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'Golden threads in the sober city woof':
London and the First Women Writers of *The Yellow Book*

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Of the eighteen writers whose work appeared in the inaugural volume of *The Yellow Book*, only three were women: Ella D'Arcy (1857-1937), 'George Egerton' (Mary Chavelita Dunne, 1859-1945), and 'John Oliver Hobbes' (Pearl Richards Craigie, 1867-1906). This article considers the London publishing context within which D'Arcy, Egerton, and Hobbes wrote their pieces that were included in that first issue of the new magazine in April 1894. The women's representations of London in each of their works are discussed in relation to their common portrayal of artistic characters who must make and potentially mistake their way in its contemporary metropolis.

The London Publishing Context

It was to the literati of London that the creators of *The Yellow Book* hoped to appeal most immediately. Early in 1894, literary editor Henry Harland had enthused that the forthcoming new magazine was 'the talk of the town already' and that it would 'make our fortunes'.[1] When the prospectus for the first issue of *The Yellow Book* subsequently appeared, Beardsley's trademark yellow and black design for the cover depicted an unaccompanied woman browsing by lamplight at a pavement bookstore on a city street. The centrality of her independent silhouetted persona, while still under the supervisory gaze of the background Pierrot-like male bookseller, suggested the irrefutable value of women both as potential readers and contributors to the magazine. This was compounded by the inside text's personification of the forthcoming publication as a woman of a certain class and culture, able to 'preserve a delicate, decorous, and reticent mien and conduct' while at the same time having 'the courage of its modernness' not to 'tremble at the frown of Mrs. Grundy'.[2] Such a combination suggested that *The Yellow Book* intended to reflect contemporary

cultural trends without alienating its audience. Women, as much as men, would be able to identify with the magazine's claim to be 'charming […], daring […], distinguished'.[3]

The prospectus also listed nine women amongst the forty-four writers that were expected to contribute to *The Yellow Book*, amongst whom were D'Arcy, Egerton, and Hobbes.[4] The publicising of their names signalled John Lane's intention that the new magazine he was about to publish would provide a wide range of avant-garde as well as proven contributors, attracting as wide an audience as possible. The potential economy of paying aspiring women writers for their pieces may have been another significant factor in the acceptance of their work for publication and *The Yellow Book* would quickly gain a reputation for its extensive inclusion of work by women writers and artists.[5]

The inclusion of texts by D'Arcy, Egerton, and Hobbes in the inaugural issue also reflected the heightened profile of women writers and the influx of them into London during the 1890s, attracted by the possibility of work in the burgeoning world of magazine publishing.[6] The launch of *The Yellow Book* provided Lane with an additional means to promote his existing list of women writers and recruit others to it. *The Yellow Book* also offered its women contributors opportunities to meet with fellow writers, for example at Lane's Bodley Head premises, or at the home of the Harlands where the process of producing the magazine took place.[7] These work and social spaces were valued as being both affordable and available for aspiring women writers who could not rely on the pre-existing university connections or club memberships afforded to their male counterparts.[8] Accessed readily by public transport, such opportunities led to the growth of 'a community of London-based women writers'.[9] This community in turn could be seen to extend women's networks previously constituted around the arts and crafts and aesthetic circles of the 1870s and 1880s. The traces of this earlier literary and artistic community were still discernible in Lane's *Keynotes* series which took its title from Egerton's short story collection of the same name published in 1893.[10] Like the early issues of *The Yellow Book*, its 'literary modishness would be emphasised by Beardsley-designed covers'.[11] Following the success of this volume, Australian-born

Egerton returned from Ireland to live in London as a welcome contributor to *The Yellow Book*. Her second book of short stories, *Discords*, was published by Lane in December 1894. Suffrage composer Ethel Smyth (1858-1944) later recalled the formation of a 'charmed circle of authors and poets and artists'[12] revolving around Harland and 'Petticoat Lane', as he was dubbed by some.[13] The overlapping of *Keynotes* and *Yellow Book* authors extended the currency of both. The appearance of Egerton's 'A Lost Masterpiece' in the inaugural issue of *The Yellow Book* therefore underlined the avant-garde credentials of the new magazine and allowed for the reciprocal promotion of both sets of publications as well as additional opportunities for *Yellow Book* contributors.[14] As Talia Schaffer has pointed out, for women writers to have a whole volume published by John Lane 'was to achieve full aesthetic recognition' – Lane's 'well-crafted books ensured that the text looked artistic, valuable, and antique' and afforded their work the same status as that of their male counterparts who also 'prized these aesthetic associations'.[15]

D'Arcy likewise benefitted from the crossover of authors between the proposed *Yellow Book* and *Keynotes* series. D'Arcy had studied art at the Slade School in London in the 1870s, but had been unable to pursue a career as an artist due to poor eyesight, turning to literary work instead and contributing to various London magazines of the day.[16] In later life, she recalled to Katherine Mix how she had submitted the manuscript of 'Irremediable' to Harland which was 'dog-eared' from the rejections of other publishers who regarded its theme of the suffering occasioned by a wrong marriage as too controversial.[17] Harland accepted the story immediately and paid D'Arcy out of his own pocket to act as his sub-editor, translator, secretary, editor and reviewer of women's stories until late in 1895. He also helped D'Arcy to find a suitable flat close to his own London house to enable her to work on *The Yellow Book*.[18] The publication of 'Irremediable' in the first *Yellow Book* was followed by D'Arcy's own volume in the *Keynotes* series entitled *Monochrome*s in 1895.

