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New Woman Poetics and Revisionist Mythmaking in Fin-de-Siècle Periodicals

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Since the publication of Talia Schaffer's *The Forgotten Female Aesthetes: Literary Culture in Late-Victorian England* (2000), much has been done to ensure that late nineteenth-century women writers and poets remain no longer forgotten. Studies such as Ana Parejo Vadillo's *Women Poets and Urban Aestheticism: Passengers of Modernity* (2005), Marion Thain's *'Michael Field': Poetry, Aestheticism, and the Fin-de-Siècle* (2007), Naomi Hetherington and Nadia Valman's *Amy Levy: Critical Essays* (2010), Emily Harrington's *Second Person Singular: Late Victorian Women Poets and the Bonds of Verse* (2014), Clare Stainthorp's *Constance Naden: Scientist, Philosopher, Poet* (2019), and Jill R. Ehnenn's *Michael Field's Revisionary Poetics* (2023), to name but a few, have drawn attention to a range of formerly marginalised female poets.[1] *Volupté*'s own special issue, 'Women Writing Decadence' (Spring 2019), has further widened the range of writers in academic discussions, highlighting the transnational elements of decadent thought and redefining the boundaries of what had long 'seemed to be an all-male club'.[2] These developments indicate the ongoing need to revise critical accounts of fin-de-siècle literary production at large. In his recent book *Decadent Ecology in British Literature and Art, 1860–1910: Desire, Decay, and the Pagan Revival* (2021), Dennis Denisoff contends that the once typical association of decadence with 'the urban, the cultured, and the artificial', as exemplified in the poetry of Charles Baudelaire, obscures its broader 'interweaving strands of interest', from feminist politics to the resurgence of pagan spiritualities based in reverence for nature.[3] His analysis invites further consideration of how aestheticist and decadent poetry engaged dynamic, intersecting discourses of gender, ecology, and religion.

Reassessing the contributions of late Victorian women poets to aestheticism and decadence necessitates that these cultural formations be understood as fluid, rather than fixed. Such an approach embraces some degree of taxonomic instability as a productive alternative to

essentialising terms. Consider, for instance, the descriptor 'New Woman' poets, rendered increasingly meaningful thanks to developments from Linda K. Hughes' *New Woman Poets: An Anthology* (2001) to Patricia Murphy's *Poetry of the New Woman: Public Concerns, Private Matters* (2023). This category, which adapts the language introduced by Sarah Grand (Frances Elizabeth Bellenden Clarke, 1854-1943) in an 1894 essay for the *North American Review*, generally refers to female-authored poetry of the 1880s and 1890s that challenges conservative gender ideologies. As a cultural phenomenon and literary icon, the New Woman challenged the notion that women find fulfilment solely in marriage and maternity, seeking instead to expand their socio-political roles and reclaim their bodily autonomy. Hughes acknowledges, however, that such a label sits uneasily with several of those featured in her anthology, whose work reflects many different artistic and intellectual aims; likewise, Murphy highlights the 'multivalent' qualities of the poetry she examines.[4] Indeed, turn-of-the-century readers might themselves have used rather different terminology. Oscar Wilde, who featured many such poems in *Woman's World* (1887-1890) during his editorship (1887-1889), offered brief yet thought-provoking remarks on such writers in an essay entitled 'English Poetesses' (1888) – though *poetess* itself remains a contested term, as a recent *Victorian Review* forum has underscored.[5] My own essay uses the descriptor 'New Woman poetics' to highlight tropes that expand, reclaim, and celebrate women's embodied experiences, both sexual and spiritual. In so doing, I aim not only to shed light on this poetry's feminist potentials but also to locate these artistic strategies in relation to broader developments in literary and cultural history. As Schaffer emphasises,

> Though today we may see the late-Victorian period as consisting of separate clumps of aesthetes, naturalists, New Women, decadents, canonical authors, popular novelists, and so forth, it is vital to remember that during this period these writers enjoyed multiple, flexible, social, and professional networks.[6]

One way to illuminate these networks is to consider the periodical contexts in which much of this work first appeared.

Among the venues that provide windows into the contested discourses that shaped the 1890s, *The Yellow Book*, identified in its own time as 'the Oscar Wilde of periodicals', deserves substantial attention.[7] Established by publisher John Lane, writer Henry Harland, and artist Aubrey Beardsley, this illustrated quarterly produced a total of thirteen issues between April 1894 and April 1897. Previous scholarship on this magazine has demonstrated both its imbrication in masculinist discourse and its importance as a literary venue for women writers, illustrators, and poets.[8] In a focused analysis of *The Yellow Book*'s poetry, Hughes has shown that female poets helped sustain this periodical's decadent agenda in the aftermath of the public scandal surrounding Wilde, given that 'women, already marginal, could more safely articulate thoughts that had become dangerous for men'.[9] Although Wilde himself never published in this periodical, scholars have typically divided its run into two distinct phases: before and after the infamous trials during the spring of 1895. Rumours that Wilde had been carrying *The Yellow Book* in his possession at the time of his arrest (though other accounts have indicated that it was rather a yellow-backed novel) led to vandalism of the Bodley Head offices, as well as the dismissal of Beardsley, associated with Wilde because of his illustrations for the English edition of the daringly explicit play *Salomé* (1893) as well as rumours of his own sexual exploits with men.[10] While Hughes upholds this general two-phase discussion of *The Yellow Book*, her attention to women's poetry results in a four-stage account:

> an initial male-dominated phase (volumes 1-3); a second phase instigated by the journal's entanglement with decadence and the trial (volumes 4-6); an eclectic phase characterized by gender equity (volumes 7-12); and, in the final volume (volume 13), a resumption of male domination in terms of numbers, yet accompanied by an integration of New Woman poetics.[11]

Building on insights from Hughes, my analysis situates selected poems by Rosamund Marriott Watson (1860-1911), Edith Nesbit (1858-1924), and Nora Hopper (1871-1906) in relation to broader patterns evident throughout fin-de-siècle periodical poetry. Reading their contributions to *The Yellow Book* in conjunction with their publications elsewhere illuminates new constellations of meaning both across contexts and within the lyrical poetry of *The Yellow Book* itself, throughout the four phases described above.

My discussion begins where Hughes concludes, with the last lines in the final poem by a female poet to be featured in *The Yellow Book*: Rosamund Marriott Watson's 'Oasis' (1897), published in volume XIII. This lyrical celebration of a place of solace amid the wilderness ends with the promise offered by 'a blackbird singing – | Singing the Song of Songs by the Gates of Dream'.[12] Hughes proposes that this closing note might be read self-reflexively, observing that 'the blackbird carols a biblical song of desire in a pagan setting of evanescence, at once an exuberant and marginal singer – an apt trope for women poets in *The Yellow Book*'.[13] While this assessment effectively summarises Hughes' overall analysis, Watson's reference to the Song of Songs resonates beyond the horizon of *The Yellow Book*. The only instance of erotic poetry within the biblical canon, the Song of Songs occupied a significant place in the literary imagination of aestheticist and decadent writers, from Wilde to Michael Field (Katherine Harris Bradley [1846-1914] and Edith Emma Cooper [1862-1913]), as several studies have shown.[14] Like many other poems by Watson and her contemporaries, 'Oasis' establishes a sensual spirituality grounded in material, earthly experiences. This poetry reveals that the refashioning of religious traditions played a crucial role in the New Woman project of articulating more robust expressions of desire – as operative outside a patriarchal economy and as a form of spiritual ecstasy that transgresses established categories of sacred/profane.

