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## **1. INTRODUCTION AND OBJECT OF THIS STUDY**

The present project entitled “Women in The Yellow Book” has the objective of studying what impact the short stories written by women and published in the influential fin-de-siècle literary journal *The Yellow Book* may have had on Victorian society. For that, the context in which the authors wrote these stories will be discussed because it is important to understand the socio-political and cultural movements that arose in this epoch. Moreover, it is also essential to study the concept the “New Woman,” since it is present in these stories. This concept referred to a model of woman that emerged during that period and was characterized by the rejection of the conventional feminine model of the Victorian society. This concept was also used to define a group of women writers who claimed the same socio-political rights between men and women. Apart from analyzing the “New Woman” concept in their fiction and the influence in these women’s lives as a social movement, the theme of marriage will be a key element of analysis common to these authors’ fiction. Marriage as an institution started to be questioned as the only option for women where they had a subordinate role in relation to men. At the same time, feminist movements took place in a society where Victorian values and mores were the basis of marriage. This group of feminists began to champion an equal position between women and men in society. These social changes were reflected in fiction dealing with themes such as “The New Woman Question” or marriage from a negative perspective. Moreover, they created a new model of heroine, a rebel, who rejected the traditional values of marriage. The “American New Woman” is also compared with the British and the European one as a liberal and progressive woman bringing this new ideology to the British Isles and the old continent. The settings where these short stories take place have an important connection with the writers’ biography as well as the themes dealt in them.

In addition, it is important to justify the importance and influence of the magazine where these women published. The fact that they published in *The Yellow Book* was relevant since “it was an avant garde magazine innovative in both form and content and remains central to the study of fin-de-siècle art, literature and society” (Denisoff and Kooistra, *The Yellow Nineties Online*). From the twentieth century to the present day, it has been almost impossible to write about this period’s major figures, art,

print, technology design, innovations, or gender politics without reference to *The Yellow Book*.

In the present project, I am going to defend the influence of Ella D'Arcy, Evelyn Sharp, George Egerton and Netta Syrett in literature considering the stories they published in *The Yellow Book*.

## 2. DISCUSSION

### 2.1. HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

The end of the nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth century was as a period of transition between Victorians and modernists. There were changes in economics, art, literature and politics, such as the emergence of “the new woman,” the new imperialism, the new realism, the new drama and the new journalism as well as ‘new’ human sciences like psychology, psychical research, sexology and eugenics. This period spread out from 1880s until the First World War in 1914. Moreover, there was an advance in the field of technology such as X-rays, telegraphy or cinematography and educational and democratic reforms.

New printing and photographic techniques appeared, literacy increased significantly and publishers published material more cheaply than before. The most significant development in printing was the growth of the periodical. Novels and long works of non-fiction were published in serial form, promoting the sense of a community of readers. In this period of social and intellectual change, “the romance is revived but with a new name, ‘short story’, appearing in the new magazines of the époque” (Ledger, 14).

In this context, new literary movements such as aestheticism and decadence emerged. Scholars have suggested that “Aestheticism and decadence shocked the Victorian establishment by challenging traditional values, foregrounding sensuality and promoting artistic, sexual and political experimentation” (Burdett, “Aestheticism and Decadence”, *Discovering Literature: Romantics and Victorians*).

*The Yellow Book* was a British journal in the 1890s associated with these two literary movements. Aestheticism emphasizes aesthetic values over social or political themes in literature, music, and art in general. It is strongly related to decadence

movement. The slogan “Art for Art’s Sake” was used by writers of the Decadent movement becoming part of a culture of commercialism and creativity (Burdett, *Discovering Literature: Romantics and Victorians*, “Aestheticism and Decadence”). “In Britain, among the artists and writers associated to *The Yellow Book* and the Decadent movement were Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley. In the United States, the brothers Edgar and Francis Saltus wrote decadent fiction and poetry” (“The Yellow Book”. Wikipedia).

The English writer and illustrator Aubrey Beardsley designed the cover illustrations of *The Yellow Book*. His illustrations became recognizable with its innovative use of contrasted white and black shapes. They were often erotic, since decadence was associated with sexual desires:

“it was a periodical, featuring essays, poems, fiction and illustrations. The yellow was associated with decadent style becoming a dominant colour and *The Yellow Book* contributed to this new and emergent style with the publication of decadent illustrations” (“The Yellow Book”. Wikipedia). (See Appendix II).