Like Egerton and D'Arcy, Evelyn Sharp (1869-1955), Victoria Crosse (Annie Sophie Cory, 1868-1952), Netta Syrett (1865-1943), Edith Nesbit (1858-1924), and Marie Clothilde Balfour

(1862-1931) were all published in both *Keynotes* and *The Yellow Book*. These and other connections of friendship and collegiality continued across the wider London network of women writers. In her memoirs Katherine Tynan wrote about attending the first 'Women Writers' dinner in London in 1889.[19] *Yellow Book* contributor Rosamund Marriott Watson had been present on that occasion and was elected president of the 'Literary Ladies' in 1892. Hobbes was to become president of the Society of Women Journalists in 1895-96.[20]

Although she was the youngest of the first three women writers published in *The Yellow Book*, Hobbes was already well known in literary circles by 1894. Brought up in London, Hobbes had combined her father's first name with the names of Oliver Cromwell and the philosopher Hobbes to form the male *nom de plume* she adopted when her first novel, *Some Emotions and a Novel*, was accepted for the T. F. Unwin Pseudonym Library Series and published in 1891, with a cover design by Aubrey Beardsley. Given George Moore's 1893 *succès de scandale* with *Esther Waters*, his shared authorship with Hobbes of 'The Fool's Hour: The First Act of a Comedy' made it an even more appealing item to be placed at the end of *The Yellow Book*'s first volume.[21] Neither author was to contribute to *The Yellow Book* again. Hobbes wrote to Moore that, despite Harland's pleading with her, she could not 'oblige him' by writing anything for future issues.[22] This was because she concurred with press criticism of the whole project: '*The Speaker* on *The Yellow Book* is only too just. I have never seen such a vulgar production.'[23] As Margaret D. Stetz and Mark Samuels Lasner have commented, it seems that 'if Lane hoped to land either her or Moore […] by publishing their slight little effort in *The Yellow Book*, he was disappointed.'[24]

Representations of London by D'Arcy, Egerton, and Hobbes: Artists in the Metropolis

For all their different responses to the magazine and its publishers, the pieces D'Arcy, Egerton, and Hobbes contributed to the magazine's first issue reveal a common preoccupation with the contemporary London they lived in and the cultural concerns of what Egerton later called the 'London so-called literary set'.[25] The discussion of their works that follows suggests the ways in

which they expressed their interest in the dissociative qualities and potentially shocking corruption of modern city life and in the artistic individual's often thwarted need to express their creative impulse. In doing so they rehearsed contemporary fascinations with 'new' women, aesthetes, and decadents, while experimenting with *à la mode* forms such as psychological realism in fiction and subversive Wildean wit in drama.

D'Arcy's 'Irremediable' was the second short story to appear in *The Yellow Book*'s first issue in which Henry James' 'The Death of the Lion' was the opening item.[26] Both stories feature male writers whose manuscripts turn out to be either missing, presumed stolen, or absent, presumed unwritten. In James' satirical story, famous writer Paraday flees the country house to which he has been tracked by journalists who are intent on finding him to uncover the manuscript of his new work as the possibly ironically termed 'keynote' for their next scoops.[27] When Paraday seeks sanctuary in the city he is lionised by a literary London characterised by the cross-gender identities of its authors Dora Forbes and Guy Walsingham and also by its obsession with external image and momentary fame, epitomised in the studio of Mr Rumbles in which the man or woman of the hour 'leaped through the hoops of his showy frames almost as electrically as they burst into telegrams and "specials"'.[28] Manipulated by his female fans as much as by the press, Paraday collapses and leaves the city to die whilst his missing manuscript is deemed to be lost.

D'Arcy's 'Irremediable' tells the story of Willoughby, a London bank clerk who is enjoying his country holiday. Amidst the bucolic landscape he becomes fixated with Esther Stables who, it turns out, is a tailoress from the East End of London staying with her country aunt. After kissing Esther repeatedly, he offers her marriage and in the second part of the story, back in London, realises that his now-unhappy marriage has made it impossible for him to pursue his literary ambitions.