This subtle yet extensive work of symbolic transformation invites both close and distant reading. Developments within the field of periodical poetry studies have successfully demonstrated the value of what was once dismissed as mere 'filler' (notoriously, the *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals* [1824-1900] omitted poetry) and enjoined critics to develop 'new ways of reading and new interpretive skills', as Kathryn Ledbetter urges.[15] The miscellaneous, heterogeneous format of nineteenth-century newspapers and magazines requires that scholars learn to move 'sideways' – a directional metaphor memorably taken up by Hughes to describe interpretive methods that attend to dialogical connections across genres.[16] Additional forms of lateral reading have become possible with the advent of online archives such as the *Yellow Nineties 2.0*, edited and directed by Lorraine

Janzen Kooistra; the *Periodical Poetry Index*, a database of citations to English language poetry published in nineteenth-century periodicals (co-directed by Natalie Houston, Lindsey Lawrence, and April Patrick); and *Digital Victorian Periodical Poetry* (*DVPP*). Directed by Alison Chapman, *DVPP* encompasses poems and poetry translations from the full runs of twenty-one periodicals, magazines, and newspapers to date (approximately 15,500 poems). The project recovers many previously unknown poets (*DVPP* includes a substantial personography), and its advanced search features aid in discovering trends in authorship (users can search by identity categories such as nationality or assigned sex) and poetic characteristics, such as patterns in rhyme or stanza formation (this latter search feature is available for a representative sample of transcribed poems from decadal years spanning 1820 to 1900).[17] Chapman has convincingly modelled how this digital archive might facilitate the re-evaluation of cultural trends: it reveals, for instance, that Scottish cosmopolitan poetry was a widespread phenomenon that appeared not only in magazines focused on Celtic revivalism such as *The Pagan Review* (1892) and *The Evergreen* (1895-1897) but also in those less immediately associated with these circles, from *Good Words* (1860-1911) to *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* (1832-1956).[18] Rather like cosmopolitanism, expressions of religion or spirituality emerge in unexpected places throughout Victorian periodicals, as Mark Knight has highlighted.[19] While such diffusive expressions can be challenging to trace, *DVPP* facilitates the tracking of patterns in authorship and/or poetic form across periodical contexts. Reading in this way results in more nuanced understandings of religious transformations within late nineteenth-century women's poetry, even as our critical vocabulary for conceptualising these developments itself continues to grow and evolve.

Re-Imagining Eve's Legacy: Revisionist Mythmaking across Periodical Contexts

While previous studies have recognised subversive or creative engagement with religious inheritances as an element of the New Woman project – Hughes' anthology, for instance, clusters several poems under the header 'Confronting Religious Tradition' – the complex relationship

between organised religion and women's rights movements in the late nineteenth century demands further, nuanced study.[20] Despite the patriarchal thrust of organised Christianity, many Victorian women poets found an enriching, even emancipatory, potential in biblical figures and images. Surveying this vast and various body of work, including poems published in periodicals from *The Christian Lady's Magazine* (1834-1848) to the *Women's Penny Paper* (1888-1893), F. Elizabeth Gray's *Christian and Lyric Tradition in Victorian Women's Poetry* (2010) has theorised this creative output in relation to the feminist hermeneutics articulated by poet and theologian Alicia Suskin Ostriker.[21] Ostriker, whose critical and creative work is informed by her Jewish heritage and knowledge of midrash, calls attention to how women writers from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries have negotiated between a hermeneutics of suspicion and a hermeneutics of desire as they seek both to challenge the misogynistic underpinnings of the traditions they engage and to re-imagine their source texts in ways that are truly life-giving.[22] Elsewhere, Ostriker uses the term 'revisionist mythmaking' to express how women poets might advance a powerful 'challenge to and correction of gender stereotypes embodied in myth'.[23] Whereas Gray's work on Victorian women poets focuses primarily on those who wrote from within a devotional perspective, this focus on creative refashioning of Christian traditions might be put into productive dialogue with more radical efforts to rewrite religion. As Margot. K. Louis has shown, the rise of paganism and other alternative spiritualities in late Victorian and early modernist literature, including expressions of Hellenism that highlighted Greek mystery religions, resulted in various poetic appropriations and re-imaginations of the myth of Persephone, which she traces from Algernon Charles Swinburne to Mathilde Blind, and from H. D. to D. H. Lawrence.[24] Beginning with the decadent poetry published in *The Yellow Book* and other fin-de-siècle periodicals, I aim to show how New Woman poets engaged in a process of revisionist mythmaking that undercuts misogynistic assumptions.

The opening chapter in Murphy's recent book reflects on how much New Woman poetry unsettles 'Eve's supposed legacy', facing the shadow cast by the patriarchal exegesis that blames the first woman for bringing sin into the world, an interpretation often used to justify restricting

women's social and political roles.[25] Within *The Yellow Book*, the poem that most explicitly encapsulates this interpretive habit is 'The Lost Eden' (1897) by William Watson (1858-1935), who led the campaign for Beardsley's dismissal following Wilde's arrest. Mediated through Adam's perspective, this poem presents Eve as the *femme fatale* who cost him paradise, describing her as 'Eve the hot-hearted' and 'Eve the unslaked'.[26] This example underscores the weight of the patriarchal tradition that the New Woman sought to overturn. The female-authored poetry that appears in this periodical does not directly rewrite the biblical fall mythology, as do several other New Woman poems such as 'Adam and Eve' by A. Mary F. Robinson (1857-1944) and Hopper's 'Apples' (both of which also invoke Lilith, Adam's insubordinate first wife according to Jewish mythology, initially represented as a seductive and murderous demon but subsequently reclaimed by feminist thinkers as a symbol of sexual liberation); however, the poetry of *The Yellow Book* frequently, if somewhat indirectly, re-imagines Eve's legacy.[27] Many of these poems are deeply invested in exploring women's appetites – both carnal passion and thirst for knowledge – and representing these longings as sacred. By portraying the relationships among humankind, divinity, and nature in terms of interconnectivity rather than separation, these texts effectively undo the curse issued on expulsion from Eden in the Genesis account. This revisionary work proceeds according to multiple strategies, from braiding together pagan and Christian mythology to recovering elements derived from biblical traditions that lend themselves to more favourable perspectives on female desire.

