-it-all lady into a woman who understands the necessity of constructing her own subjectivity as mixed with that of others, but the utopic aspects of the story severally limit the availability of such a subjectivity to Victorian women by placing the woman too far outside the real lived experience of those women. However, Egerton’s maintenance of the unitary coherent Victorian subject is also simultaneously undermined by the mixed nature of the feminine identities she that forms out of that

subject. This mixed subjectivity subverts integrity of the unitary subject by allowing desire to keep the subject always incomplete and multiple. This Victorian woman writer does not take her readers outside of the realm of Victorian social codes but rather works within that realm to create tension that undercuts its fundamental ability to account for the women's potential mixture with the Other. George Egerton uses scraps of the Victorian discursive construction of feminine identity to quilt a self that can operate within that discourse without being totally contained by it.

The woman in "The Regeneration of Two" begins the process of understanding how she has allowed herself to be contained by Victorian femininity through an encounter with a wandering poet whose comments on the degeneration of women in society begin her own process of self-reflection. Prior to meeting with the poet, the woman seems to be another of Egerton's potentially great women: "taking her altogether, she is seductively attractive, a thing of piquant contrasts—the attractive artificiality, physical lassitude and irritable weariness of a disillusioned woman of the world, and the eyes of a spoilt child filled with frank petulant query" (*Discords* 165). While her nature of mixed contrasts indicates her potential for moving toward subjectivity just outside of the Victorian feminine role, this woman seems less likely to make it than even the woman of "A Cross Line" because she lacks even that woman's small amount of self-awareness. However, the final woman of *Discords* does something the other woman never could: she falls in love and acknowledges her own desire for the Other. She meets a poet who is as much a mixture as she with his eyes: "steel-grey as a lake without sunlight" (*Discords* 180). He "sees too much," sees the ills that world would hide, and has the "dual nature . . . the very harmony of his creations springs from the *Discords* of his temperament" to

understand what he sees (*Discords* 188). He tells her how he found only “vanity, the old insatiable love of power that is the breath of most women’s nostrils, or the physiological necessity for excitement that belongs to the wavering cycle of her being” when he looked among modern women for a life-long loving companion (*Discords* 193). His critique of modern society and particularly the role of women is the first time she considers a man’s feelings toward her: “she never remembers before to have taken the man’s feelings into consideration; she has simply dwelt on her own as of primary importance” (*Discords* 185). Her desire for him and his love leads her to reflect for the first time on how her own her pleasure relates to others. She listens intently to his discussion of society’s ills, and begins to see her own position as an artificial woman of the world as distasteful: “She feels her corset press her like an iron hand; she is shamed to the depths of her soul . . . she is the epitome of the class of women he lashes with his scorn! She cringes inwardly, and a dull pain stirs in her” (*Discords* 197). The pain of his distaste for women like her prompts this woman to look inside herself and see the invisible bonds that confine her within a unitary feminine role that encourages her degeneration. After she and the poet part ways, she regenerates her body and mind through her own devices, but retains her desire for the man who inspired her internal and external project. Thus though Egerton establishes a traditional dynamic, with the clear-sighted male poet showing the worldly woman the error of evil feminine ways, that dynamic is upset by the poet’s mixed nature and the woman’s ability to find a solution to the problem he poses.

In the relationship between these two after their first meeting, Egerton repeatedly mixes the subversive and the traditional so that the bond between them can allow the woman to realize her potential for participating in mutual desire without separating

herself entirely from Victorian feminine identity. The poet continues his wandering, and the woman establishes a commune for fallen women where “She has not stilled her heartache, nor has she forgotten him but she has found a use for herself” (*Discords* 204). This woman has learned the lesson of the woman’s advice in “A Psychological Moment in Three Periods”: “Forget yourself, live as much as you can for others, get a purchase for your own soul some way, let no fate beat you” (*Discords* 58). Thus while she yearns for the poet, she does not waste away like the typical romantic heroine; instead, she puts the three and half years that they are apart to good use and finds work that fulfills her. For, in living for others, she betters her own life by putting her own sufferings in perspective and coping with the absence of her love. She understands, as does the woman in the other story, that ““it may help you to forget your own fate to realize another’s harder one”” (*Discords* 59). She keeps a place in her heart open for the poet whether he returns or not: “something tells her to wait, just wait. She scarcely knows what she expects, sometimes she tells herself nothing—and yet better so” (*Discords* 212). When she rescues him from a blizzard and nurses him through the fever that follows, she does not immediately declare her love for him or even identify herself. Instead, she waits for him to remember her and express his own feeling for her. She knows that she must simultaneously be a person herself and love another completely as she decides what she can be to him: “she is only weighing the effect of it on her own life and work; she is not willing to leave the plough she has set herself to guide. She realizes well that his love, no matter if it be his whole love will not fill her completely” (*Discords* 248). For this woman, “desire is movement” and she understands that she must not be confined within the role of wife (“*Women-Mothers*” 49). Consequently, when he does declare his love for her, she does

