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**New Woman's Resistance from Margin in Selected Stories from Stephanie
Forward's *Dreams, Visions and Realities***

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of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in English**

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Letter of Recommendation

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Letter of Approval

This Thesis entitled "New Woman's Resistance from Margin in Selected Stories from Stephanie Forward's *Dreams, Visions and Realities*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Pabitra Giri has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee:

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New Woman's Resistance from Margin in Selected Stories from Stephanie Forward's
Dreams, Visions and Realities

The present research paper makes a literary investigation upon the Selected Stories from Stephanie Forward's anthology of stories Dreams, Visions and Realities, authored by the late Victorian and early modernist women writers. It argues that the selected stories reflect feminist resistance during Victorian and early modern time. In order to achieve it, these stories employ the fictional persona of the leading female characters, who are portrayed in their constant struggle to resist against the prevalent patriarchal imposition of traditional gender roles and are in the quest of their own individuality. Likewise, the paper further explores the characteristic of new woman in the female characters namely Calixta, Thyra Flowerdew, Annette Browning, Josepha and Vanora whose nonconformist, modern, unconventional, independent, self-asserting and self-willed lifestyle vehemently resists the set of the conventional code of gender roles for their individual identity. For strengthening the argument that the selected stories demonstrate the resistance of women for their individuality, freedom and independent being, the researcher borrows theoretical insights from the theory of resistance from various critics including Michelle Foucault accompanied by the theoretical notion of New Woman and Judith Butler's concept of gender as performativity along with Louis Tyson's interpretation of gender roles. The paper concludes with the findings that the contemporary social and political transformations encouraged the transition in the women's gender consciousness beyond the essentialist patriarchal notion of masculine and feminine roles.

Key Words: resistance theory, new woman, gender consciousness, individuality

The present research paper makes a modest investigation upon the Selected Stories from Stephanie Forward's anthology of stories *Dreams, Visions and Realities*, a collection of stories authored by the late Victorian and early modernist women writers from Britain and America. It argues that these stories capture the resistance undertaken by the women against the traditionally imposed feminine roles in the late Victorian and early modern period for the assertion of the women's individuality. The paper further explores the rise of new woman whose quest for individual freedom, independence, and nonconformist lifestyle subverted the prevalent patriarchal politics of private sphere and the public sphere for the equality between the sexes. In doing so, the researcher also historicizes the contemporary social and political developments that provoked a transition in the women's consciousness beyond the accepted gender assumptions of the society. For accomplishing the objective, the paper carries out the literary investigation in the critical light of the insights borrowed from the theory of resistance and new woman accompanied by the historicization of the social, political and cultural circumstances that play crucial role for the production of gender consciousness in the women's struggle against the domination in the society.

The stories such as "A Bird on Its Journey", "The Storm", "The Yellow Drawing-Room", "The Men in the Scented Coat" and "The Hour of Her Life" portray the female characters as the nonconformist, modern, unconventional, independent, self-asserting, self-willed beings who transgress the set of the conventional code of gender roles for their individual identity. These female characters are depicted as breaking the boundary of patriarchal expectation of feminine lifestyle. Such experimental images of the late Victorian and early modern female characters are modeled after what Sarah Grand conceptualized as the new woman. The new woman resists the marginalized social status of the women in the patriarchal society and asserts her public space by performing what patriarchal society mandated as the masculine roles. Thus, the research probes into the way the late Victorian

and early modern women writers experiment with the new woman characters of the women who resist from the margin to subvert the imposed gender roles for the freedom, independent, and the assertion of women's individuality.

The female protagonist, Calixta from the story "The Storm" resists the patriarchal assumption of marriage. The marriage, as a social institution, controls the freedom of the women because it domesticates the life of the women. Marital roles as attributed to women expect them to stay subordinate to their husband. It legitimizes the private sphere of the domestic life as the social position of the women. Women are traditionally conditioned to compromise their needs, desires and interests for the proper protection of the family values, honor and perform as the object of their husband's satisfaction. Such traditional roles are transgressed by Calixta who develops extramarital affair with her ex-lover while still staying in the boundary of marital standard. She becomes nonconformist by choosing to gratify her sexual passion, desires and celebrates individual freedom without having to get confined within the male-dominated institution of marital code.

Thyra Flowerdew from "The Bird on its Journey" denies being an object of a man's desire when he courts after her. She remains committed to her ambition to rise to the top of her profession. Her pursuit for the career as a singer dismantles the patriarchal division of domestic life as women's sphere. She invades the public world- the hotel where she performs her performances. Her presence in the public world manifests the women's resistance against the conventional gender roles for their individual identity. She is the famous pianist but she hides her identity from the visitors in the hotel. The tennis player, Oswald Everard proposes to marry her but she refuses by saying that she is the wild bird and she has her own passage. She loves freedom without any restrictions. Thus, she refuses Everard. She exercises individual choice unlike patriarchal expectation of submissiveness. Her public image as

professional tuner and her free-spirited lifestyle entirely rejects the traditional gender role of women as the being of private sphere.

Annette Browning, the female protagonist from “The Hour of Her Life” is an epitome of the new woman because she is an independent professional woman. Against the patriarchal demarcation between the masculine and feminine occupation, she establishes a business in the public sphere. She runs an exclusive flower shop in the heart of Clubland. Besides, she challenges her family restrictions and marries a man of her choice. She enjoys her individual freedom by listening to her voice unlike the conventional women who subscribe to the domestication of patriarchal society at the expense of one’s independent life.