It was a new type of journal with a large format that attracted attention through its contents and the differentiation between the literary section, placed at the beginning, and an artistic section, placed at the end. The magazine typified the new movement in art and literature. In spite of the critics, the magazine was very successful until Wilde was arrested in April 1895. During his arrest, he was carrying a novel with a yellow cover and it was assumed to be *The Yellow Book*. Beardsley was associated with Wilde since he illustrated Wilde’s *Salome*. The publisher, John Lane, dismissed Beardsley and removed the illustrations of the artist from the magazine since his association could damage the image of the magazine. *The Yellow Book* published until 1897 with the participation of a wide variety of important writers and artists (McGrath, “The Yellow Book”, *The Victorian Web*).

## **2.2.THE NEW WOMAN**

The concept of the New Woman referred to a new type of woman that rejected the social mores of Victorian society: she was unconventional, independent, open-minded and a rebel.

The *fin de siècle* meant a change in the role of women in society. Gender became a relevant issue in Europe and in the United States and the emergence of the women's movement as a political force, the vindication of the improvement of working-class women's conditions and the struggle for the vote, were crucial changes in the role of women from then to now: "the extreme inequities between men and women promoted a social debate about women's roles known as *The Woman Question*" ("The Victorian Age Review", *The Norton Anthology of English Literature. Norton topics online*).

To understand the influence of New Women writers, it is important to understand this background of women's situation and roles in fiction. They started to create new models of heroines who refused to marry and play the traditional feminine role, choosing on the contrary to work for a living and to defend the feminist cause. However, it was not until the early twentieth century that the militant suffragette movement became important in the request for the vote, which was one of the main causes of women's social subordination and oppression (Cunningham 5) and also, "the New Woman writers indicated three major areas in which women felt oppressed: marriage, labour market and suffrage" (Diniejko, "The New Woman Fiction", *The Victorian Web*).

The term "New Woman" was first used by novelist Ouida (1839-1908), in May of 1894, in response to Sarah Grand's essay (1854-1943) on "The New Aspects of the Woman Question", which had been published two months earlier in the March 1894 issue of the North America Review. Prior to 1894, "The New woman has been named in different ways, 'the Novissima', 'the Odd Woman', 'the Superfluous' or 'Redundant Woman'" (Ardis 10). This term was also used by a group of writers who denounced the disadvantaged position of women to men. They are Mona Caird, Sara Grand or Charlotte Perkins Gilman, who demanded social equality and the same political rights between men and women along with poets such as Charlotte Mew and writers of short stories as Ella D'Arcy, George Egerton and Kate Chopin. There were also men writers who dealt with the theme of New Woman such as George Gissing and Thomas Hardy (Buzwell, "Daughters of Decadence: the New Woman in Victorian fin de siècle", *Discovering Literature: Romantics and Victorians*). Marriage was the main theme of Victorian fiction, following the prototypical plot of courtship, heartbreak and

reconciliation and normally ending with the characters' wedding and domestic harmony" (Cunningham 20). In fact, most mid-century writers assumed a series of aspects, although this situation started to change at the end of the century:

Women's main concerns are those of love, the home and the family; they are morally fragile, continually threatened with the fatal fall from the purity which defines their respectability; and any hint of sexuality is dangerous and usually damning. Marriage is to be regarded as final: if a woman voluntarily abandons it, she puts herself beyond the social pale (Cunningham 43- 44).

Most of mid-century writers assumed these women's concerns and they included in their fiction reflecting the women's roles and values in society although this situation started to change at the end of the century. New woman movement and fiction disappeared at the end of World War One. Nevertheless, "they created a great impact in women literature and society promoting changes in women's customs such as riding bicycle, travelling and their way of clothing" (Diniejkó, "The New Woman Fiction", *The Victorian Web*).