Despite the contrasting depictions of London as a place of wealth or poverty by James and D'Arcy, their stories may both be read as epitomising the strains placed on the male artistic temperament by demanding women. James, however, appears to offer a male perspective on the

stresses of London literary life as a site of fame, whilst D'Arcy represents her writer's London as a place of unfulfilled obscurity. As in the Egerton story discussed later in this article, D'Arcy acknowledges the creative struggles of its would-be writer protagonist. Like Egerton, D'Arcy also exposes the self-absorption and vanity that accompanies a preoccupation with notions of genius. In the works of other contemporary women writers, such a depiction had often been a comic one, making the fictional male writer into a subject of ridicule by exposing his affectations. Ella Hepworth Dixon (M. Wynman, 1857-1932), whose 1896 short story, 'The Sweet o' the Year' about the 'unjust gender politics of [her] male counterparts' was to appear in volume IX of *The Yellow Book*,[29] and whose novel *Story of a Modern Woman*, featuring London, appeared in 1894, had already created the figure of Claud Carson in her earlier comic novel, *My Flirtations* (1892): 'some cad with long hair, who rolls his eyes about and recites erotic poems'.[30] Carson eventually dedicates his book *Roses of Passion* to the female narrator, but is then socially unmasked as being already married to his landlady's daughter and living in a small stucco house in Hammersmith.

While Carson's absurdity is portrayed as ultimately harmless, men's misuse of their socially endorsed celebrity and charisma might also be shown to have tragic consequences for the women around them. In her 1890 story 'Girl's Hero', for example, the later *Keynotes* author Mabel Wotton (1863-1927) employed the satiric mode to access the male 'interiority […] to criticize rather than arouse sympathy for him'.[31] The narrator details the older poet's exploitation of his young admirer Laure who he meets on a trip to the country and who follows him back to London. He continues to use her as a source of artistic inspiration and apparently feels no remorse for his part in her early death.[32] In 'The Fifth Edition' from her 1896 *Keynotes* collection of short stories, *Day-books*, Wotton portrays a young male writer who exploits the good nature of a more talented woman writer to make his way amongst the 'denizens of Bohemia'.[33] He leaves her to die in poverty and goes on to make a socially advantageous marriage.

The issue of the incipient destitution of female artists and writers who depended entirely on their own earnings and were exploited by men was one keenly felt by *Yellow Book* and *Keynotes*

women writers. In *The Sinner's Comedy* from 1892, Hobbes had focussed on the plight of a woman who must work to maintain her estranged husband and so subjugate her talent to hack work. Anna Christian sacrifices herself for the 'Unspeakable man' who she has left 'having endured all things', and whose demands keep her in continuous frugality.[34] She supports herself with work as an illustrator and is unable to fulfil the artistic promise she had shown as an art student.[35]

In 'Irremediable', however, the girl does not show artistic or literary promise, nor does she die a melodramatic death. Instead, the aspiring writer Willoughby can be seen as the victim of the institution of marriage that ties him irrevocably to a woman who may be considered as socially and intellectually his inferior, or as the victim of his own multiple vacillations and self-centredness. As the story opens, D'Arcy evokes Willoughby's 'exquisite enjoyment' of his holiday freedom to 'roam whither sweet fancy led him'.[36] The reader is left in no doubt about the outcome of the story as the narrative voice informs them, just before his first meeting with Esther, that Willoughby has 'little idea he was taking thus the first step towards ruin'.[37] While the reader's image of Esther is formed entirely through Willoughby's gaze, the narrator's presentiment of doom makes his judgement questionable to the reader. Willoughby idealises Esther as a 'working class daughter of the people', in keeping with his socialist leanings, and as 'natural, simple-minded', in contrast to the middle-class girl who had previously jilted him.[38] He is attracted to her sexually by her 'rough abundant hair', but still notes the picturesque qualities that make her part of 'an agreeable picture' amidst the woodland.[39] During their short courtship, Willoughby vacillates between thinking about Esther and enacting the role of a contemplative Romantic who 'traced fantastic pictures and wove romances in the glories of the sunset clouds'.[40] Willoughby also assumes the role of Esther's heroic rescuer, feeling 'full of wrath with her father, with all the world which makes women suffer', despite the 'interior voice' that urges him 'to break away, to seek safety in flight even at the cost of appearing cruel or ridiculous'.[41]

As Heather Marcovitch has commented, D'Arcy's focalising of events through the male narrator throughout does not inhibit the reader's ability to provide their own 'double reading'.[42] It

is still possible for the reader to sympathise with 'male protagonists engaging in unsuitable romances and bad marriages', but the depiction of them as 'egotistical fools whose efforts to set the terms of their romances backfire' undermines their assumed masculine authority.[43] Willoughby, for example, patronisingly believes that he will change Esther to conform to his ideal of womanhood, improving her beyond her class, but in the second part of the story the reader sees how she refuses to be educated by him.[44] Nonetheless, while the reader may respond to the narrator's ridiculing of Willoughby, the story's ending simultaneously sustains a sympathetic fascination for his plight just as realist narrative is replaced by proto-modernist psychological description.[45]