Josepha from “The Man in the Scented Coat” represents a concrete image of new woman who dismantles the world of domestic sphere and travels freely through the public world. Unlike traditional gender impositions, she drinks and smokes cigarettes. She wanders in the roads of the London, a public space where women were traditionally restricted from. The masculine domination of public world is captured by Josepha. Her carefree, free-spirited and fearless lifestyle initiates the rise of new woman challenging the orthodoxical understanding of gender difference. She drinks, smokes, plays cards with man which are taken to be exclusive male activities.

Vanora from “The Yellow Drawing-Room” symbolically asserts her selfhood through the symbolic use of the yellow color. The story is narrated by male narrator named Mr. St. Vincent who feels inferior due to Vanora’s assertion of power. She is assigned to decorate his room but she makes it her own by choosing the color; yellow. She independently makes the choice of her color and the color symbolically represents her triumph over male domination. It suggests her refusal to submit to his masculine interests. This way, Calixta, Vanora, Thyra, Josepha and Annette are the literary representations of the new woman whose resistance from

the marginalized space against the conventional gender roles is analyzed as an instrumental struggle to assert their new self in the form of independence, freedom, equality and individual identity. The changing socio-economic and political atmosphere of the late Victorian and early modern period will considerably be discussed to shed light on the transition of female role in the women's literary works.

The research paper furthermore analyzes upon the changing scenario of gender perspective in the late Victorian and early modern period. The literary representations of the historical era were dominated by its social, political, economic realities. Because of these changes in the social spectrum, a new style of representation in literary domain was urged to reflect the new sentiments of the society. Few women began to dominate the public world by fighting the traditional roles assigned to them. For representing these new images of womanhood in the backdrop of social and political changes, the experimentation emerged as a new technique of representation. New woman became the experimental image of womanhood at the time as seen in the selected stories.

As art and literature captures the sentiment of the society, the literary works of the era limited itself to the male's perspective of gender and the representation of female characters suffered the long-held patriarchal stereotypes. The literary works of the male always depict the women's image in the stereotypical manner. Women were represented as the angel of the house who must conform to the rules, regulations, values of the house, a domestic sphere. The women's lives were conditioned by the dominant rules of the patriarchy which defined women's subjectivity as the angel in the house who "are expected to stay in the house for pleasing their husbands, raising children and taking care of household chores" (Monir 13). So, women were viewed as an object of male's sexual gratification, machine for reproduction and the carrier of family values. These traditional expectations of women always control and condition women to be limited in the four walls of the private sphere. Pointing out the

patriarchal understanding of womanhood as a sole factor for the controlled, conditioned and generalized representation of women in the literary work of the male, Monir further argues:

In Victorian times the representation of women was imminent, passive, sensual and passionately. It is the time when it is first revealed that what women could do by Mary Wollstonecraft. Feminist scholars who fight for women's social, political, and economic rights have observed the earlier representations and concluded that the Victorian condition of women is mainly due to the dominant rules of patriarchal society. (13)

In the given observation, Monir uncovers how the early Victorian times treated women. The male literary representation of women highly generalized and controlled the women's identity as the being of the domestic sphere. Such patriarchal practice of gender subjected women to the secondary and subordinate position as an object of sexual satisfaction and the servant of male's household service. The lines also disclose the patriarchal doctrines of gender powerfully condition women's lives due to which women couldn't fully discover her individuality. Her freedom, independent and self-willed life was oppressed and suppressed by the patriarchal domination.

However, few women writers from late Victorian and early modern experimented the literary representation of gender roles, particularly that of women's role. For example, Kate Chopin's *Calixta*, unlike traditional woman who compromises her desire in the name of marriage, moves beyond the marital boundary and engages in an affair to satisfy her individual desire. These literary works captured the transition in the women's movement from the patriarchal gender perception of them as a creature of domestic sphere to the rise of new self as a new woman and stressed on the demands for their emancipation and equality as

Stephanie Forward observes referring to the late Victorian and early modern period spanning from 1890s to the 1940s:

The era covered was a very significant one for women, as they questioned their restricted position in society. Throughout this vibrant period of transition there were campaigns for reform in many different areas of their lives. They were seeking enhanced opportunities for education and employment, and hoped for professional recognition. There were demands for political enfranchisement and emancipation. Changes were requested in the laws pertaining to marriage, divorce and custody rights, and anxieties were voiced about the controversial subjects of prostitution and the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases. Women often espoused causes such as animal rights and vegetarianism, and some were attracted to spiritualism. (xi)

In these historical observations, Forward recollects the political and social phenomenon that witnessed the massive transformations in the lives of women. It highlights upon the fact that the late Victorian and early modern period proved to be the foundational period for the emergence of the women's movement for their social and political participation.

The period found the rise of the gender consciousness on the part of women and their struggles for the acquisition of the political rights, social positions and individual emancipation following the movement of feminism. The industrial transformations demanded a shift in the roles of the women and they started seeking for their new position in the society. Following these social and political movement penetrating into the discriminative structure of the patriarchal society, few women writers including the writers of the selected stories namely Mabel E. Wotton, Sarah Grand, Mona Caird, Kate Chopin and Beatrice produced the literary works that were powered by feminist ethos. Among them, Sarah Grand was the

pioneer for the empowering concept of new woman that continued to influence the female characters in the contemporary literary works.