### **2.3.WOMEN WRITERS**

The women on which this study will focus are Ella D'Arcy, Evelyn Sharp, George Egerton and Netta Syrett. I have chosen these four women for several reasons, above all for their significant contribution to the New Woman movement in literature. Ella D'Arcy and George Egerton were the first women to publish in the first issue of April 1894; the other contributors were men. D'Arcy was one of the most prolific writers of the magazine. Evelyn Sharp was one of the most important contributors to the magazine as well and she provided six short stories. She was heavily involved in the feminist movement, a topic which is reflected in most of her narrative. George Egerton was another important female figure in the magazine. The publisher John Lane published her first collection of short stories, *Keynotes*, as the first number of a new series which they called *Keynotes* as well. Her stories all have female protagonists. Finally, Netta Syrett's three stories deal with the theme of marriage and the role of women in society.

After this brief introduction to the women writers in *The Yellow Book*, I am going to call attention to relevant aspects of their personal and professional lives that will help to further analyze the themes that connect their narratives.

### 2.3.1. ELLA D'ARCY (1851-1939)

Ella D'Arcy was born in London in 1851 and spent some time in the Channel Islands, which is the setting for several of her stories. Her parents were Irish and she was educated in Germany and France. In her early years, D'Arcy studied to become a painter, but she started to have problems with her eyesight and she chose fiction writing as an alternative. Before her appearance in *The Yellow Book's* first volume, D'Arcy had published some of her work in Charles Dickens's *All the Year Round*, as well as in *Blackwood's Magazine* and *Temple Bar*.<sup>1</sup>

D'Arcy had problems with her short story "Irremediable" (1894) because several publishers refused to publish it, since they considered her treatment of marriage inappropriate. Her story, which describes the hard reality of a loveless marriage from a male perspective, led the editor of *Blackwood's* to insist on the fact that "marriage was a sacrament and should not be treated so summarily" (Denisoff and Kooistra, *The Yellow Nineties Online*).

Her fictional style won acclaim and she worked with Henry Harland as assistant editor for the periodical. D'Arcy was also a long-time friend of the writer Charlotte Mew, a *Yellow Book* contributor, who was in love with D'Arcy. Both her style and subject matter challenged traditional morality as well as conventional narrative styles. Her writing also questioned the standard representations of women (Denisoff and Kooistra, *The Yellow Nineties Online*).

In 1895, her first collection of short stories, *Monochromes*, was published, followed in 1898 by another entitled *Modern Instances*. Besides, she also translated André Maurois's biography of Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Ariel*, into English. After the nineteenth century, D'Arcy rarely published and spent her last years in Paris. She never married.

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<sup>1</sup> We can see the full text in *The Yellow Nineties Online*

The women in D'Arcy's stories are often represented as ignorant such as in "Irremediable," the story of a couple in which the woman is uncultivated or "White Magic," where the woman is guided by superstition. D'Arcy's stories reveal what men think about women as in "The Pleasure Pilgrim" or "A marriage." Most of her stories are told from a male point of view and they reflect men's attitudes towards women in a society that drives women to behave in an unpleasant manner.

### **2.3.2. EVELYN SHARP (1869-1955)**

Sharp was born on 4 August 1869; she was the ninth of eleven children and the youngest of the four daughters of Jane and James Sharp. Her father was a "Gladstonian Liberal and businessman" (John 6). Sharp's mother, Jane, was the youngest daughter of a city lead merchant from north Wales. Sharp grew up in a respectable Victorian family, but she saw herself as less conventional than the rest of the Sharps:

She delighted in sharing a birthday with the Romantic poet Shelley. Much of her time was spent writing stories, weaving fairy tales about changelings, spells and magic, with princesses who know their own minds. Evelyn felt that her family did not appreciate the ambitions of the modern young woman (John 1).

Sharp's career begins in October 1893, when she published her first seven fictional contributions in *Atlanta Scholarship and Reading Union*. A year later, she tried her fortune in London, as other young women writers of the decade (12). The following decade she joined the women's suffrage movement rebelling against both her background and her times. She was twice imprisoned and gained considerable experience in speaking in public. Much of Sharp's work was dedicated to women's suffrage. She took over the editorship of the popular newspaper *Votes for Women*. The actress, writer and suffragette Elizabeth Robins, in one of the first histories of the movement, declared: "Evelyn made the 'largest sacrifice of the time, ambition, health and most of the outward things that sensitive, proud-spirited women prize'" (4).