In the final section of the story, the narrator describes Willoughby's walk home from the city to his Highbury Park lodgings.[46] The narrative voice is ambiguous, maintaining suspense despite the earlier prediction of ruin: 'Esther's face was always before his eyes, […] she filled the universe for him'.[47] D'Arcy then frames the reader's response to the first floor rooms he now shares with Esther, through Willoughby's threshold view of it as 'repulsive in its disorder'.[48] The final paragraphs move the reader into a focalised interior reverie, in which Willoughby reviews his life and his early success in writing for 'the magazines'[49] before reaching a kind of epiphany, knowing that he will no longer be able to write again. Instead of noting the books around him, Willoughby reads only the truth 'like a written word upon the tablecloth before him'.[50] His own literary ambitions have been replaced in effect by the ties of domesticity in which the passion of hatred generated by the immovable presence of his wife has replaced any kind of male-contrived idealism or intellectualism. He experiences only 'agonising, unavailing regret'.[51]

An internal drama of regret also characterises Egerton's contribution to the first issue of *The Yellow Book*. 'A Lost Masterpiece: A City Mood, Aug. 93' evokes its London setting through a series of 'impressions' garnered by the ambiguously gendered first-person narrator.[52] Inspired by their journey through the city, the narrator fails to transmute the musings provoked into any

satisfactory final form. For this the narrator lays the 'blame […] blame' on the woman whose sighting in the street has caused them a distraction which they can 'only regret […] regret'.[53] Like D'Arcy, Egerton focuses on the increasingly heightened sensitivity of the story's aspiring artist and writer, making use of dreamlike 'psychological moment[s]'[54] that give the story its 'proto-modernist quality'.[55] This 'impressionistic, allusive, episodic' writing, 'making extensive use of dream, reverie and interior monologue', made Egerton 'a controversial new woman writer in the 1890s' and for more recent critics an 'exemplar of "feminine modernity"'[56] whose experimental use of the form promoted its decadent associations.[57]

As in 'Irremediable', contact with a woman, however cursory, exposes the vulnerability of the would-be writer who is so easily diverted from their vocation. Also, as in D'Arcy's story, travelling within London presages the unravelling of creative inspiration. Egerton's narrator declares that the passing woman is 'murdering, deliberately murdering' the 'delicate creation' of their 'brain, begotten by the fusion of country and town'.[58] Initially forced into the city by business, the narrator takes on the guise of a flâneur, who is making an expedition through London on a kind of parallel grand tour and is 'simply an interested spectator of its varied panorama'.[59] The narrator travels by boat into the city from the Chelsea embankment, its environs developed in the 1870s to appeal as an 'artistic neighbourhood'.[60] The persona of the first-person narrative voice is further constructed through references to musical, literary, and visual texts that evoke disparate historical and contemporary representations of London familiar to the reader and narrator alike. The grim realism of the grimy barges and their impoverished inhabitants associate themselves in the narrator's mind with the pleasing seventeenth-century canal pictures of Canaletto and Guadi.[61] The Dickensian depiction of London is revealed in the reference to Miss La Creevy from *Nicholas Nickleby* (1839) and encompasses a zoomorphic vision in the observation that the modern London 'chimneys ceased to be giraffic throats belching soot and smoke', morphing instead into ancient obelisks and hieroglyphics.[62]

Egerton's narrator describes the process of inspiration in which 'delicate inner threads were being spun into a fanciful web'[63] in terms redolent of Pater's description of the *Mona Lisa*'s 'strange webs',[64] and, reminiscent of his 'gem-like flame',[65] identifies the ensuing 'precious little pearl of a thought' that evolves into a 'unique little gem' of composition.[66] She also anticipates it as a possible 'embryo of genius', 'work of genius', and even a 'solid chunk of genius'.[67] The equating of Paterian diction with notions of genius re-enforces how far the narrator's aesthetic ambitions are rooted in Pater's idea that 'the small particular moment is deeply significant'.[68] However, arguably the reader is aware also of the narrator's subversion of such aesthetic discourse to pursue their own ambition for celebrity. The narrator then grandiosely anticipates the gratitude of the London crowd who can benefit from 'no greater miracle than the tale I had to unfold', and likens the story to alchemy, being able to 'reveal to them the golden threads in the sober city woof'.[69]