Grand coined the term 'new woman' to refer to the newly emerging social image of the women as feminist, educated, independent and career oriented women: "In the last few years of this period the term 'new woman' is advent for feminist, educated, independent career oriented women. When the movement against women oppression begins, the term 'new woman' was coined by Sarah Grand in her article "The New Respect of Woman Question" in 1894" (Monir 13). Here, the lines evidently reveal the growing participation and tremendous gender conscious among the female writers like Sarah Grand. Likewise, Kate Chopin was a well-known women writer. She was heavily appreciated for her daring and courageous portrayal of her female characters whose actions and behaviors would completely rebel against the established code of behaviors, actions, thoughts and characters of the women. Her women are powerful nonconformist who break free from the restricted boundaries of gender assumptions and pursue for their individual desires. Her female characters are bold, unconventional, and nonconformist. Chopin's stories dominate the theme of women's independence, identity, sexual desires, individual freedom, and economic equality. Analyzing her portrayal of female characters in contrast to conventional stereotypes generalized male writers, Fatimah Binte Monir identifies:

Kate was very casual and confident enough to talk about the sensitive issues like women's independence, their thoughts on their career, their sexual desires. She was one of the powerful writers of her time and her writings were unconventional. She bravely went against the conventions of patriarchal society which were forcefully imposed on women and proposed for women's social, economic and political equality through her fictions. Chopin's themes in her short stories are women centered; her

fictions are on their independence, identity, love, sexual desires, perspectives of society and their contributions. (34)

In these reviewing lines, Monir discovers that Kate Chopin's representation of her female characters was progressive and revolutionary. Her female characters were ahead of their time. Chopin was a feminist in her themes which attempt to rebel against the discriminative distribution of gender relations and the social and economic disparity between the male and female. She invoked the ethos of emancipation and freedom for the women through the literary invention of the fictional revolutionary characters. Like Grand and Chopin, other women writers of the selected stories powerfully advocated for the emancipation, freedom, independence and equality for the women through the portrayal of their feminist female characters which will be broadly analyzed in the subsequent paragraphs. These women writers and their works were undoubtedly influenced by the widespread movements for the gender equality and the individual freedom of the women. Their female characters embody the characteristics of new woman and come up with the acts of resistance to challenge the conventional distribution of gender roles that only condition them to compromise their freedom, independence and other social and political privileges.

There has hardly been any discussion on these literary representations by the women writers; largely because the women writers' works were overlooked for the mainstream academic discussion was monopolized by the male writers. The Selected stories are few examples of the women writers' literary productions which question the traditional gender perception and depict their female characters in the light of progressive narrative. The female characters in the selected stories embody the new roles unlike the ones imposed by the patriarchal values. After reading the stories, some questions trigger one's mind such as why do all stories have female characters as the protagonists? Why do these female characters act as per their own choice? Why do the male characters conform to female characters' actions

and decisions? How do these women writers view male gender? How do the female characters' unconventional actions respond to the spirit of the time? The portrayal of the female characters in the selected stories as the modern, unconventional, independent, nonconformist and self-willed seems to reflect the resistance of the women against the essentialist feminine roles imposed by the patriarchy and assert the women's quest for individuality in the form of new woman.

The primary source of analysis for the present research is the text. The selected stories from Stephanie Forward's anthology of stories *Dreams, Visions and Realities* are the primary texts. However, the analysis will be carried out in the theoretical framework of New Woman in order to argue how the female characters' actions and decisions challenge the conventional form of women's selfhood and introduce a new self as the independent, self-willed, nonconformist and modern woman. The archetypal image of new woman as a contrast to the previous image of woman who was supposed to be submissive, pious, angel of the house, nurturing and an object of their husband's satisfaction emerged to dominate new dimension of female characters in the late Victorian and early modern literary works, especially by women writers. Such transformative and progressive version of women who transgress the conventional code of feminine roles and occupy their space in the public arena will be applied as a theoretical reference to analyze the female characters' resistance in the selected stories.

The practice of heteronormativity as designed by patriarchal institutions assigned the particular roles to males and females on the basis of cultural privileges and powers. It instigated the politics of binary gender positions in which being male was considered to be the superior being in comparison to being female: "We have defined heteronormativity as the uncritical adoption of heterosexuality as an established norm or standard. Heterosexism is the system by which heterosexuality is assumed to be the only acceptable and viable option and

hence to be superior, more natural and dominant” (Perlesz et. all 183). In the light of this definition, we can understand that heteronormativity is the cultural construction of gender assumptions that assume it to be naturally given. Such constructed gender roles in which being woman is characterized as submissive, conformist, dependent, nurturing, silent and serving is culturally executed in such a way that it looks very natural and given. Critically analyzing and deeply unfolding the internal politics of patriarchal heteronormativity and its hegemonic division of roles for the superiority of the males over females, Lois Tyson identifies:

Traditional gender roles cast men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive, they cast women as emotional, (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive. These gender roles have been used very successfully to justify inequities, which still occur today, such as excluding women from equal access to leadership, and decision-making positions...Patriarchy is thus, by definition, *sexist*, which means it promotes the belief that the belief that women are innately inferior to men. This belief in the inborn inferiority of women is a form of what is called *biological essentialism* because it is based on biological differences between the sexes that are considered part of our unchanging essence as men and women. (85)