not ask for marriage but instead desires a commitment where both are free: “‘Free man’—with pride—‘and free woman!’” (*Discords* 251). Unlike the woman in “A Cross Line,” this woman refuses to allow the institution of marriage to contain the subversive potential of her desire. While it will be she who waits at home, should he decide to wander, she represents the culmination of the hard lessons about marriage in *Discords*. She knows that she ought to ignore what others may think regarding the love that she knows to be true. She refuses to lose her love over other opinions, as did the woman in “Her Share,” who could not have the love that made her “[blossom] into a kind of beauty that belongs to every woman once in her life” because her friends and family did approve of his foreignness and Socialist political views (*Discords* 78). That woman gave up her love and was left with only his aesthetic representation of their relationship: “All the beauty of my life was on the cover, and my life has been as the empty wooden box with a date in it” (*Discords* 81). She enters into this union with the knowledge that girl in “Virgin Soil” so horribly lacked: “‘the ceremony had no meaning for me, I simply did not know what I was signing my name to, or what I was vowing to do’” (*Discords* 154). Unlike that tragic girl, this woman knows the true character of the man she binds herself to and understands that in the institution of marriage “‘man demands from a wife as a right, what he must sue from a mistress as a favour’” (*Discords* 155). The woman in “The Regeneration of Two” knows exactly what she is doing as a free subject, and she does not give up her subjectivity, her right to herself, in doing so. She does not marry under duress, like the tragic woman in “Wedlock,” who marries under the false promise that she can have her daughter born out-of-wedlock live with her after she is married. She binds herself to this man only for love and companionship. She forms a union with a

man who realizes that their love “will never be more than one note; true, a grand note, in the harmony of union; but not the harmony” in her life (*Discords* 246). In this freely-given bond, the woman and her poet form a union where both retain their subjectivity and yet remain in what Luce Irigaray terms “amorous exchange” with one another (“*Bodily Encounter*” 43-4). Her love will be one of reciprocity where she is both independent from and dependent on the Other.

The woman’s transformed subjectivity, a subjectivity not founded on separation from but connection with another, also enables her to form bonds with other women that acknowledge their own subjectivities. Before the woman has her encounter with the poet, her relationship with her maid Aagot is typical and much echoes the relationship between the lady and the maid in “A Cross Line.” The woman in “The Regeneration of Two” asks her maid if about love, but dismisses the maid’s Spanish love affair as just a function of environment with the comment: “‘You northerns always do; ‘Spanish’ seems to convey an idea of romance, of beauty to you folk up here’” (*Discords* 168). The mistress, as an English woman, is doubtless above such quaint Norwegian associations. Yet once she has fallen for her foreign “crack-brained poet,” she begins to value other women on a higher level through her establishment of a fallen women’s commune (*Discords* 210). This is not to say that she does not retain her position as lady of the house, but rather that she does not see her position as granting her the right to dismiss the difference in Others. Thus while she can dissect some of her women’s faults, she also recognizes their virtues: “‘Take Strine. A lump of emotional inclination, without a grain of reasoning power or resistance; the daughter of a drunken father and an epileptic mother; at times affectible as an aspen leaf to a wind-puff—and yet not a bad mother’”

(*Discords* 208). This woman does indeed feel that she is “helping her sisters out of the mire” in what Chrisman terms the woman’s “social tendency,” yet the woman

characterizes these women as sisters and not children (*Discords* 212; Chrisman 49).