At this high point of excitement, the narrator becomes fixated by a woman seen from the bus who hurries along the pavement beside it. The narrator associates the woman with 'Pompier' from the lyrics of a popular Brazilian song, but also puts the reader in mind of the narrator's 'pomposity' in blaming her for the disappearance of the 'lovely illusive little being' of the proposed composition.[70] The narrator's presentiment of her as a 'ghoul-like spirit that haunts the city and murders fancy'[71] only underlines the self-aggrandisement of this self-proclaimed genius. Instead, the focus shifts to the woman who is not constrained by the narrator's attempts to categorise her and who cannot be dismissed like the earlier 'anaemic city girl' with the admonishment to 'get thee to thy typing'.[72] While the narrator begins and ends the story by expressing regret, the reader does not necessarily share that regret over the pedestrian woman's presence. Her exotic persona can be seen as supplanting the now failed impressionistic perceptions of the narrator with her alternative exuberance of lived experience. The woman does not speak for herself. Instead, the narrative voice is scuppered by her display of energy and sense of purpose in keeping with Egerton's own declared narrative project to cultivate 'one small plot: *the terra incognita* of [woman] herself, as she knew herself to be, not as man liked to imagine her – in a word, to give herself away, as man has given

himself in his writing'.[73] Effectively, the unnamed woman becomes the unacknowledged masterpiece of the story's title. Egerton herself finds through her the means to surmount the narrator's creative impasse, which was one that she too had encountered in capturing a moment of inspiration with its '*toys of the brain*' in the short story form, since '*to write them down is to destroy them -as fancies!*'[74]

Nonetheless, despite the eventual disjunction between the narrator and reader, the reader's response to London remains constructed through the sheer range of cultural and class references invoked by Egerton's aspiring writer. For example, the woman on the pavement provokes images of a Brazilian singer on an Eastern steam ship for the narrator.[75] There are references also to popular street music of the kind that might have aroused moral objections at the time, for instance when the narrator observes a busking violinist and harpist as they play 'some tuneful thing […] likely a music-hall ditty'.[76] The resonances of different class cultures colliding in London can also be felt in the final piece of *The Yellow Book*'s first volume. Hobbes had begun work on *The Fool's Hour: A Play* with George Moore, who only wrote dramas through a 'quasi-theatrical performance of collaboration',[77] not long after their first meeting in December 1893.[78] The appearance of 'The Fool's Hour: The First Act of a Comedy', in the inaugural issue of *The Yellow Book*, introduces a group of upper-class characters attracted to the theatre for different reasons. Its publication would seem to be in keeping with the future *Yellow Book* in which items on all aspects of theatrical culture would appear, acknowledging the lure of musical theatre and its capacity to shock.[79]

'The Fool's Hour' rehearsed many of the themes from Hobbes' novels that were re-published in a single volume as *The Tales of John Oliver Hobbes* also in 1894.[80] As in the play, the tales reveal the incompatibility of male and female aspirations in an environment that is *à la mode*. Upper-class characters are frequently infused with artistic pretensions and impinged upon at times by parallel bohemian worlds without ultimate detriment to the existing status quo. The published first act of the play maintains both satiric and comedic modes. The drafts of Acts 2 and 3 introduce additional darker elements of blackmail and extortion through a London theatrical setting, but also

show how the foolish young protagonist, Cyril, is rescued from his infatuation with a musical actress by the love of a suitable young woman. The conventional order of Act 1 will thus be restored by the end of the play.

Act 1 is set in a smart townhouse in Brighton, close to London by train as we are reminded, and yet apparently far removed from its questionable mores. By the end of the act, several of the characters have left Brighton to attend the dress rehearsal of a new musical production in London. Lord Doldrummond's friend, Lord Soame, must hurry as he has 'an engagement in town to-night […]. An amusing one […]. At the Parnassus'.[81] Soame describes the theatre in an epigrammatic flourish that confirms both its and his own dubious morality: 'A theatre much favoured by young men who wish to be thought wicked, and by young ladies who *are*.'[82]

Later, the reader learns that Cyril, the young man of the house, is also being taken to the Parnassus by the tenor singer Mandeville who will be singing there at a dress rehearsal of the decadently titled 'Dandy and the Dancer'.[83] This show and its famous lead actress, Sarah Sparrow, with whom Cyril is already infatuated, act as a magnet for the wealthy young man who is desperate to escape his mother's control because he 'cannot see much of the world through [his] mother's embroidery'.[84] Cyril leaves with Mandeville to catch the train to London, having announced that he intends to take chambers of his own in town and live a bachelor life, thus removing himself from the moral influence of his parents. Additionally, the audience are aware that Julia, who his mother has chosen as a good match for Cyril, has mentioned to a flattering Mandeville that she too 'should like to be an actress!'[85] The world of the theatre then has widespread appeal for characters in a play that, in turn, courts its *Yellow Book* audience through stage witticisms that carry the frisson of deviance. Soame, for example, tells his foil Lord Doldrummond that 'the pleasures we imagine are so much more alluring, so much more dangerous than those we experience', before hurrying away to the Parnassus.[86] Julia is drawn to Mandeville by his inevitably immoral reputation as a performer, telling him: 'You – you are supposed to be rather dangerous. You sing on the stage and have a tenor voice.'[87] For Cyril, the Parnassus offers an opportunity to indulge the aesthetic

and potentially decadent aspects of his character as indicated in the stage directions for his entry: 'his features have that delicacy and his expression that pensiveness which promise artistic longings and domestic disappointment'.[88]

In the draft version of Act 2, the audience sees Cyril backstage at the Parnassus and besotted by Sarah.[89] He is manipulated into borrowing money at an extortionate rate to woo her and to propose marriage to her. When he reneges on their engagement, the astute Sarah and her lover Mandeville pursue Cyril for damages with which to buy their own theatre and set themselves up as impresarios. The business necessities of the theatre become central to the plot of a play which was never to be performed. Ironically it is Julia, who has not yet experienced the Parnassus, who steps in to persuade Sarah to settle out of court. The reader and audience can expect that there will be a happy ending in which Julia and Cyril will marry, reverting to acceptable norms of class and gender.