In these lines, Tyson seems to vehemently attack upon the constructed difference between male and female. She peels off the politics behind the working of the dichotomy between masculine and feminine roles as imposed by the patriarchal tradition. The traditional roles as masculine and feminine are more discriminative and manipulative for Tyson because it places the male on superior position with all privileges in their hand and women are marginalized at the domesticated space of the family. Such created differences are only the result of patriarchal dominance that functions as the institution and enforce the gender roles as the cultural essence to keep women submissive. Within such institutionalized structures of

patriarchal society, the role of women is to subscribe themselves to the interest of the male's expectations. It takes away women's natural right to freedom and individuality. The conventional role of women as highlighted above by Tyson was the tragic reality of the Victorian society that persisted until the rise of the feminist movement in the latter part of the twentieth century which functioned as the force of resistance against the established system of gender assumptions.

The theoretical concept of resistance emerges as an essential movement for the change by challenging the established values, system, practices and thoughts. The theoretical discussion of the phenomenon of resistance took the form of debate in the social science primarily from post-colonial theory and Foucault. James Scott is credited with the conception of resistance which was further extended in the theoretical approach by post-colonial theorist and thinkers like Foucault. Establishing the nature of resistance as an act against the domination of high class, Scott characterizes resistance as the subordinate members' denial of the domination of the upper class: "resistance is any act(s) by members of a subordinate class that is or are intended either to mitigate or deny claims (for example, rents, taxes, prestige) made on that class by super-ordinate classes (for example, landlords, large farmers, the state) or to advance its own claims (for example, work, land, charity, respect) vis-à-vis those super-ordinate classes" (qtd. in Marta, 56). Here, Scott presents the resistance as the acts of refusal and denial by the subordinate classes for the assertion of their voice, privileges, claims and rights. Further Analyzing the main argument of James Scott regarding the nature of resistance, Marta Heredia in his review observes:

Resistance is rooted in the daily individual and collective covert acts of opposition and self-help against domination: it does not need recourse to political or labour organization but, rather, to actions like foot-dragging, mockery and fake compliance. Several other propositions follow from these: that subordinates have their own

political agendas which may differ or not from elites' agendas; that, on those bases, they make political choices about their lives and about the daily experience of different forms of power; that relations of domination have material and ideological bases; and that consent is limited. (53)

In the given review, the critic highlights that the resistance is found in daily individual and even in collective forms. This act of resistance is formed against any form of domination. The manifestation of resistance doesn't necessarily have to be the political or labour organization but it is noticed even in the smaller form such as foot-dragging, mockery etc. His notion of resistance is divided into two types: one is formally organized and other is everyday forms of resistance which is prosaic, covert, unstructured and informal. All the female characters from the stories show the daily individual resistance in the form of refusal to the traditionally designed feminine roles. Their expression of resistance is more individual, informal, unstructured, and covert. Like Scott theorized the concept of resistance against the domination but in individual forms, Vanora from the story "The Yellow Drawing-Room" shows her resistance by decorating the bridegroom's room in her own choice of color. It is her silent and invisible resistance for the assertion of her own interests.

Vanora from Mona Caird's "The Yellow Drawing-Room" asserts her own dignity without submitting to male domination. She is assigned to decorate a male's room who she was supposed to marry. Despite his constant pressure to see her in traditional behavior, she resisted it by choosing to live her way independently. Observing Mona Caird as an advocate of new woman and her view about marriage and its hindrance to women's personal freedom, Alexander Louise Messem observes, "Mona Caird viewed marital and maternal obligation as forms of bondage from which women needed to free themselves before they could gain equality with men" (4). Mona's heroine, Vanora avoids being restricted by the male's patriarchal expectations. She decorates the room in her individual scheme without submitting

herself to the male's expectations. She takes full authority and colors the room with yellow color, color of her choice. The narrator is a male named Vincent. Vanora's aunt has planned to get her married with him. She was going to see him. She was given a privilege to decorate his room. Vanora was not the traditional type of woman that Vincent wanted her to be. The narrator who is the male protagonist is guided by the conservative gender perception. His dislike towards Vanora is resulted because she is not submissive. In the following narrative lines, the narrator's patriarchal stereotype of women towards Vanora can be sensed:

I had a prejudice against Vanora, and this last freak made me think none the better of her. Evidently she was rather a headstrong and probably affected young person; everyone said that she liked to make herself conspicuous, and that you never knew what she was going to do next. I hate that sort of girl. The true woman is retiring, unobtrusive, indistinguishable even until you come to know her well, and then she is very much like what every other true woman would be under the same conditions.

(103)

In these lines, the narrator's patriarchal attitude is revealed towards Vanora's efforts to pursue her independent, self-willed living. The narrator seeks for the traditional characters and behaviors in her. His expectation is the submission of her which is echoed in his dialogue when he says "She shall love me, and she shall learn, through love, the sweet lesson of womanly submission" (108) Here, the narrator wants to treat Vanora as an object of emotional being and manipulate her by controlling superior position on her. However, she resists his constant expectation of submission and takes the authority to select the color and design of the room on her choice. He doesn't like it anymore. But she cherishes her freedom of choice. He develops a sense of inferiority at having his room decorated at her wills. Her selection of color symbolically suggests her independence and freedom as Forward reviews:

Vanora's color choice is a brilliant yellow. She has made her mark upon the drawing-room: in effect it is a room of her own, something denied to so many women at that time. St. Vincent cannot cope with this color scheme, because it is a manifestation of Vanora's unpredictability and her refusal to submit to male domination (xxiii).