She became one of *The Yellow Book* contributors in the 1890's since "the acceptance of Sharp's first novel (*At the Relton Arms*) and a story for the most talked-about periodical of the day, *The Yellow Book* enabled her to move to Picadilly's

Victorian Club with its attic bedrooms for professional women, their own reading room and reserved table in the dining room” (John 15). Netta Syrett, another *Yellow Book* writer, occupied the room next to Evelyn: “The young women’s rooms were so small and close together that Evelyn and Netta talked to each other by leaning out of their windows” (Syrett, *The Sheltering Tree* 89).

Six of Sharp’s stories were published in *The Yellow Book*. “The Other Anna” came out in April 1897, along with poems by William B. Yeats and Herry Nevinson. This and another story, “In Dull Brown” (January 1896), implicitly include themes related to class and gender based on appearance.

Like many young women of her class and age, Sharp worked with children, entertaining them with her fairy stories. She also helped the Women’s Industrial Council in which women worked in hard conditions. At the same time, Sharp participated in social circles of artistic London, such as ‘the New Woman’ of the early 1890s and the Pioneer Club: “*Evelyn Sharp disliked labels; she was called a feminist, pacifist, socialist and much else. But there was one label that she willingly and consistently embraced: that of the Rebel Woman*” (John 1, italics in original).

In 1906, Sharp became a member of the NUWSS (National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies) and the Pankhursts’ Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU). Their slogan was “Deeds not Words.” She was one of an important number of speakers in different audiences. She declared that “if boys were taught more history in school and knew, for example, about the Norse and Celtic Women who had fought with men, they might not be so keen to oppose equal rights” (55).

Sharp was a suffragist worker during the First World War. She was the last woman to refuse to pay taxes because she had no vote. After the First World War, Sharp became a member of the Labour Party and she worked as a journalist on the *Daily Herald*. Moreover, Sharp wrote the essay on *Mary Wollstonecraft* for the 1934 book *Great Democrats* by Alfred Barratt Brown. Sharp was a member of the Women’s World Committee Against War and Fascism along with Ellen Wilkinson, Vera Brittain and Storm Jameson. Sharp died in a nursing home in Ealing on 17 June 1955.

### 2.3.3. GEORGE EGERTON (1859-1945)

**George Egerton** was christened with the name Mary Chavelita Dunne on 14 December 1859. She was known to her friends as “Chav”. Her birthplace was Melbourne, Australia, but her family did not remain there long. Her father was Captain John Joseph Dunne, an Irishman of one of the noblest Irish families. Although George Egerton described her father as a “Dublin academician”, he was nothing of that kind. He worked at different jobs during his life, never holding one for long. He was continually in debt (Stetz 1).

Captain Dunne married Isabel George of Glamorganshire, Wales. When Egerton’s mother died, her father decided to split up the family, which he could not support. In 1875, Egerton travelled to Germany where she started to study in a Roman Catholic convent school. She had a natural aptitude for learning languages, which allowed her to master German quickly, and a talent for drawing. She earned money as an art teacher to the younger girls. The school became the source of her hatred of nuns and priests and of her dislike of Catholicism throughout her life (Stetz 5).

Eventually, Egerton travelled to America, and later to London, where she met the Whyte-Melvilles, who had a strong influence on her personal and professional life. Although she had been educated as a Catholic, she had acquired from her father a liberal view of the law, including marriage laws. This led her to start an affair with Higginson, Mrs. Melville’s husband. This event provoked her break away from Ireland and the Catholic Church immersing herself with passion in the culture and the literature of her new homeland. After Higginson’s death, she married Egerton Tertious Clairmonte in 1891, the author of *The Africander, A Plain Tale of Colonial Life*, which includes many details about Clairmonte’s life in Africa (12).

Egerton’s two collections of short stories *Keynotes* and *Discords* became successes and they suggested she was a feminist, a suffragette and an advocate of women’s rights, but in fact, Egerton had little sympathy with such causes. She often said she preferred the company of men, finding them both more intelligent and more broad-minded (67).