The representation of theatrical London's intrusion into the more suburban stability of the Brighton house allows the reader of the play to vicariously experience potential threats to the social order, balanced by the reassuring certainty that class and gender order will be restored. As in the texts by D'Arcy and Egerton, the fate of an individual with artistic longings lies at the heart of the piece and the draw of the city as a source of potential inspiration is invoked. As with the stories, the unpublished later Acts of 'The Fool's Hour' also show London as the place where artistic aspirations and pretensions are thwarted. For D'Arcy's aspiring young writer, as for Egerton's thwarted genius and Hobbes and Moore's potential aesthete, London life disappoints. For Willoughby the outcome veers towards drudgery, for Egerton's narrator towards mediocrity, for Cecil towards domesticity. For all three the abnegation of their hopes of fulfilment is realised in the city.

Unsettling spaces: Stories by Mew and Syrett in the *Yellow Book*'s Second Volume

The début *Yellow Book* stories by Netta Syrett (1865-1943) and Charotte Mew (1869-1928) that were to appear in the second volume of *The Yellow Book* also deal with themes of domestic and artistic disappointment. Here, however, the stories focus directly and unquestionably on the failure of their female protagonists to find fulfilment, whether in Mews's London or Syrett's opposed pastoral settings of rural colonial India and an English seaside village. In Mew's 'Passed', for example, the first-person narrator lays to one side her embroidery thread work and leaves her city home. In this 'proto-modernist piece', the narrator finds herself moving into an unsettling phantasmagorical and sensual London, identifying herself with the otherness of the city and forging a narrative 'in which the style is […] related to the expression […] of a queer consciousness'.[90] Taking an unexpected path she finds her way through the city on a mysterious course in which London is transformed into a momentary pastoral idyll when 'the broad roads are but pathways through green meadows, and your footstep keeps the time to a gentle music of pure streams'.[91] Having witnessed the death of a destitute young girl and the despair of the girl's bereaved sister, the narrator returns to her more suburban house, but she no longer feels at home there.

Similarly, Syrett's 'Thy Heart's Desire', expresses the protagonist's experience of 'frustration, especially the frustration of women who, lacking any positive alternatives, make poor choices and wind up entrapping themselves in impossible domestic circumstances'.[92] The narrator describes Kathleen as she struggles to continue with the familiar task of sewing despite the unsettling domestic setting that causes her eyes to wander 'from the gay silks of the table-cover she was embroidering to the canvas walls' of her Indian tent.[93] After her soldier husband's death she returns to England. In a tense final scene set on an English cliff top, overlooking the unexotic 'grey sea',[94] she tells her late husband's friend, with whom she had fallen passionately in love in India, that she cannot now marry him. There is no comfortable return to an English, pastoral landscape for, as in Mew's story, there is no narrative means by which the woman can comfortably settle back into a homely domestic status quo.

As this article has discussed, poverty and the demands of respectable domesticity were ever-present hindrances for emerging women writers in 1890s London. Their first contributions to *The Yellow Book* revealed the way in which these familiar societal and emotional restrictions could be seen to affect their characters, but also showed how they themselves might succeed in achieving the expression of an unfettered imagination in their writing. Arguably the launch of *The Yellow Book*, with the augmentation of friendships, collegiality, and the publishing opportunities it offered, provided D'Arcy, Egerton, and Hobbes, as well as later *Yellow Book* women writers, a further means by which they might hope to engage with a wider public and 'reveal to them the golden threads in [their] sober city woof'.[95]