In the light of Forward's review, it can be observed that Vanora resists conventional gender roles as submissive, dependence, passive, silent etc. Rather, she takes authority of her action and follows her choice without being enslaved to male's expectations.

Resistance is primarily concerned with the transformations, reformations and recorections over what has been followed as the normativity. Whenever the norms in place are questionable and discriminative, it tends to provoke for the movement of resistance for the establishment of the new norms. Michele Foucault in his theoretical essay "The Subject and Power" elaborates the notion of resistance in relation to the power. He associates the intricate relationship between the power and resistance. Any social and political norms and values that are structured in the unequal distributions of power relations suffer the rise of the resistance. The dominant groups in the community are privileged with the more powers and authorities whereas the minority groups are manipulated by the systematic production of the discourse. The groups holding the authority and power build the discourse and control the powerless ones: "Discourse is controlled, limited, defined and exercised by power and draws to the way boundaries between the true and false are erected within the context" (42). The patriarchal discourse of public and private sphere and the unequal distribution of the gender roles reflect the functioning of the power. Such system of gender roles gave more privileges, freedom and powers to the male making them the supreme power to control over women.

The theory of resistance assumes that the forms of resistance begin to take place when the power relations between the groups and individuals in the community are exploitative and

hierarchical. The movement of resistance emerges to subvert those norms for the establishment of new power relations in which there exists no hierarchical distribution of power among individuals, groups and communities. Foucault in his essay “The Subject and Power” describes the resistance as a way for formation of new power relations dismantling the older forms of normativity:

[forms of resistance are] another way to go further towards a new economy of power relations, a way which is more empirical, more directly related to our present situation, and which implies more relations between theory and practice. It consists of taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point. To use another metaphor, it consists of using this resistance as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their positions, and find out their point of application and the methods used. (780)

In these theoretical lines, Foucault has brought together the power and resistance. He treats resistance as a force to battle the older forms of power organizations and distributions and a way to set a new form of power relations

Looking at it from the point of Foucauldian notion of resistance, it is clear to view the concept of new woman as the feminist force of resistance that challenged the patriarchal norm of heterosexuality that classifies the gender as masculine and feminine while the role of the women is undermined, generalized and stereotyped. The traditional definition of gender and its categorization of gender roles control, confine and sideline the existence of women within the domestic sphere. All forms of feminist movements can be seen as the feminist resistance because they aim to resituate the power relations between the sexes. The authoritative system of behaviors, practices and assumptions are questioned and threatened by the resistance as Jonathan Parsons defines, “resistance is not to be understood as purely

external force, but rather as a necessary counterpoint to any kind of power or authority” (8). The categorization of masculine and feminine with the feminine as the inferior being by the authoritative dominance of patriarchal doctrine of heterosexuality came under the attack of feminist resistance as few women writers raised voice against these orthodox of gender roles and experimented their female characters in their new image. Their female characters became the symbol of resistance because they didn't conform to the heterosexual division of gender roles.

The notion of new woman emerged as the powerful tool for the resistance against the patriarchal distribution of gender roles. It advocated for the new form of women's subjectivity as free-willed, independent and modern woman in contrast to the conventional stereotypes as submissive, nurturing, silent, emotional, weak etc. The revolutionary concept of new woman was the women writers' form of resistance. These female writers subverted the prevalent gender occupations in order to empower the social, political and economic standard of women's position in the society. The selected stories show how these women writers from late Victorian and early modern developed the moment of resistance against the deep-rooted gender domination. The selected stories depict the female characters taking actions and decisions for the assertion of equal participation. The new woman as a form of resistance can be textually illustrated through the female character, Josepa.

Josepha from Sarah Grand's story "The Man in the Scented Coat" is perfect example of new woman. She redraws the understanding of gender by invading what was traditionally assigned as an act of masculinity. No one is born to be masculine or feminine. New woman phenomenon claims that gender is not fixed and absolute as it is claimed to be by the patriarchal construction of gender roles. The traditional categorization of being 'masculine' and 'feminine' bears cultural character which holds no truth. The categorization is unstable

because the idea of gender is fluid. New Woman challenged the Victorian notion of femininity and the supremacy of masculinity.

Josepha exemplifies new woman who performs what was traditionally expected to be men's behaviors. Josepha ventures out in London, a public sphere of men. She travels in the public vehicles. She drinks, smokes cigarettes:

Colonel Purturbation having offered Josepha a cigarette, which she accepted, they continued to sit there, smoking and chatting. One subject of interest led on to another, and the time went well enough to be forgotten; and the fog had cleared; and still they sat and talked, and might have continued to sit and talk much longer, too, but for another interruption. (82)

In these narratives lines, Josepha encounters a gang of men on the streets but she doesn't fear them anymore. She is self-defensive, powerful and self-protective. She doesn't fear them. She has confidence for her own security. Instead of being terrified, she rather stays with them and plays card and drink. She even plays cards with the strange man whose cunning approach is tackled by her in a masculine manner. She isn't afraid of any encounters with the strange men. Her bold, powerful, self-defensive, independent and self-willed behaviors testify her as an example of new woman resist the traditional feminine roles by the display of feminine masculinity. Her refusal to fear in the public and her rebellion action in the form of drinking, smoking and travelling in the public world shows her act of resistance as argued by Foucault who opines that resistance takes place in plural forms instead of singular expression. .