While typological readings might most readily pair the Garden of Eden (where yielding temptation results in condemnation) with the Garden of Gethsemane (where resisting temptation brings about salvation), another useful counterpoint emerges in the unnamed *hortus conclusus* (enclosed garden) featured throughout the Song of Songs, a place of sensual pleasure.[28] From the early church fathers onward, this text has often been interpreted allegorically, as an expression of divine love for the Church as the Bride of Christ; however, nineteenth-century developments in higher critical scholarship read it in a secular context, as in Ernest Renan's translation *La Cantique*

des Cantiques (1860).[29] Subsequent biblical scholars have further highlighted the extent to which the Song of Songs foregrounds the sexual experiences of the unnamed woman (often identified as the Shulamite woman), as well as its rich synaesthetic metaphors.[30] These features – delight in carnal satisfaction, attention to female sexuality, and emphasis on the comingling of the senses – align with the hallmarks of aestheticist and decadent poetry. Duc Dau's recent study *Sex, Celibacy, and Deviance: The Victorians and the Song of Songs* (2024) has highlighted the literary reception of this book in nineteenth-century Britain, with particular focus on feminist and queer interpretations that align with the aims of contemporary queer theology.[31] Against the backdrop of critical developments that portrayed biblical texts less as unified divine revelation than as imperfect human poetry, subject to its own theological inconsistencies and ideological contradictions, many Victorian writers re-engaged religious traditions from experimental and imaginative perspectives.[32]

The same year that Watson published 'Oasis' in *The Yellow Book* (1897) she also published a poem entitled 'The Song of Songs' in *Pageant* (1896-1897), a decadent gift book edited by J. W. Gleeson White and Charles H. Shannon.[33] There, her work appeared in conjunction with several other poems that engage artistically and expansively with religious traditions. 'Ancilla Domini' by Selwyn Image – a poet, artist, illustrator, and former Anglican clergyman associated with the Arts and Crafts movement – features a tender lullaby from the Virgin Mary to the child Jesus that describes the Annunciation in moving, poetic language:

> Foretold upon the awful morn,
> When Gabriel spake, and on my soul was borne
> God's grace unutterable, o'ershadowing me.[34]

Elsewhere in the same volume, 'Twenty-Four Quatrains from Omar' turns to the mystical Persian poet whose work received renewed attention in Victorian Britain following Edward Fitzgerald's translation of *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* (1858) – though in this case, the quatrains in question were translated by Frederick York Powell. Even as these lyrics reflect Victorian Britain's imperialistic and orientalist fascinations, they also offer a thought-provoking portrayal of divine delight, one with the potential to unsettle dominant discourses of religion and morality: 'Being, as

Thou art, the Player and the Play, | And playing for Thine own pleasure, carelessly'.[35] This crossing of subject and object positions accords with the sensuous mysticism of Watson's poem.

'The Song of Songs' echoes both 'Oasis' and its biblical precedent, opening as 'a blackbird, waking | Sings in a dream'. Watson's jubilant apostrophe to this 'Dear Voice – O fount pellucid and golden' and her poem's emphasis on hidden things ('Better than all things seen, and best of the unbeholden, | Song of the strange things that we shall not know') accord with the words of the Shulamite woman in Song of Songs: 'O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice'.[36] Moreover, the emphasis on dreams as a pathway to intimate knowledge accords with the attention to the Shulamite woman's dreams throughout the third and fifth chapters of the Song of Songs.[37] This symbolic association arguably extends to the biblical fall narrative as well, at least as refracted throughout British literary tradition: John Milton's epic *Paradise Lost* (1674) twice portrays Eve as experiencing revelation through a dream, first as a warning of temptation and finally as a foreshadowing of redemption.[38] Fittingly, Watson's poem concludes with the prospect of eternal life, or at least perpetual youth, with its unanswered question to this mysterious voice, 'Who would say, "Youth is past," while you keep faith with the year?'

This poet herself had something akin to multiple incarnations as a literary figure, writing first as 'R. Armytage', then as 'Graham R. Tomson', and finally as 'Rosamund Marriott Watson'. Born Rosamond Ball, she became famous for her poetry and notorious for her personal life, as a woman who twice left her husband for another man: first, Arthur Graham Tomson – she had previously been married to George Francis Armytage – and later H. B. Marriott Watson – with whom she had an affair while still legally married to Tomson – prompting the change in pseudonym.[39] Though a self-identified agnostic, she dabbled in spiritualism during her final years, and intimations of her interest in life after death surface in several poems she contributed to *The Yellow Book*, including 'Vespertilia' (1895), 'The House Desolate' (1895), 'D'Outre tombe' (1896), and 'Children of the Mist' (1897).[40] Like 'Oasis', 'The House Desolate' features a striking biblical

allusion. Here, the imagery of twilight and dreams takes a darker tone. Its quatrain stanzas depict the spectral presences that haunt an old abode, where 'faint winds about the lintel sigh | "Your house is left to you desolate"'.[41] This line, the last in the poem, quotes the passage in the gospel of Matthew in which Jesus rebukes the scribes and Pharisees, religious leaders of the day, for their hypocrisy: 'Behold, your house is left unto you desolate'. In this context, the rebuke occurs in conjunction with a thwarted wish to care for the people of Jerusalem: 'how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings'.[42] This maternal and avian imagery accords with the moments in Watson's other poetry discussed previously, wherein she presents divine love or presence in terms of birdsong. By implication, then, the bleak edifice of 'The House Desolate' figures forth the emptiness of an institutional religion that has no room in its concept of God for such tender, embodied, and feminine energy.

Another gothic poem from *The Yellow Book* that similarly culminates in a thought-provoking reference to Christian traditions is 'The Ghost Bereft' (1897) by Edith Nesbit. Although Nesbit herself was not a supporter of the suffrage cause, her work is often discussed in the context of New Woman poetry, including the studies by Hughes and Murphy cited previously. Nesbit shared with many decadent writers a fascination with Catholicism, and her supernatural fictions reflect her investment in pagan and occult ideas.[43] This poem's couplet rhymes tell the tale of a ghost who returns to earth in hopes of catching sight of his beloved, only to find that she too has died. Since she is in heaven while he is wandering in limbo, this discovery would seem to seal his despair – 'I have lost her for evermore!' However, an epilogue destabilises this closure. The scene shifts to heaven, where 'one pale saint shivered', discomfited despite her 'shining raiment'. She seems dimly conscious of her former lover's anguish, reflecting, 'The past is hid and I may not know | – but I think there was sorrow long ago'.[44] This narrative pattern both recalls and departs from Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 'The Blessed Damozel', a poem that was first published in the Pre-Raphaelite periodical *The Germ* in 1855 and was itself inspired by Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Raven' (1845). Rossetti's poem ends as the lady weeps and sighs, longing for her lost lover – a subversive

exaltation of physical passion on earth above spiritual communion in heaven.[45] By contrast, Nesbit's speaker at last implores, 'O Christ, because of thine own sore pain, | Help all poor souls in the wind and rain!'[46] Her petition appeals to Christ's human nature and embodied suffering as a wellspring for compassion and mercy – both of which are qualities that Victorian culture perceived as conventionally feminine. Rather than merely invert established hierarchies that position heaven above earth, then, Nesbit seeks to bring spiritual and physical love together on the same plane, through the mystery of the incarnation.