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[1] Margaret D. Stetz and Mark Samuels Lasner, *The Yellow Book: A Centenary Exhibition* (Houghton Press, 1994), p. 21.
[2] Mrs Grundy was an archetypal figure representing respectability. See https://archive.org/details/TheYellowBookProspectusToVolume1/page/n1/mode/2up, p. 4 [accessed 19 January 2024].
[3] Ibid., p. 5.
[4] Jad Adams, *Decadent Women: Yellow Book Lives* (Reaktion Books, 2023), p. 20.
[5] Ibid., pp. 92-96.
[6] See C. L. Whyte, *Women's Magazines: 1693-1968* (Michael Joseph, 1970), p. 8. Cited by A. Clayworth, '"The Woman's World": Oscar Wilde as Editor', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 30:2 (1997), p. 85.
[7] Adams, pp. 84-108.
[8] Ibid., p. 22.
[9] Ana Parejo Vadillo, 'Phenomena in Flux: The Aesthetics and Politics of Traveling in Modernity', in Ann L Ardis and Leslie W. Lewis, eds., *Women's Experience of Modernity 1875-1945* (John Hopkins University Press, 2003), p. 211.
[10] The second *Keynotes* volume also appeared in 1894. Florence Farr's *The Dancing Faun* satirised the theatrical world in which its author had achieved fame as an actress. Farr had also worked as an embroiderer for May Morris during the late1880s alongside Una Taylor, an expert embroiderer, whose story collection *Nets for the Wind* appeared as a *Keynotes* volume in 1896.
[11] W. V. Harris, 'John Lane's Keynotes Series and the Fiction of the 1890s', *PMLA*, 83.5 (October 1968), p. 1407.
[12] Ibid., p. 1412.
[13] Stetz and Lasner, p. 27.
[14] George Egerton, 'A Lost Masterpiece. A City Mood, Aug. 93', *The Yellow Book*, 1 (April 1894), pp. 189-98.
[15] Talia Schaffer, *The Forgotten Female Aesthetes: Literary Culture in Late-Victorian England* (University Press of Virginia, 2000), p.49.
[16] Short stories by Ella D'Arcy appeared in *Temple Bar*, *Argosy,* and *Blackwood's* between 1890 and 1893 under the name Gilbert H. Page. See Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV, 'Ella D'Arcy: A Commentary with a Primary and Annotated Secondary Bibliography', *English Literature in Transition 1880-1920*, 35.2 (1992), pp. 179-211.
[17] K. L. Mix, *A Study in Yellow: The Yellow Book and its contributors* (London: Constable and Company, 1960), p. 77.
[18] Adams, p. 24.
[19] Katherine Tynan, *Twenty-Five Years: Reminiscences* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1913), p. 290.
[20] See Linda Hughes, 'A Club of their own: The "Literary Ladies", New Women Writers, and *fin-de-siècle* authorship', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 35.1 (2007), pp. 233-60.
[21] George Moore, *Esther Waters* (London: Walter Scott, 1894); John Oliver Hobbes and George Moore, 'The Fool's Hour', *The Yellow Book*, 1 (April 1894), p. 260.
[22] Mix, p. 95.