Furthermore, she produced two stories for *The Yellow Book*, “A Lost Masterpiece: A city Mood, Aug.’93” in 1894 and “The Captain’s Book” one year later. In 1895-1896 she produced seven tales, *Symphonies* that reflected the personal and professional upsets of her life. All the stories in *Keynotes* shared essentially the same heroine, and each story revealed a new aspect of that heroine’s emotional state. In *Discords* the main issue focuses on the relation between the sexes (Stetz 90-91). Nevertheless, *Symphonies* contained two stories closely related to Egerton’s own life. The first of these, “The Captain’s Book,” had been published previously in *The Yellow Book* of July 1895.

At the time of publication of *Symphonies*, *The Yellow Book* had ceased publication. It had been praised by one critic as “free from any suspicion of moral slime,” but another critic had seen even the mere inclusion of a picture of “George Egerton”—the watercolor portrait of Egerton by Walton—as a dangerous reminder of “the former tendencies of this quarterly” (107).

Without the background of Egerton’s life and times, her fiction cannot be appreciated since her work shows many influences and personal feelings and experience, which is essential to understand her fiction.

#### **2.3.4. NETTA SYRETT (1865-1943)**

Netta Syrett was born Janet Syrett in 1865 in Landsgate, Kent. She was one of five daughters of the silk merchant Ernest Syrett and the niece of writer Grant Allen. Syrett studied in Cambridge Training College to become a teacher and then taught for two years at a school in Swansea. Later, she moved to London and she taught in the London Polytechnic School for Girls (Wikipedia).

Syrett published twenty books for children dealing with fairies and fantastic creatures, and short stories with supernatural elements. Apart from fiction for children, she wrote about the marriage question and with women’s professions, a theme which is characteristic of other New Women writers. Her first novel, *Nobody’s Fault* (1896), was published by John Lane in the *Keynotes Series*. The novel’s protagonist suffers in an unhappy marriage and has few opportunities for employment. However, she begins to write and publishes a novel. The female protagonist’s of two other novels by Syrett, *The*

*Day's Journey* (1905) and *The Victorians: The Development of a Modern Woman* (1915), also write novels, which goes to show that the woman is paving the new way to literature world, defending her professional goals (Nelson 52).

During her career as a writer, she published thirty-eight novels, eighteen short stories, which appeared in different newspapers and magazines of the epoch, and four plays, as well as many children's books. In her novels, she often included secondary female characters that were "sexual mavericks", which choose to live with their lovers for various reasons, rather than marry them" (Murray 548). In contrast, Murray explains that Syrett does not give much importance to male characters:

"the men in Syrett's novels are less interested and varied [...] husbands who deny their womenfolk any chance of personal fulfillment, or they are old-fashioned cads, sexual opportunists who seduce and desert the heroine" (550).

Syrett died in London in 1943. She never married although we do not have much information about her personal life: "we should only discover her more intimate self at one remove, from her novels and short stories" (Murray 554).

## **2.4. MAIN THEMES**

In this section, we will analyze the main themes that will enlighten us as to these women writers' thoughts, feelings and ways of life in the time they lived, since fiction was the only medium through which they could expose their experiences, feelings and social situation without triggering a harsh debate. Their stories deal with themes related to the woman question and marriage, although the writers vary widely in the technique used in treating them: "Egerton's often impressionistic descriptions of protagonists' fleeting thoughts indicate her rejection of traditional realism, and her privileging of the connection between the physiological and psychological" and "Evelyn Sharp focuses on social themes using an ironic tone. D'Arcy's style and subject matter were groundbreaking, challenging traditional morality as much as conventional narrative styles. Her writing also questioned the standard representations of women (Denisoff and Kooistra,

*The Yellow Nineties Online*”). Finally, Syrett’s fiction deals with the marriage question and with occupations for women (Nelson, 52).<sup>2</sup>

With respect to the themes, most of the stories by these authors published in *The Yellow Book* deal with marriage, an institution that was under debate. The concept of the New Woman as opposed to the traditional Victorian English woman is also present in some stories, sometimes enhanced by a comparison between the American and European New Woman. Another theme is art—*The Yellow Book* was a magazine that combined literature and art, which placed these women writers in continuous contact with artists in real life; in addition, D’Arcy and Egerton trained as artists as well. The duality of reality and fiction is another point of interest—their fiction includes autobiographical aspects that reflect some of their personal experiences, their thoughts, inner feelings and views of life.