They are not inferiors who need to be given lessons in how to live a good life but rather fellow women who need to be granted the right opportunity to live their lives well. She understands the lesson that encountering the fallen Edith teaches the young woman in

“Gone Under”: “I have no right to sit in judgment; I have never been tempted”

(*Discords* 105). Hence the woman in this final story of *Discords* echoes the young woman’s “‘Edith, sister!’” in viewing these women as sisters (*Discords* 112). The story also revises the figure of cow-girl seen in “An Ebb Tide.” This Gunhild is not the instinctual being of all feeling like Gundrun in the final *Keynotes* story, but instead this cow-girl is an extremely valued member of the household in this finale of *Discords*:

She rises with dawn and she has done the round of her work each day; drunk her share of raw spirit honour of the Yule; danced vigorously each festival evening and had no sleep for two nights. Yet she makes no complaint; she is true to her nature with its splendid loyalty, sturdy independence and stubborn pride, and about as much understanding of conventional morality as the first best cow amongst her flock. (*Discords* 228)

No longer is the cow-girl just a typical, over-emotional, lower class woman, acting purely on instinct. Nor is she required to fit the mold of the middle class woman. Instead, Gunhild’s difference is valued for its strengths, and the lady asks only for the cattle-girl’s hard work and not for her assimilation. Out of all the women in her house, the lady of the house seems to admire most this woman who is only barely a part of their community:

“She [Gunhild] is never in the house except when the big bell rings for meals, and she brooks no interference; it is only on rare occasions where strength is wanted that she lends a hand, and she is proud of the reliance placed in her” (*Discords* 228). Though she

does not join Gunhild in her radical lifestyle, the female protagonist can appreciate the cattle-girl without romanticizing the other woman's life. With the inclusion of this passage about the Gunhild and the lady's regard for her, Egerton makes a space for difference within Victorian feminine subjectivity. As Lyn Pykett notes in *The "Improper" Feminine*, Egerton's marking of space for difference within the feminine subjectivity that she depicts in "The Regeneration of Two" allows her "to emphasise [sic] multiplicity and to focus on differences (between women) as well as difference (as a universal, essentialist gender category)" (173). The female protagonist no longer has "to elide the specific terms of this othering (ethnic, socioeconomic) by conflating it with the othering of women on the basis of gender," and can bond with other women while allowing for the difference between them (McCullough 211). Thus through the woman in "The Regeneration of Two," Egerton depicts a feminine subjectivity that can allow for difference within itself and between Others.

This liminality between self and other, between the conservative and the traditional, makes Egerton's women all the more disturbing to Victorian models of feminine subjectivity. Rather than clearly conforming to popular ideas of the "New" Woman or the "Old" Woman, Egerton's heroines disrupt the ideological coherence of either identity. In doing so, these women paradoxically are more "new" than many New Women. After all, as Sally Ledger argues, the New Woman's danger to Victorian notions of identity was her ability to elude stable definition: "The elusive quality of the New Woman of the fin de siècle clearly marks her as a problem, as a challenge to the apparently self-identical culture of Victorianism which could not find a consistent language by which she could be categorized and dealt with. All that was certain was that

she was dangerous, a threat to the status quo” (24). Thus the New Woman, as a cultural idea, represented the inability of Victorian notions of feminine identity to fully contain the women they represented, and as such, presented a basic challenge to the discursive order of Victorian culture that attempted to fix women within the whore/ angel binary. Consequently, Victorian discourses surrounding the New Woman are marked by what Linda Dowling calls a “lurid vision of cultural apocalypse . . . [with a] vocabulary of crisis” (437). The cultural construct of the New Woman thus figures not only as the revolt of women from their “proper” places within Victorian society but also the fractures and fissures in Victorian notions of coherent subjectivity. Egerton’s women, with their movement between the new and the old, further heighten the stakes of that challenge by making even the New Woman label inadequate. The writers of New Woman fiction, of which Egerton was classed without her own consent, received a great deal of harsh criticism because they destabilized normative Victorian constructions of woman: “they said new things about what women could and should do rather than about what women were” (A.R. Cunningham 181). New Woman fiction was about the possibility and potential of a cultural construct that embodied the chaotic potential of social disorder through its constructed instability as an identity; it was about questioning the unitary nature of subjectivity. In *Keynotes* and *Discords*, Egerton’s discussion of woman’s subjectivity makes this instability the focus of the search for feminine selfhood. Hence the danger that Egerton’s female protagonists in *Keynotes* and *Discords* represent to Victorian society lies in the women’s potential to contaminate the smooth coherence of a specifically white, upper-class late-Victorian feminine identity as the author moves them toward a more mixed feminine subjectivity within and between the two collections.