[23] Ibid., p. 95. Not all women writers wished to be publicly linked to the magazine once its first volume had appeared. Michael Field (Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper) had been included in the prospectus' list of contributors, but withdrew the poem they had submitted for the July issue of *The Yellow Book* after being 'almost blinded by the glare of hell' when approaching the window display of the inaugural issue in the Bodley Head's Vigo Street premises. See Marion Thain, *'Michael Field' Poetry, Aestheticism and the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 14-15.
[24] Stetz and Lasner, p. 27.
[25] Adams, p. 312.
[26] Ella D'Arcy, 'Irremediable', *The Yellow Book*, 1 (April 1894), pp. 87-110.
[27] Henry James, 'The Death of the Lion', *The Yellow Book*, 1 (April 1894), p. 22.
[28] Ibid., p. 37.
[29] Margaret D. Stetz, https://1890s.ca/dixonE_bio/ [accessed 6 May 2024].
[30] Ella Hepworth Dixon, *Story of a Modern Woman* (William Heinemann, 1894); M. Wynman [Ella Hepworth Dixon], *My Flirtations* (Chatto and Windus, 1892), p. 75. Wynman's poignant story, 'The Sweet of the Year', in which a young Parisian artist discovers that his elderly concierge was once the adored model of a celebrated artist, was to appear in the April 1896 volume of the *Yellow Book* (pp. 158-63).
[31] B. Randall, "'Everything Depend[s] on the Fashion of Narration": Women Writing Women Writers in Short Stories of the Fin-de-Siècle', in *Cross-Gendered Literary Voices*, ed. by R. Kim and C. Westall (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 41-42.
[32] Mabel E. Wotton, *A Pretty Radical and Other Stories* (David Stott, 1890), pp. 226-46.
[33] Mabel E. Wotton, *Day-Books* (John Lane, 1896), p. 164.
[34] J. O. Hobbes, *The Sinner's Comedy* (1892), in *The Tales of J. O. Hobbes* (T. Fisher Unwin, 1894), p. 129.
[35] Ibid., pp. 139-40.
[36] D'Arcy, 'Irremediable', p. 87.
[37] Ibid., p. 88.
[38] Ibid., p. 91.
[39] Ibid., p. 90.
For a discussion of D'Arcy's use of this 'recurring trope in writing from this period' in her 1891 story 'The Smile', published under the pseudonym Gilbert H. Page, see Sue Asbee, *The Women Aesthetes: British Writers,* vol. 3 (Pickering and Chatto, 2013), p. 110
[40] D'Arcy, 'Irremediable', p. 96.
[41] Ibid., p. 98.
[42] Heather Marcovitch, 'White Magic, Black Humour: Ella D'Arcy's Narrative Strategies' in *Cahiers Victoriens & Edouardiens*, 96 (2022), https://doi.org/10.4000/cve.11663 [accessed 1 December 2024].
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid., Section 13.
[45] See Kate Krueger's segment of the British Association of Decadence Studies Jeudi 'The *Yellow Book* Community: Sisterhood and Collaboration', 7 April 2022. Recording available at https:/bads.gold.ac.uk/2022-spring [accessed 30 January 2024].
[46] Highbury Park was a relatively new residential area. The nearby church of St. John whose spire is noted by the narrator had been permanently erected and consecrated in 1881.
[47] D'Arcy, 'Irremediable', p. 100.
[48] Ibid., p. 101.
[49] Ibid., p. 106.
[50] Ibid., p. 108.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Egerton, 'A Lost Masterpiece', p. 190.
[53] Ibid., p. 196.
[54] Sally Ledger, ed., *Keynotes and Discords by George Egerton* (Continuum, 2006), p. xvii.
[55] Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the fin de siècle* (Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 188.
[56] Lyn Pykett, 'Egerton, George', in *The Cambridge Guide to Women's Writing in English* , ed. by Lorna Sage (Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 216.
[57] Kostas Boyiopoulos, Yoonjoung Choi, and Matthew Brinton Tildesley, eds., *The Decadent Short Story* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015), p. 124.
[58] Egerton, 'A Lost Masterpiece', p. 195.
[59] Ibid., p. 190.
[60] Mark Girouard, *Sweetness and Light: The 'Queen Anne' Movement 1860-1900* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p.93.
[61] Egerton, 'A Lost Masterpiece', p. 191.
[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid., p. 190.
[64] Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (London: Macmillan, 1873), p. 118. See also Pater's description of how, for the close observer of the external world, 'Experience' becomes 'reduced to a swarm of impressions', p. 209.
[65] Pater, p. 210.
[66] Egerton, 'A Lost Masterpiece', p. 193.
[67] Ibid., pp. 193-194.
[68] Schaffer, p. 171.
[69] Egerton, 'A Lost Masterpiece', p. 193.
[70] Ibid., pp. 195-196.
[71] Ibid., p. 196.
[72] Ibid., p. 193.
[73] George Egerton, 'A Keynote to Keynotes', in John Gawsworth, ed., *Ten Contemporaries* (Ernest Benn, 1922), p. 58. Cited by Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (Bloomsbury, 1991), p. 65. Emphasis in original.
[74] George Egerton, *Keynotes* (Mathews and Lane, 1894), Epigraph. Italics in original.
[75] Egerton, 'A Lost Masterpiece', p. 195.
[76] Ibid., p. 192. For a brief discussion of the 'Purity Crusades' of the 1880s, see Boyiopoulos, Choi, and Tildesley, p. 4.
[77] Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn, *George Moore: Influence and Collaboration* (University of Delaware Press, 2014), p. 6.
[78] Ibid., p. 204. The manuscripts and typed versions of the three acts extant suggest that Hobbes wrote the draft version and Moore added his comments from January 1894 onwards.
[79] For more on the *Yellow Book*'s inclusion of art and literary works related to all forms of theatre, see Stetz and Lasner, pp. 37-38.
[80] The texts included were: *Some Emotions and a Moral* (1891); *The Sinner's Comedy* (1892); *A Study in Temptations* (1893); *A Bundle of Life* (1893).
[81] John Oliver Hobbes and George Moore, 'The Fool's Hour', *The Yellow Book*, 1 (April 1894), p. 260. In the draft Act 2, events behind the scenes at the theatre suggest that it is far from being the abiding place of poetry its name would suggest.
[82] Ibid. Emphasis in original.
[83] Ibid., p. 271.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid., p. 270.
[86] Ibid., p. 256.
[87] Ibid., p. 267.
[88] Ibid., p. 270.
[89] For Ann Heilmann's edited texts of Acts 2 and 3, see Heilmann and Llewellyn, pp. 219-71.
[90] K. Flint, 'The "Hour of Pink Twilight": Lesbian Poetics and Queer Encounters on the Fin-de-Siècle Street', *Victorian Studies*, 51.4 (2009), p. 705. Cited in Asbee, p. 241.
[91] Charlotte Mew, 'Passed', *The Yellow Book*, 2 (July 1894), p. 124.
[92] Margaret D. Stetz https://1890s.ca/syrett_bio/ [accessed 30 January 2024].
[93] Netta Syrett, 'Thy Heart's Desire', *The Yellow Book*, 2 (July 1894), p. 231.
[94] Ibid., p. 250.
[95] Egerton, 'A Lost Masterpiece', p. 193.