Foucault holds opinion that anywhere the power exist the resistance also exists. He further points that there are different manifestations of resistance. It means there is no single location of resistance because it occurs in different forms such as the form of refusal, rebellion, target or handle in power. In his essay *History of Sexuality*, he further argues:

Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power...[There is] a *multiplicity of power resistance*: these play the role of adversary, target, support, or handle in power relations. These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network. Hence there is no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary. Instead there is *plurality of resistance*, each of them a special case. (95-96)

Josepha from Sarah Grand's story "The Man in the Scented Coat" is perfect example for Butler's idea of gender as performativity. She redraws the understanding of gender as an outcome of one's performativity. She asserts that no one is born to be masculine or feminine. One's gender is not a natural entity nor it is something that can be formed by the cultural imposition but it is attained by one's set of acts. The doing determines the gender identity of any individual as Butler explains, "Gender proves to be performative...that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed" (33). Here, Butler's understanding of gender clearly contradicts the conventional celebration of heterosexual identity. It gives a stress on the way one performs for the identification of the gender. It claims that gender is not fixed and absolute as it is claimed to be by the patriarchal construction of gender roles. She states that the traditional categorization of being 'masculine' and 'feminine' bears cultural character which holds no truth. For her, the categorization is unstable because the idea of gender is fluid and changing according to how one performs in everyday life. Butler further clarifies, "It seems fair to say that certain kinds of acts are usually interpreted as expressive of a gender core or identity, and that these acts either conform to an expected gender identity or contest that expectation in way" (527). In these lines, Butler seems to suggest that the set of

acts we perform everyday may follow the expected roles for a particular gender or it may challenge the long-held roles. This is where she sees the gender to be in trouble.

Lois Tyson's exposition of masculine and feminine dichotomy occupies the central mission of the theoretical movement known as New Woman. The theoretical movement of New Woman found its advent in the late Victorian period as an artistic and literary movement that dismantled and refigured the long-held patriarchal definition of gender. Few women writers experimented with the female characters in their new gender roles, the ones that are in stark contrast to the conventionally restricted roles as submissive, passive, innocent, pious, conformist, dependence and so forth. New woman refers to the newly emerging social image of modern woman who is self-willed, determined, independent, self-asserting, demanding and nonconformist. It was an outcome of the widespread movement of feminism across the Europe and America that generated the massive gender consciousness among women.

The movement aimed at resisting the established gender values and attacked its polarized politics between feminine and masculine. It raised the question about the proper placement of women within the structure of gender relations. The movement went on dismantling the existing definition of gender and diffused it as the mere social construction for the monopoly of the male over female. Defining the quintessential characteristic of new woman in the light of liberation and empowerment in the backdrop of feminist movement, Janice H. Harris takes new woman as "[a]ctive, willful, independent, intellectual, she seeks for her own satisfaction and submits to no one and nothing" (523). Such personality of new woman took up previously-held masculine roles and began to dominate the public sphere instead of being confined to the imposed sphere of domesticity. Such indeterminacy of absolute of gender in his characters illustrates the subversion of traditional gender roles in the stories authored by the women writers in the selected stories from the late Victoria and early modern period. Their representation of female characters in the form of modern,

unconventional, masculine, nonconformist, independent and self-willed reflect the resistance of new woman against the traditional imposition of private sphere and legitimize their positions in the public domain. Such an act of resistance found its historical origin in the aftermath of industrial revolution in the early Victorian era.

The industrial revolution during the early Victorian period witnessed massive changes in the socio-economic and political scenario of the Victorian societies. With all the changes and transformations, a wave of force in the form of revision on gender assumptions also started dominating the arena of art and literary representation: “Following the Industrial Revolution, the modernization of the Victorian age continued to create significant impacts on women” (Khunpakdee 14). The rapid social, political, economic and cultural developments demanded a new consciousness in the lives of the women who were previously confined as the creature of the domestic life. The Victorian politics of private and public sphere based on the sex difference between female and male came under the feminist movement of resistance:

Industrialization had a significant impact on woman, for there is convincing historical argument that it led to an idealization and privatization of middle-class women due to changes in the social structure and urban environment. In other words, perception of what were appropriate male and female roles underwent considerable revision. This resulted in the notion of separate spheres, which assigned to women the private sphere of home, whereas men moved in the public sphere of politics, commerce and business, and social activities. Consequently, women’s experience, as well as public expectations, were deeply influenced by this notion. Having their place firmly established by the hearth, women silently conformed to this socially constructed norm. Those who broke the rule only became a threat and provoked strong reactions, but also ‘compromised’ their femininity and respectability by becoming ‘public’ figures. (Khunpakdee 8)