Such bridging aligns with several poems that Nesbit had previously contributed to *Atalanta* (1887-1898). Founded by Elizabeth Thomasina Meade Smith (1844-1914), who used the pseudonym 'L. T. Meade', this monthly periodical marketed itself to girls and young women from middle and upper classes, while also adopting elements of the family literary magazine; furthermore, the periodical's name evokes the powerful huntress and follower of the goddess Artemis in Greek mythology.[47] In Nesbit's 'Medway Song' (1894), the first-person speaker declares that heaven must be very near and very like the places with which she is familiar on earth, revelling in the vivid details of the riverside scene.[48] Similarly, her subsequent poem 'The Woman's Kingdom' (1895), reclaims humble, earthly experiences: the hearth in place of a throne, and a heart instead of a golden sceptre. While this imagery might seem to uphold a domestic ideology that relegates women to the private sphere, 'The Woman's Kingdom' ultimately suggests that what is at stake is not the simple exchange of sceptre for heart but, rather, a transformation whereby the two become one, especially insofar as this object is described as a 'royal heart' held in the speaker's hand.[49] These subtle transfigurations effectively complement the more overtly transgressive refiguring in the other poem that Nesbit contributed to *The Yellow Book*: 'Day and Night' (1895), which represents the Earth as an adulterous woman who feigns faithfulness to the Sun while longing for her secret lover, Night.[50] Taken together, these poems not only demonstrate Nesbit's artistic versatility but also underscore that the New Woman effort to reclaim women's sexuality might be closely coupled with matters of spirituality.

Elsewhere within the poetry of *The Yellow Book*, a similar reverence for divinity on earth finds expression through the collision or intertwining of classical and Christian traditions, as in Nora Hopper's 'Shepherds' Song' (1895). Cast in the form of a lament and published during the Easter season, this song venerates the sensuality of Greek mythology, in contrast to the frigid chastity associated with Christianity. Even as the shepherds acknowledge that the rule of Diana, goddess of the hunt and moon, has passed away with the rise of the Virgin Mary, they declare their preference for the former figure: 'Maiden rule we still obey – | Yet we loved the first maid best'. They further suggest that the advent of 'a maid with softer eyes, | Colder breast' has brought about the diminishing of the entire natural order: 'Earth was green that now is grey'.[51] Such lines recall Swinburne's 'Hymn to Proserpine' (1866), which even more forcefully identifies Christianity as a force that subdues the earth – 'Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown grey from thy breath' – and concludes by defiantly affirming Proserpina, goddess of death, as the strongest of all.[52] Yet Hopper's poem ends differently, as the final stanza echoes the first in its remembrance of Diana's resting place:

> Here Diana dreaming lay
> (Snow in snow!)
> Lay a-dreaming on a day
> Long ago.[53]

This variant refrain bears an uncanny resemblance to the opening of Christina Rossetti's 'A Christmas Carol' (1872):

> snow on snow, snow on snow
> in the bleak midwinter,
> long ago.[54]

Moreover, the repetition of the poem's opening passage and the description of this dreamscape suggest the cyclical pattern of the seasons and effectively disrupt the linear progression of time, resulting in a disorienting blend of past and present, as well as pagan and Christian. After all, as the shepherds themselves acknowledge, they 'still obey' a 'maiden rule', implying similarity as well as difference between Diana and the Virgin Mary.[55] Read in this light, the poem's interplay of

classical and Christian imagery appears to have less in common with Swinburne's 'Hymn to Proserpine' than with a poem entitled 'In Picardy' (1889) published in the *Woman's World* and signed 'Graham R. Tomson'. This poem's twilight scene employs neutral tones as it comingles Christian and pagan deities, simply stating that 'our martyred God hangs high above | The poppies of Persephone' – a much more ambiguous portrayal of divinity, death, love, and resurrection.[56]

Several pastoral poems that Hopper contributed in subsequent years to *Atalanta* further complicate this seeming opposition between classical and Christian traditions. The first of these, similarly entitled 'A Shepherd's Song' (1896), declares allegiance to Pan, in contrast not to the Christian God but to other pagan deities: Hermes and Cytherea, or Aphrodite. As the speaker reveals, his prayers to Pan issue from another aspect of devotion altogether – that is, his romantic love for the woman Thais, whose name recalls the Athenian courtesan and mistress of Alexander the Great. In Hopper's poem, Thais herself is deified as 'a goddess in a russet gown' and described as the one who commands the shepherd's obedience day and night. The speaker's declaration 'There is no Eden I can lose | While Thais keeps kind watch for me' effectively intertwines classical and Christian imagery.[57] In other poems published in *Atalanta*, Hopper turns more overtly to Christian stories, refashioning these traditions to highlight and expand the roles of women. 'An Old-Fashioned Carol' (1896) offers a lullaby sung by Mary, employing distinctly archaic diction and orthography ('lullay', 'fere', 'Rood', and 'Goddë's') suggestive of Hopper's participation in the late nineteenth-century Celtic revival, with its recovery of folk traditions – an interest that emerges throughout many of her poems in *The Yellow Book*, including 'Lament of the Last Leprechaun' (1894) and 'Two Songs' (1896).[58] Hopper furthers her imaginative engagement with the Christmas story in 'A Carol', a dialogue between a shepherd and shepherdess that inventively combines the biblical narratives of fall and redemption. The shepherdess, who travels far and wide to proclaim the birth of Jesus, reveals herself to be none other than Eve, the 'apple-thief' who was 'Plucked out of Adam's side | To be his thorn'. Even as such descriptions seem to participate in misogynistic traditions that associate Eve with sin, Hopper revises patriarchal interpretation by

making Eve an 'immortal' being who is 'well-beloved' by her people in the heavenly realms.[59] In this poem, Eve's earthly journey cannot be reduced to punishment or curse; instead, she has an active role in bearing witness – rather as Mary Magdalene is portrayed as the first to see and tell of the risen Christ in the Gospel of John.[60] Situated within these broader frameworks, Hopper's poetry becomes both more artistically innovative and more deeply invested in re-imagining Christian traditions than might at first appear.

When the poems by Watson, Nesbit, and Hopper published in *The Yellow Book*, *Pageant*, *Woman's World*, and *Atalanta* are read together, what emerges is a richer understanding of their revisionary work. Although their most daring poems are those that appear in the periodicals most immediately associated with decadence, there are remarkable similarities across their texts. Considerations of audience and context necessitate that, to some extent, these poets wrote differently for different periodicals – *Atalanta*, for instance, targeted a younger and broader readership – but their more subtle acts of engaging creatively with inherited religious frameworks should be seen as on a continuum with their more overt transgressions.