## CONCLUSION

As she develops her model of women's subjectivity, Egerton attempts not to radically break with Victorian femininity but instead to smudge the edges that confine women so strictly within the position of non-subject. Egerton's New Women refuse to pretend that they are entirely new and thus remain always part of the old. They are the women with gray gloves; they are the women who move on the edges of the discursive construct of feminine subjectivity and constantly push those edges as they move toward a space that allows for the expression of their own desires, not the desires that men would grant them. Egerton's insistence on the mixed nature of her art and the women depicted in that art thus undermines any attempt to construct a stable, unitary identity – the black and white of the self and Other continually blend into a patchwork of infinite grays.

## LIST OF REFERENCES

### Primary Sources

- Egerton, George. *Discords. Keynotes and Discords*. London: Virago Press, 1983.
- , "A Keynote to Keynotes." *Ten Contemporaries: Notes Toward Their Definitive Bibliography*. Ed. John Gawsorth. London, Ernest Benn Ltd., 1932.
- , *Keynotes*. Cambridge: Roberts Brothers, 1893.
- Hansson, Laura Marholm. *Six Modern Women: Psychological Sketches*. Trans. Herione Ramsden. Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1896.
- Rev. of *Keynotes*. *Bookman* (London) (Dec. 1893): 87.
- Schreiner, Olive. *Story of African Farm*. New York: Penguin Books, 1995.
- Sharp, William. Rev. of *Keynotes*. *The Academy* (17 Feb 1894): 142-3.
- "She-Notes Part I." *Punch or the London Charivari*. 10 March 1894: 109.
- "She-Notes Part II." *Punch or the London Charivari*. 17 March 1894: 129.
- "Socio-Literary Portents." *The Speaker* (22 December 1894): 683-5.

### Secondary Sources

- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Bjørhovde, Gerd. *Rebellious Structures: Women Writers and the Crisis of the Novel 1880-1900*. New York: Norwegian University Press, 1987.
- Chrisman, Laura. "Empire, 'race' and feminism at the *fin de siècle*: the work of George Egerton and Olive Schreiner." *Cultural Politics at the fin de siècle*. Eds. Sally Ledger and Scott McCracken. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. 45-65.
- Cunningham, A. R. "The 'New Woman Fiction' of the 1890's." *Victorian Studies* 17 (Dec. 1973): 177-186.

- Dowling, Linda. "The Decadent and the New Woman in the 1890's." *Nineteenth Century Fiction* 33.4 (March 1979): 434-453.
- Irigaray, Luce. "The Bodily Encounter with the Mother." *The Irigaray Reader*. Ed. Margaret Whitford. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc, 1997.
- , "Women-Mothers, the Silent Substratum of the Social Order." *The Irigaray Reader*.
- Ledger, Sally. "The New Woman and the crisis of Victorianism." *Cultural Politics at the fin de siècle*. Eds. Sally Ledger and Scott McCracken. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. 22-43.
- McCullough, Kate. "Mapping the 'Terra Incognita' of Woman: George Egerton's *Keynotes* (1883) and New Woman Fiction." *The New Nineteenth Century: Feminist Readings of Underread Victorian Fiction*. Eds. Barbara Leah Harman and Susan Meyer. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996. 205-223.
- Miles, Rosie. "George Egerton, Bitextuality and Cultural (Re)production in the 1890s." *Women's Writing* 3.3 (1996): 243-259.
- Pykett, Lyn. *The "Improper" Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and New Women Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Schaffer, Talia. *The Forgotten Female Aesthetes: Literary Culture in Late-Victorian England*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000.
- Stetz, Margaret Diane. "'George Egerton': Woman and Writer in the Eighteen-Nineties." Diss. Harvard University, 1982. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1982. 1558-A. DA 8222708.
- Vicinus, Martha. "Rediscovering the 'New Woman' of the 1890s: The Stories of 'George Egerton.'" *Feminist Re-Visions: What Has Been and What Might Be*. Eds. Vivian Patraka and Louise A. Tilly. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983. 12-25.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lisa Hager was born in Marietta, Georgia. Thus she, unlike most folks in Atlanta and particularly East Cobb County, can claim the area as her true, birth home. At age nine, she met Noel. She lived her whole life in the same house until she moved to Athens, Georgia, to attend the University of Georgia. At the University, she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in English and an Undergraduate Certificate in Women's Studies. In addition to her curricular activities in Athens, Lisa also became deeply involved in feminist activism. She then moved to Florida to pursue graduate studies in Victorian literature at the University of Florida. Currently, Lisa is continuing her studies at the University of Florida, and hopes to find more time to fight The Man.