In these lines, it's observed that the historical movement of gender revision was sparked by the rise of industrial changes in the early Victorian period of Britain. After the social and economic transformations took place, the division of gender roles between male and female as public sphere (male) and private sphere (female) limited the social space of the women. This domestication of women was challenged by the movement of feminism in the Nineteenth Century:

Women in Britain have started to fight for their rights and independence since the beginning of the 19th century; the aim was to have the same opportunity for the education, occupation and life as men. The perception of an independent woman has changed throughout the centuries as well as, from a woman who was supposed to be a wife, mother and keeper of a household. (Martina 5)

Few women writers of the late Victorian times under the influence of the feminist movement began to experiment with the female characters in an unconventional role that oppose the patriarchal expectation of feminine roles. The women writers from the selected stories namely Kate Chopin, Beatrice Harraden, Sarah Grand, Mabel E. Wotton and Mona Caird were the popular names in the domain of literary experimentation of their female characters in the noble image of New Woman. The impact of industrialization that empowered the economic image of women in the society by encouraging them to resist against the conventional subjectivity of women as dependent can be textually seen in Mabel E. Wotton's female character, Annette in the story "The Hour of Her Life".

In the line of Josepha, Mabel E. Wotton's heroine, Annette Browning from "The Hour of Her Life" also shows the quality of new woman who is an independent, educated and career oriented woman as Fatimah Binte Monir observes, "new woman is advent for feminist, educated, independent career oriented woman" (13). Conventionally, the business as a public

activity was taken to be absolute world of masculine occupation. Rather, Wotton's heroine runs flower business in the heart of Clubland. Annette has owned her flower shop at the heart of the Clubland:

It was the beginning of the last season that a flower-shop was started in the heart of Clubland, which, had it continued open, would have been town-famed long ere this. Instead of holding the orthodox stiff-backed chairs and counter, the interior was as prettily arranged a little nook as could be found in all London. Bits of old brocades and trailing plants covered the walls, and the stock-in-trade, which consisted exclusively of men's buttonholes, was dispensed by so beautiful a woman that she was able to make it a rule from the very first, that whatever might be the price of the flowers when sold by her two assistants, they doubled in value when touched by her own hands. Annette was the name over the window. (47)

In these narrative lines that introduce the female protagonist, the story describes Annette as an owner of the flower-shop with great fame in the heart of Clubland. In the descriptive lines, Annette is portrayed as an independent woman who has full power and authority over the price of the products and the shop is named after her name. Running business activity is a public activity and it is an economic activity. Traditional structure of gender division assumes the public activity as men's world as illustrated by Tyson earlier. Yet, Mabel E. Wotton captures the changing scenario of the women and their economic and social standing along with the rapid industrial developments taking place at the time. The industrial changes compelled the revision of the gender roles and encouraged the participation of the women in the economic world which ultimately empowered them to be independent. Thus, industrialization contributed hugely in women's resistance against the conventional confinement.

But, however independent and successful business woman she is, she couldn't break the boundary set by her family. She was in love with eligible bachelor named Freddy Calvin, the heir to the Lord. She had to cross the class divide. Later, she shows her feminine masculinity by taking authority of her own life and challenges family's decision. She refuses to obey the family's pressure to not marry Calvin. Unlike traditional status of women who should be conformist and never stand against the family's decision for her choice of life partner, Annette strongly takes a stand and claims her right to independent choice. In the following dialogue that reads:

“Couldn't my love for my husband do anything?” Her voice was dangerously sweet, her blue eyes were liquid with tears she was too proud to shed. “It should teach me to sink my old life utterly; I would have no will nor aim but his.” The face she was watching did not soften, and Annette drew back a step, as though the quite figure had struck her. (53)

In this dialogue, Annette makes a confrontation with her father who opposes her relationship with Calvin because of their class difference. Here, Annette sounds nonconformist and disobedient towards the imposition of her family on her life. Her insistence to live with her boyfriend celebrates the subversion of traditional womanhood as submissive, conformist and dependent. Her self-asserting stand reflects her as feminity masculine rather than typical traditional conformist woman.

The new woman phenomenon as the unconventional portrayal of the female characters occupied the central form of feminist resistance in the literary works of the late Victorian and early modern women writers. These women writers including the above-mentioned writers of the selected stories institutionalized the modern figures of new woman in order to revise and reform the existing social assumptions on the gender. New Woman as a

symbolic literary experimentation came into being in an effort to dismantle the domesticated space of women and liberate them for their independence, freedom, emancipation and individual self as Ann Heilmann observes, “[t]he specific questions New Woman fiction raised were about the construction of gender and male violence in society, about the institutions of marriage and motherhood, and about women’s right to radically redefine every aspect of their position in the world” (xv). From this observation on the New Woman literary works, it becomes clear that the women writers’ new woman characters resisted the patriarchal construction and division of gender roles by subverting in which the new woman strive for their own individuality without conforming to the conventional gender behaviors as Tapanat Khunpakdee identifies, “New Woman was instrumental in articulating women’s need for independence and fulfillment as existing apart from sexual relations and outside of marriage” (18). The reflection of such a new woman who transgresses the boundary of sexual relation and marriage for her own independence and fulfillment is embodied by Kate Chopin’s female character, Calixta from “The Storm”.