Flesh, Soul, and Divine Ecstasy: Re-Creating Nature in *The Yellow Book*

Attending to such religious rewritings across periodical contexts makes it possible to return to *The Yellow Book*'s other female-authored poetry with fresh eyes. While its many poems celebrating nature may not seem subversive, their portrayal of heaven and earth as meeting in an ecstatic embrace could be deeply rooted within the New Woman project. Among the women who contributed poetry to *The Yellow Book*, Olive Custance (1874-1944) rivals Watson as the most frequently featured: Watson published a total of nine poems in this periodical, whereas Custance published eight. Custance has been regarded as a quintessential, if also somewhat problematic, decadent poet. A bisexual woman, she married Wilde's former lover Lord Alfred Douglas and eventually converted to Catholicism, though her publications in right-wing and anti-Semitic periodicals later in her career offer a sobering reminder that decadent poetics might be put to a

variety of ideological purposes.[61] Perhaps unsurprisingly, literary scholars have highlighted Custance's expressions of same-sex desire across her creative output, including poems published in *The Yellow Book* such as 'The White Statue' (1896), a transgressive twist on the Pygmalion story, and 'A Madrigal' (1895), a sensuous appeal to a 'sweet maid'.[62] In addition to challenging patriarchal and heteronormative economies, her contributions to this periodical intermingle sexual and spiritual ecstasy in ways that have not yet been fully appreciated.[63] Even as it is charged with ambiguously gendered sensual imagery, celebrating the maid's 'sunlike hair' with the phallic power to 'pierce' as well as the 'rare red tint' of her lips, 'A Madrigal' foregrounds the stasis and motion of the speaker's soul. Initially described as 'still as summer noon', 'silent', and prone to 'struggle', the speaker's inner states later give way to impassioned abandon: 'I see thee, and my soul is swung | In golden trances of delight'.[64] This soulful eroticism accords with the blending of flesh and spirit throughout Custance's nature poetry.

'Twilight' (1894), the first of her poems to be printed in this periodical, features an epigraph from George Meredith that effectively personifies the poem's subject as both a maternal and a sensual presence: 'Mother of the dews, dark eyelashed Twilight! | Low-lidded Twilight, o'er the valley's brim'.[65] Custance's poem itself opens with an apostrophe to Twilight, inspired by a brief and partial glimpse of the spirit's ineffable majesty:

> Spirit of Twilight, through your folded wings
> I catch a glimpse of your averted face,
> And rapturous on a sudden, my soul sings
> 'Is not this common earth a holy place?'

Bridging the mundane and the marvellous, this opening address underscores Twilight's excessive glory – insofar as her face remains averted – as well as her immanent presence. The next stanza amplifies this language of adoration, presenting God himself as keenly desiring this ethereal being:

> Spirit of Twilight, you are like a song
> That sleeps, and waits a singer, like a hymn,
> That God finds lovely and keeps near Him long
> Til it is choired by aureoled cherubim.

The speaker's sense of wonder achieves cosmological proportions, reclaiming ordinary material realities as sacred and re-imagining heaven and earth. A similar hallowing occurs in Custance's 'The Waking of Spring' (1895), which welcomes the spirit that personifies nature's renewal as a 'Blithe stranger from the gardens of our God' and an 'awakened bride' – imagery that once again recalls the Song of Songs.[66]

Her later lyric 'Sunshine' (1896) further develops this imagery, commenting on the intersection of erotic and spiritual passions. The speaker, self-identified as a woman – 'A mortal maid, whose heart is yet | Too full of all the world's vain fret' – describes her experiences of gazing upon the 'Sunshine Spirit', who is likewise gendered feminine, in terms of a sensual catalogue from 'gold wings spread aslant the green' and 'slim feet' to 'limbs so shimmerous white' and 'parted strands of shining hair'. In addition to delighting in these physical features, she ponders the experience of yearning for that which eludes her understanding:

> Because your subtle smile had caught
> My soul in tangled trance of thought –
> Your sweet hushed speech I strove to hear
> You seemed to sway so strangely near …
> Sun-Vision, was it I you sought?

As smile catches soul, spirit and body intertwine. Moreover, the reversal of subject-object positions in the final question, wherein the speaker raises the possibility that the Sunshine might be desiring her as much as she desires the Sunshine, effects a mystical reorientation. Ellipses, aposiopesis, and unanswered questions punctuate this stanza, as indeed they do the entire poem, underscoring that the speaker's knowledge remains tenuous and fragmentary. The final lines open into awe: 'Are you a dream? I cannot guess … | God's earth is full of mysteries …'.[67] This affirmation of uncertainty creates space for the marvellous, conceptualising desire beyond possession and revelling in the pleasures of unknowing.

Custance's songs effectively intensify the images and concerns introduced in the very first poem to appear within *The Yellow Book*: 'Tree-Worship' (1894), by Richard Le Gallienne, with whom Custance had a brief romance.[68] Like many other contributors, Le Gallienne combines

pagan and biblical elements, including an allusion to the grief of Rizpah (the concubine of King Saul whose children were slaughtered to atone for their father's wrongdoings).[69] Declaring that 'all other gods have failed' him, the speaker venerates the tree. His prayer reveals a deep yearning for union with nature ('Give me to clasp this earth with feeding roots like thine'), expressed in distinctly erotic terms ('With loving cheek pressed close against thy horny breast, | I hear the roar of sap mounting within thy veins'). The final stanza features an invocation to the Muse, in what amounts to a mysterious resurrection and a prayer that this divine presence might dwell within him: 'O winds that blow from out the fruitful mouth of God, | […] O God's best Angel of the Spring, in me arise'.[70] Custance's nature poems, in turn, take these tropes a step further, more directly addressing the concept of divine desire and more self-reflexively meditating on the process of spiritual searching.

My analysis aims not to suggest that all of the female-authored poetry within *The Yellow Book*, or even all of its nature poetry, participates unequivocally in this New Woman poetics. Images of divine presence within earthly beauty might well be used for various ideological purposes. Consider, for instance, Frances Nicholson's 'Wait!' (1896), which features an evocative description of a twilight scene, expresses the soul's longing for ineffable mysteries, and declares that 'Nature is Heaven's Prophet'. For those who have ears to hear, this prophet offers the revelation 'Obey in silence – work – hope – *wait*' – a message that, if reductively applied, might crush feminist activism.[71] And yet, the experience of waiting is not necessarily passive; it can also be an active, agential, and even empowering state, as Emily Harrington has proposed in her analysis of the dynamics of waiting throughout the poetry of Dollie Radford (Caroline Maitland, 1858-1920), who likewise contributed to *The Yellow Book*.[72] In the case of Nicholson's poem, the title's exclamation mark hints at the intensity of desire that attends this expectation. Though not without its limitations, her poem presents such anticipation as more than blind submission – indeed, as something that might point the way beyond a domineering model altogether. Initially, the speaker seeks to command the earth, highlighting her frustrated experiences of reaching for that which

eludes her grasp: 'Answer, and end the long unrest, | The strain to see, and touch, and know'. What issues instead is 'a silence, half mysterious, | half tender', a gentle refusal that renders spiritual knowledge not as a proclamation but as an invitation.[73] This participatory poetics both portrays and actively creates the experience of desire.