#### 2.4.1. MARRIAGE

The theme of marriage is present explicitly or implicitly, in the all of short stories. It is treated in a very negative light, both with respect to women and to men. Marriage is viewed as a social and cultural institution that puts an end to any possibility of happiness in the couple. Different women writers such as Mona Caird or Mary Lyndon denounced this institution in their literary works and articles. Mary Lyndon analyzed “what kind of contract is marriage?” explaining that “a wife was herself the ‘property’ of her husband since he could claim her earnings and her body when she could not make similar claims upon him” (Lyndon 22-23).

Mona Caird published an article entitled “Marriage” in the *Westminster Review* in 1888 that provoked a great debate. In fact, it was the most famous newspaper controversy of the 19th century. Caird posed the question: “Is Marriage a Failure?”, and she went on to explain that women marry because society expects it of them and tempts them with the promise of its favours. As Caird declared in her article, “life for poor and single women becomes a mere treadmill.” Caird refers to the couple as “victims expected to go perpetually together, as if they were a pair of carriage-horses; to be forever holding claims over one another.” (Caird 186-201). This metaphor is explained

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix I for a complete list of the stories by the authors.

by Caird to mean, the man who marries finds that liberty has gone and the woman exchanges some restrictions for another. She feels herself offended if her husband does not come back home at the end of the day and the husband and society thinks her disobedient if she does not stay at home alone waiting for her husband. What Caird discusses in her article echoes the themes presented in the stories of D'Arcy, Sharp, Syrett and Egerton.

a) **Causes of Marriage Failure: Class Differences and Money**

“Irremediable” was one of the most polemic stories written by Ella D'Arcy. It had been rejected by many publishers previously because of its ‘scandalous treatment’ of the matrimonial institution (Denisoff and Kooistra, *The Yellow Nineties Online*), and it was first published in *The Yellow Book*, which goes to show the progressive open-mindedness of the journal. The story describes a loveless marriage from a masculine perspective, a point of view used in many of these stories. They are told from a male perspective perhaps because a woman was not expected to show her inner feelings or desires.

On the other hand, it was the man who made decisions and had the active role not only in the couple but in society. In “Irremediable,” it is the man who chooses the woman he wants to marry, thus playing the active role; she has no power in this process, not only because she is the passive element, but also because of their different social classes. D'Arcy chooses a couple from different social backgrounds suggesting that society sees marriage as an opportunity to improve one's social status: “Well, anyhow, you're a gentleman. I've often wished I was a lady. It must be so nice ter wear fine clo'es an' never have ter do any work all day along” (D'Arcy, “Irremediable” 90). This use of a substandard linguistic register by the female character shows her lower position/status and her illiteracy, while her desire to get married to a rich gentleman, which she makes explicit to the man, denotes her desire to share his position in society. This characterization of the female character is a representation of women in D'Arcy's society. Therefore, their idyllic meeting at the beginning of the story changes radically and the marriage turns into a tragedy for both of them: “She had objected to most of his photographs, and had removed them” (106); he concludes: “...when he understood the

terror of his hatred, he laid his head upon his arms and wept, not facile tears like Esther's but tears wrung out from his agonizing, unavailing regret" (108).

Because one of the reasons for the failure of the marriage is the woman's illiteracy, we can infer that the author is championing the right of women to be educated and cultivated instead of being prepared only for marriage and the service of the husband. The female character is not guilty of "her lack of education."

In "A Marriage," D'Arcy presents an extremely quiet and unhappy wife even with no inner feelings: "Nettie maintained an absolute silence, and West, leaning against the window frame [...] She did not answer, she merely fixed her limpid eyes on his, thrusting him back with their coldly negative stare" ( D'Arcy, "A Marriage" 328-330). The female character, Nettie, was happier before getting married. In the story, several years pass and she becomes a different person. Marriage transforms her into a cold and sad woman.