A married woman, Calixta welcomes her ex-lover Alcee in the absence of her husband and child. In the symbolic atmosphere of the stormy weather outside, Chopin portrays Calixta’s freedom to fulfill her inner desire without any adherence to the established code of marital behavior “When he touched her breasts they gave themselves up in quivering ecstasy, inviting his lips. Her mouth was a fountain of delight. And when he possessed her, they seemed to swoon together at the very borderland of life’s mystery” (126). In these narrative lines, Calixta is seen fully engaging in the sexual relationship with her ex-boyfriend despite the fact that she has her own husband. It shows her courage to resist against the traditional boundaries of marriage for the utter fulfillment of her individual desires. Through her sexual indulgence with her boyfriend, she asserts her individuality without any fear of imposed external values. She refutes the patriarchal expectation of marital loyalty towards

her husband and celebrates her sexuality without any fear of marital infidelity. Pointing out the purpose of Chopin's female characters, Emily T. observes, "Chopin makes use of the extraordinary occasions in characters' lives to carry them out of unconsciousness of submissive life" (68-70). In the light of this review, it's clear to see how Calixta subverts the traditional feminine role as a submissive, nurturing, and passive and conformity. She remains nonconformist to the imposed marital limitation and exercises her natural freedom by satisfying her sexual rights as Stephanie Forward, the editor of the anthology *Dreams, Visions and Realities* concludes, "in 'The Storm' Chopin permits Calixta to follow 'nature' freely and to enjoy her sexual fling. This involves transgression against society's accepted code of behavior" (xxvi). Forward also rewards Calixta in the light of new woman who resists any accepted code of conventional roles for her independence and fulfillment. Calixta, however, stays at home within the world of marriage but still finds ways to go beyond the institution of marital restrictions and enjoy her personhood in the form of gratification of her personal desires and passions.

Like Calixta, other female characters embody the qualities of new woman and their actions form the resistance. Thyra Flowerdew in Beatrice Harraden's "The Bird on its Journey" chooses a career of her choice as a pianist, a profession that empowers her to escape from the domestic responsibilities of woman's private sphere. She sounds determined, confident and unflinching from her passion for a musical career as Forward reviews, "Her ambition is to rise to the very top of her profession" (xxvi). Here, the female character's freedom for her individuality is fulfilled. Reading the nature of Harraden's heroine, Forward further observes:

Female writers in the nineteenth century frequently compared women to birds trapped in a cage, or to birds with clipped wings, yearning to fly freely. Many Victorian women felt frustrated by the sheer repetitiveness of their daily routine. Harraden's

story is interesting because her heroine has managed to escape from the traditional woman's sphere and triumph in her chosen career. (xxvii)

In the light of Forward's review, it's clear to conclude that Thyra resists the conventional gender expectations and follow the individualism for her own meaningful self and fulfillment. Thyra is constantly in the pursuit of her higher being who refuses to be in love with a man who proposes to marry her. Like Annette who occupied public space as the business owner of the flower-shop, Thyra also struggles to hold a public image as a singer. Unlike the traditional expectation of women, she travels freely into the public world. It is seen when she visits the salon of the hotel in Switzerland "It was about four in the afternoon when a young girl came into the salon of the little hotel at C. in Switzerland, and drew her chair up to the fire" (143). In these narrative lines, Thyra is presented as confident, free-willed and outgoing girls who freely enjoy the world of public space. While at hotel, she is courted and followed by a boy who happens to fall in love with her. He develops a kind of intimacy towards her but she remains unaffected. His impression of her is reflected in his dialogue "What an independent little lady you are!" (150). His judgment evidently portrays her image as an independent woman. He call her a 'little wild bird' and at the end, propose to tame her. But her response totally echoes her refusal to be surrendered to a male's life. In her response "But wild birds are not so easily tamed" (150), she expresses her voice to remain an autonomous being with full of freedom instead of being imprisoned under male's taming. Symbolically, through Thyra's independent decision to stay from the boy's control and focus on her ambition to rise higher to her singing profession, Beatrice advocates for new selfhood of the women with freedom, independence and individuality. This way, the women writers of late Victorian and early modern period experiment with the representation of female characters as the new woman who resist the traditional gender roles for the pursuit of their freedom, independence, emancipation and individuality.

In this way, the selected stories make the reflection of the forms of resistance on the part of the women characters. Through the means of these invented literary characters and their fictional portrayal of resistance for the assertion of their individuality, freedom and independence, the women writers of the selected stories demonstrated how there was a wave of transformation and the shift in the position of the women in the late Victorian and early modern period. With the rapid progression of industrial expansion that brought changes in the social and political phenomenon, the women of the time developed a gender consciousness to explore their identity in the newly emerging picture of the male-dominated society.

Historically, the discourse of patriarchy divided gender as masculine and feminine and assigned essential roles. Such construction of gender roles domesticated women as a subordinate to their male counterpart. However, the concept of gender and women's roles began to face a shift after some women resisted against the traditional roles and demanded for equal position in the society. These women are called new woman who seek for their individual freedom, independent life and free-spirited living. Instead of being dominated by the patriarchal gender assumptions, they adopted roles that are considered to be masculine and proved the conventional idea of gender to be problematic as Butler later theorized that gender is matter of performativity. All the female characters from the selected stories display the masculine roles dismantling the old categorization of gender roles as masculine to male and feminine to female. Their action is the act of resistance to claim their individuality, freedom and independence. This way, late Victorian and early modern time witnessed women's resistance in the image of new woman.

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