As a meditation on spiritual pathways, 'Finger-Posts' (1896) by Eva Gore-Booth (1870-1926) is similarly nuanced in both its didacticism and its inchoate amalgam of classical and Christian myth.[74] An Anglo-Irish writer admired by William Butler Yeats and involved in the Celtic revival, Gore-Booth was also a vocal suffragette, and her vision for social and political reform reflects a heterodox Christianity informed by Theosophical teachings about divinity, selfhood, and spiritual evolution.[75] 'Finger-Posts', highlighted in a review published in the *National Observer* as 'mildly reminiscent of Rosetti [*sic*], but not without individual distinction', offers a series of seven sonnets, describing in turn the direction toward heaven, nature, sorrow, joy, despair, love, and hope.[76] Rather than prescribe a single trajectory, this sequence outlines the various, at times contradictory, seasons of the soul, speaking of 'the gods' while also borrowing liberally from biblical imagery. The second sonnet, which discusses 'the way of Nature', invokes the Parable of the Sower: 'From the rich furrows where the good seeds fall | She brings forth life'.[77] Seemingly antithetical states become unified within the final stanza, which outlines 'the road of Hope' in terms that recall elements from all the previous sonnets, thereby suggesting that the very condition of being 'on the way' – *any* way – might in itself be a manifestation of anticipation in action.[78] Foregrounding process rather than destination, this sequence marvels at the beauty, pain, and mystery of human life, throughout its manifold moods.

Taken together, these examples demonstrate that there is a critical imperative to attend carefully to the shades and shadows evident across the spectrum of the nineteenth-century efforts to articulate a new cult of beauty, from Pre-Raphaelitism to aestheticism and decadence. Within and beyond *The Yellow Book*, New Woman poetics encompasses not only overt expressions of subverting inherited religious symbols but also more subtle acts of reforming them. Attending to

such varied and nuanced artistic strategies aids in pursuing what several scholars have identified as a growing edge within scholarship on aestheticism and decadence. As Joy Dixon observes, nearly ten percent of British feminists at the turn of the century had ties to the Theosophical Society or other alternative spiritualities – a statistic that underscores the need to consider this period's complex discursive intersections between gender and religion; similarly, Denisoff remarks that literary scholarship has not yet fully accounted for the degree to which New Woman ideas were influenced by occultic mysticism.[79] In addition to enriching scholarly understanding of intellectual developments at the fin de siècle, from the rise of alternative spiritualities to decadent conversions to Catholicism, focusing on revisionist mythmaking might help revitalise narratives of literary history. As both Ostriker and Louis highlight, nineteenth-century refashionings of mythic archetypes for the purposes of challenging cultural norms about gender and power find intriguing afterlives throughout works by writers in our own time such as Adrienne Rich, Sheri S. Tepper, Ursula K. Le Guin, and Margaret Atwood.[80] Rather than categorising decadent and aestheticist poetry as reflecting a transitional moment from the Victorian to the Modernist era, this framework illuminates how New Woman poetics participates in a process of transformation that is a much more perennial aspect of making art and being human.

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[1] Talia Schaffer, *The Forgotten Female Aesthetes: Literary Culture in Late-Victorian England* (University of Virginia Press, 2001); Ana Parejo Vadillo, *Women Poets and Urban Aestheticism: Passengers of Modernity* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Marion Thain, *'Michael Field': Poetry, Aestheticism, and the Fin-de-Siècle* (Cambridge University Press, 2007); Naomi Hetherington and Nadia Valman, eds, *Amy Levy: Critical Essays* (Ohio University Press, 2010); Emily Harrington, *Second Person Singular: Late Victorian Women Poets and the Bonds of Verse* (University of Virginia Press, 2014); Clare Stainthorp, *Constance Naden: Scientist, Philosopher, Poet* (Peter Lang, 2019); and Jill R. Ehnenn, *Michael Field's Revisionary Poetics* (Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

[2] Melanie Hawthorne, 'Women Writing Decadence: An Introduction', *Volupté: Interdisciplinary Journal of Decadence Studies* 2.1 (2019), pp. 1–15 (p. 1). Writers considered within this special issue include Gertrude Eysoldt, Maria Kazimiera-Zawistowska, Olive Custance, L. Onera, Maria Jotuni, Emilia Pardo Bazán, and Else Lasker-Schüler.

[3] Dennis Denisoff, *Decadent Ecology in British Literature and Art, 1860–1910: Decay, Desire, and the Pagan Revival* (Cambridge University Press, 2021), p. 4.

[4] Linda Hughes, Introduction to *New Woman Poets: An Anthology* (The Eighteen Nineties Society, 2001), p. 1; and Patricia Murphy, *Poetry of the New Woman: Public Concerns, Private Matters* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2023), p. 3.

[5] Wilde's essay initially appeared in *Queen* (8 December 1888). Although the term *poetess* is often associated with specifically sentimental lyric forms, it has diverse and dynamic applications. See Marjorie Stone's editorial introduction and the forum pieces featured in *Victorian Review,* 48.2 (2022), pp. 147-206.

[6] Schaffer, *The Forgotten Female Aesthetes*, p. 16.

[7] The epithet 'the Oscar Wilde of periodicals' was bestowed by the American magazine *The Critic*. See Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, '*The Yellow Book*: (1894-1897): An Overview'. *The Yellow Book Digital Edition*, ed. by Dennis Denisoff

and Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, 2010. *Yellow Nineties 2.0*, Ryerson University Centre for Digital Humanities (2019) <https://1890s.ca/yb-general-introduction/> [accessed 31 January 2024].
[8] See, for instance, Sally Ledger, 'Wilde Woman and The Yellow Book: The Sexual Politics of Aestheticism and Decadence', *English Literature in Transition, 1880–1920,* 50.1 (2007), pp. 5-26; Margaret D. Stetz, '"Ballads in Prose": Genre Crossing in Late-Victorian Women's Writing', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 34.2 (2006), pp. 619-29; and Laurel Brake, 'Endgames: The Politics of *The Yellow Book* or, Decadence, Gender, and the New Journalism', *Essays and Studies,* 48 (1995), pp. 38-64.
[9] Linda K. Hughes, 'Women Poets and Contested Spaces in *The Yellow Book*', *Studies in English Literature,* 44.4 (2004), pp. 849-72 (p. 859).
[10] See Heather Marcovitch, '*The Yellow Book*: Reshaping the *Fin de Siècle*', *Literature Compass,* 13.2 (2016), pp. 79-87.
[11] Hughes, 'Women Poets', p. 851.
[12] Rosamund Marriott Watson, 'Oasis', *The Yellow Book,* 13 (April 1897), p. 212.
[13] Hughes, 'Women Poets', p. 865.
[14] See Gerald Carter, 'The Shulamite of Sodom: Wilde's Subversion of the *Song of Songs* and the Birth of the Monstrous-Feminine', *Miranda,* 19 (2019), pp. 1-16; see also Duc Dau, 'Stronger than Death': The Song of Songs in Michael Field's Poetry and Life Writing', *Religion and Literature,* 50 (2018), pp. 17-38.
[15] Kathryn Ledbetter, 'Time and the Poetess: Violet Fane and Fin-de-Siècle Poetry in Periodicals', *Victorian Poetry,* 52.1 (2014), pp. 141-59 (p. 156). See also Linda K. Hughes, 'What the Wellesley Index Left Out: Why Poetry Matters to Periodical Studies', *Victorian Periodicals Review,* 40.2 (2007), pp. 91-125.
[16] Linda K. Hughes, 'SIDEWAYS!: Navigating the Material(ity) of Print Culture', *Victorian Periodicals Review,* 47.1 (2014), pp. 1-30.
[17] Alison Chapman, ed., *Digital Victorian Periodical Poetry* (2024) <https://dvpp.uvic.ca/> [accessed 31 January 2024].
[18] Alison Chapman, 'Locating Scottish Cosmopolitanism in the Digital Archive', *Studies in Scottish Literature,* 48.1 (2022), pp. 83-92.
[19] Mark Knight, 'Periodicals and Religion', *The Routledge Handbook to Nineteenth-Century British Periodicals and Newspaper*s, ed. by Andrew King, Alexis Easley, and John Morton (Routledge, 2016), pp. 355-64.
[20] Hughes, *New Woman Poets*, pp. 59-65. This category features poetry by Mary Elizabeth Coleridge, May Kendell, E. Nesbit, Graham R. Tomson / R. Armytage (Rosamund Marriott Watson), A. Mary F. Robinson, Dora Sigerson, and Mathilde Blind.
[21] F. Elizabeth Gray, *Christian and Lyric Tradition in Victorian Women's Poetry* (Routledge, 2010), pp. 22-30.
[22] Alicia Suskin Ostriker, *Feminist Revision and the Bible* (Blackwell, 1993), p. 57.
[23] Alicia Suskin Ostriker, 'The Thieves of Language: Women Poets and Revisionist Mythmaking', *Signs,* 8.1 (1982), pp. 68-90 (p. 75).
[24] Margot K. Louis, *Persephone Rises, 1860–1927: Mytho*graphy, Gender, and the Creation of a New Spirituality (Ashgate, 2009).
[25] Murphy, *Poetry of the New Woman*, pp. 22-25 (p. 22). See, for example, the statements about Eve made by Tertullian, 'The Apparel of Women', in *Disciplinary, Moral, and Aesthetical Works*, trans. and ed. by Rudolph Arbesman, Sister Emily Joseph Daly, and Edwin A. Quain (Fathers of the Church, 1959), p. 117; see also Augustine, *The Confessions, The City of God, On Christian Doctrine*, trans. by J. F. Shaw (William Benton, 1952), p. 628.
[26] William Watson, 'The Lost Eden', *The Yellow Book,* 12 (January 1897), pp. 11-14 (p. 12).
[27] These poems by Robinson and Hopper can be found in Hughes, *New Woman Poets*, pp. 71-72. For an example of feminist scholarship that reclaims Lilith, see Judith Plaskow, 'The Coming of Lilith: Toward a Feminist Theology', in *The Coming of Lilith: Essays on Feminism, Judaism, and Sexual Ethics*, ed. by Donna Berman and Judith Plaskow (Beacon Press, 2005), pp. 32-43.
[28] For discussion of such pairing of Eden and Gethsemane, see Katherine B. Jeffrey, 'Gethsemane', *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature*, ed. by David Lyle Jeffrey (William B. Eerdmans, 1992), pp. 302-03. Examples of nineteenth-century applications of this interpretive pattern include William Adams, *The Three Gardens: Eden, Gethsemane, and Paradise* (London: Scribner, 1856). For biblical scholarship that analyses the intertextual connections between Eden and the garden of the Song of Songs, see Phyllis Trible, 'Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation', *Journal of American Academy of Religion,* 51.1 (March 1973), pp. 30-48; see also Francis Landy, 'The Song of Songs and the Garden of Eden', *Journal of Biblical Literature,* 98.4 (1979), pp. 513-28. For a more recent re-evaluation of these intertextual connections, see Katharine J. Dell, *The Solomonic Corpus of 'Wisdom' and Its Influence* (Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 197-204.
[29] James Doleman, 'The Song of Songs', *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature*, ed. by David Lyle Jeffrey (William B. Eerdmans, 1992), pp. 727-30 (pp. 727-28); Carter, 'The Shulamite of Sodom', pp. 2-3.
[30] Marcia Falk, Preface to *The Song of Songs: A New Translation* (HarperCollins, 1993), pp. xiii-xxii (pp. xv-xvii); Francis Landy, 'Song of Songs', *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed. by Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 305-19 (pp. 310-11).
[31] Duc Dau, *Sex, Celibacy, and Deviance: The Victorians and the Song of Songs* (Ohio State University Press, 2024), pp. 1-17. Her chapters consider works by Charlotte Brontë, Thomas Hardy, Christina Rossetti, John Gray, Michael Field, Edward Burne-Jones, Simeon Solomon, Phoebe Anna Traquair, and Augusta Theodosia Drane.

[32] Of the developments in biblical scholarship that sent shockwaves throughout Victorian Britian, arguably the most impactful was David Friedrich Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu* (translated into English by George Eliot in 1846), which challenged ideas about the divinity of Jesus; however, foundational works of higher criticism by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, along with earlier studies of Hebrew poetry's parallel patterning, such as those by Robert Lowth and Johann Gottfried Herder, similarly invited a range of provocative biblical rewritings. See Charles LaPorte, *Victorian Poets and the Changing Bible* (University of Virginia Press, 2011), pp. 4-21 and Denae Dyck, *Biblical Wisdom and the Victorian Literary Imagination* (Bloomsbury, 2024), pp. 11-22.
[33] Rosamund Marriott Watson, 'The Song of Songs', *Pageant,* 2 (1897), p. 63.
[34] 'Ancilla Domini', *Pageant* 2 (1897), pp. 196-97 (p. 197); 'Image, Selwyn', *Digital Victorian Periodical Poetry* (2024) <https://dvpp.uvic.ca/prs_517.html> [accessed 31 January 2024].
[35] 'Twenty-Four Quatrains from Omar', *Pageant,* 2 (1897), pp. 106-08 (p. 107).
[36] Watson, 'The Song of Songs', p. 63; Song of Songs 2.24, in *The Bible. Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha* (Oxford University Press, 2008). All subsequent biblical quotations come from this edition.
[37] Song of Songs 3.1-4; 5.2-7.
[38] John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, V. 28-93 and XII. 594-96, in *John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. by Merritt Y. Hughes (Hackett, 2003), pp. 207-469.
[39] For a thorough study of this woman's life and writing, including how she shifted her authorial signatures as her romantic affairs unfolded, see Linda K. Hughes, *Graham R: Rosamund Marriott Watson, Woman of Letters* (Ohio University Press, 2005), pp. 35-50, 217-45.
[40] This interest in spiritualism is noted by Linda K. Hughes, 'Rosamund Marriott Watson (Graham R. Tomson)', *Dictionary of Literary Biography,* 240 (2001), pp. 308-20 (p. 319).
[41] Rosamund Marriott Watson, 'The House Desolate', *The Yellow Book,* 7 (October 1895), pp. 23-24 (p. 24).
[42] Matthew 23.37-38.
[43] For a discussion of Nesbit's complex attitudes towards women's rights, including her refusal to support women's suffrage, see Julia Briggs, *A Woman of Passion: The Life of E. Nesbit, 1858–1924* (New Amsterdam Books, 1987), p. 130. On Nesbit's interests in pagan and occult ideas, see Denisoff, *Decadent Ecology*, p. 23.
[44] Edith Nesbit, 'The Ghost Bereft', *The Yellow Book,* 12 (January 1897), pp. 110-12 (p. 112).
[45] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'The Blessed Damozel', *The Broadview Anthology of British Literature*, *vol. 5: The Victorian Era*, ed. by Joseph Black et. al. (Broadview Press, 2021), pp. 709-12.
[46] Nesbit, 'The Ghost Bereft', p. 112.
[47] Jane Dawson, 'Not for girls alone, but for anyone who can relish really good literature': L. T. Meade, Atalanta, and the Family Literary Magazine', *Victorian Periodicals Review,* 76.4 (2013), pp. 475-98 (p. 476); Petra Clark, 'The Girton Girl's "academic home": Girton College in the Late-Victorian Periodical Press', *Victorian Periodicals Review,* 52.4 (2019), pp. 659-78 (see especially pp. 666-68).
[48] Edith Nesbit 'Medway Song', *Atalanta,* 7 (August 1894), pp. 702-03.
[49] Edith Nesbit, 'The Woman's Kingdom', *Atalanta,* 8 (August 1895), p. 683.
[50] Edith Nesbit, 'Day and Night', *The Yellow Book,* 4 (January 1895), p. 234.
[51] Nora Hopper, 'Shepherds' Song', *The Yellow Book,* 1 (April 1895), pp. 189–90 (p. 190).
[52] Algernon Charles Swinburne, 'Hymn to Proserpine', *The Broadview Anthology of Poetry and Poetic Theory*, ed. by Thomas J. Collins and Vivienne J. Rundle (Broadview Press, 1999), pp. 984-86 (p. 985).
[53] Hopper, 'Shepherds' Song', pp. 189-90.
[54] Christina Rossetti, 'A Christmas Carol', *The Complete Poems of Christina Rossetti*, ed. by R. W. Crump and Betty S. Flowers (Penguin, 2005), pp. 210-11 (p. 210).
[55] Hopper, 'Shepherds' Song', p. 190.
[56] Graham R. Tomson, 'In Picardy', *Woman's World*, 2 (September 1889), p. 579.
[57] Hopper, 'Shepherd's Song', p. 193.
[58] Nora Hopper, 'An Old-Fashioned Carol', *Atalanta,* 10 (December 1896), p. 193.
For a discussion of Hopper's participation in the Celtic revival, see Gregory A. Schirmer, *A History of Irish Poetry in English* (Cornell University Press, 1998), pp. 194-201.
[59] [Nora Hopper], 'A Carol', *Atalanta* 11 (January 1899), p. 160. The poem itself is unsigned; however, *DVPP* indicates that attribution is given in the volume index <https://dvpp.uvic.ca/poems/atalanta/1899/pom_15932_a_carol_with_apologies_to_a_t.html> [accessed 31 January 2024]. This poem appears with the subtitle '(With Apologies to A. T. Q. C.)'.
[60] See John 21.10-18.
[61] Sarah Parker, 'Olive Custance, Nostalgia, and Decadent Conservatism', *Volupté: Interdisciplinary Journal of Decadence Studies*, 2.1 (2019), pp. 57-81.
[62] Olive Custance, 'The White Statue', *The Yellow Book,* 11 (October 1896), p. 91; Olive Custance, 'A Madrigal', *The Yellow Book,* 6 (July 1895), pp. 215-16 (p. 215).
For criticism on same-sex desire in Custance's poetry, see Sarah Parker, *The Lesbian Muse and Poetic Identity, 1889–1930* (Pickering and Chatto, 2013), pp. 77-91; and Patricia Pulham, *The Sculptural Body in Victorian Literature: Encrypted Sexualities* (Edinburgh University Press, 2020), pp. 171-75. Custance's contributions to the *Yellow Book* receive discussion by Hughes, 'Women Poets', pp. 859-60, 863, and Murphy, *Poetry of the New Woman*, pp. 75-80.

[63] In his biographical account, Brocard Sewell notes briefly that Custance converted to Catholicism in 1924 and further comments that shortly before her death in 1944 she 'expressed deep regret' for having 'lapsed' in 1927. See Sewell, *Olive Custance: Her Life and Work*, ed. by G. Krishnamurti (The Eighteen Nineties Society, 1975), p. 24. One notable instance of scholarship that begins to address Custance's religious inclinations is Edwin J. King's remarks in his introduction to *The Inn of Dreams: Poems by Olive Custance (Lady Alfred Douglas*) (Saint Austin Press, 2015), pp. xi–xl. King claims that Custance was 'heavily influenced by Catholicism' at the time that she published her 1911 collection and further asserts that she was 'religiously inclined all her life' (p. xi).
[64] Custance, 'A Madrigal', pp. 215-16.
[65] Olive Custance, 'Twilight', *The Yellow Book*, 3 (October 1894), pp. 134-35. This quotation comes from 'Love in the Valley'; it is attributed simply to Meredith.
[66] Olive Custance, 'The Waking of Spring', *The Yellow Book,* 4 (January 1895), pp. 116-17 (p. 117).
[67] Olive Custance, 'Sunshine', *The Yellow Book,* 9 (April 1896), pp. 187-88.
[68] See Parker, 'Olive Custance', p. 57.
[69] See 2 Samuel 21.1-14.
[70] Richard Le Gallienne, 'Tree-Worship', *The Yellow Book,* 1 (April 1894), pp. 57-60.
[71] Frances Nicholson, 'Wait!' *The Yellow Book,* 8 (January 1896), pp. 371-72 (p. 372). Emphasis in original.
[72] Harrington, *Second Person Singular*, pp. 142-45.
[73] Nicholson, 'Wait!', p. 372.
[74] Eva Gore-Booth, 'Finger-Posts', *The Yellow Book,* 10 (July 1896), pp. 214-17.
[75] For a discussion of Gore-Booth's political and spiritual vision, see Joy Dixon, *Divine Feminine: Theosophy and Feminism in England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), pp. 190-94.
[76] 'Yellow and Green', Review of *The Yellow Book*, vol. 10, July 1896, *National Observer,* 15 August 1896, pp. 393-94. *Yellow Nineties 2.0,* ed. by Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, Ryerson University Centre for Digital Humanities, 2019 <https://1890s.ca/yb10-review-national-observer-15-aug-1896/> [accessed 31 January 2024].
[77] Gore-Booth, 'Finger-Posts', p. 215; See Matthew 13.3-23.
[78] Gore-Booth, 'Finger-Posts', p. 217. Emphasis in original.
[79] Joy Dixon, 'Modernity, Heterodoxy, and the Transformation of Religious Cultures in Britain', in *Women, Gender, and Religious Cultures in Britain, 1800–1940*, ed. by Sue Morgan and Jacqueline de Vries (Routledge, 2010), pp. 211-30 (p. 219); Denisoff, *Decadent Ecology*, p. 141.
[80] Ostriker, 'The Thieves of Language', pp. 71-72; Louis, *Persephone Rises*, p. 133.