On the other hand, the woman's lack of economical independence was one of the causes for the failure of marriage, since there was not a balance in the couple, the woman being subordinated to the man as a property. These stories demonstrate their creators' belief that women's emancipation would be beneficial and liberating for men as well as for women. Women depended economically on their fathers and then on their husbands. They were not allowed to work outside the house and so they could not be independent, a view that was not new then, as we know from Jane Austen's novels and later Victorian writers. Thus, marriage was their way of abandoning the parents' house and the father's control. This ideology is made explicit in D'Arcy's story "An Engagement" through the characters' dialogues: "women must marry!" (Darcy, "An Engagement" 394); "she should someday marry. Everybody did" (399).

In D'Arcy's story "An Engagement", marriage is once again associated with money. It is seen as a business transaction but in this case, we have the opposite view: the female character, Agnes, is in possession of a good fortune. Getting married to her is seen as a good business. Owen, the male character is ambitious and when he discovers the information about her amount of money, he starts to be more interested in her: "he looked at Agnes Allez for the first time with a genuine interest. The ten thousand pounds mentioned by Carrel had stuck fast in the younger's man mind" (387).

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From these stories, D'Arcy denounces marriage as a business, since the interest in getting married for money does not have a happy ending for the couple: marriage as economical institution fails.

b) **Consequences of Marriage: Bitterness, Lovelessness and Lack of Communication**

Another idea present in the stories is that marriage transforms women in a negative way: "Marriage is the metamorphosis of women-the Circe wand which changes back all these smiling, gentle, tractable, little girls" (D'Arcy, "A Marriage" 339). In the following quotation, the male protagonist is talking to his friend about his wife after having married: "You remember Nettie before I married her? Did she not appear the gentlest, the sweetest, and the most docile girl in the world?" (338). These words reflect the male's ideal wife: gentle, sweet and docile, obedient and subordinated to the husband, passive, without an opinion or desire. They also suggest that once the woman has achieved her purpose of marrying, she stops being sweet and docile and changes into a bitter attitude opposed to the angelical one.

Netta Syrett, in "Thy Heart's Desire", describes an unhappy marriage by showing the lack of communication between husband and wife. She feels alone all day at home and when her husband arrives at home, she claims his attention and she wants to talk to him, but the husband seems not to be conscious of his wife's necessity of communication:

I believe I'm a little nervous when one is all day alone. [...] Poor little girl, are you really lonely? He said. Even the real feeling in his tone failed to rob his voice of its peculiarly irritating grating quality". After some time in silence again, the husband answers to his wife: "I'm just thinking of something to say to you (Syrett, "Thy Heart's Desire" 231- 232).

As we can see in this quotation, her husband does not address her as a wife but as a child calling her "poor little girl." He is undermining the importance of her role as his wife and partner in the marriage and placing her below him. This supports, Syrett's

larger critique of marriage as an empty institution where the couple has nothing in common.

Other stories also present marriages with no love, such as “At Twickenham” by D’Arcy, where the story reflects a marriage with no communication between the couple as we can check in the following quotations taken from the wife and the husband respectively: “Minnie seldom took the trouble to hear him at all”. [...] “At the end of every Sunday evening he was glad to remember that the next day was Monday when he could return to his occupations and his acquaintances in the City. In the city men were ready to talk to him, to listen what he said” (D’Arcy. “At Twickenham”318).

### **c) Final failings: divorce**

D’Arcy's “The Web of Maya” is different from the rest of her fiction on marriage because it begins with a divorce. The unsuccessful and conflictive marriage this time is due to the couple's different ideology: the woman is an atheist with a progressive ideology while the husband's conservative ideology is based on religion. The character illustrates the new open-minded woman with a new ideology different from the traditional and Victorian moral values. It could be taken to represent The New Woman and the writer herself, since D’Arcy was a progressive and open-minded woman in her time as it has been explained previously.

### **2.4.2. THE NEW WOMAN**

The New Woman as a character appears in three stories by D’Arcy, Egerton and Sharp. In “The Pleasure Pilgrim”, D’Arcy relates the New Woman to the American woman, the protagonist of the story, who is characterized as “a liberal woman” regarding love. In the following quotation, Campbell, one of the male characters, is talking to Miss Thayer, the American woman, judging her with severity:

To all right-thinking people, a young girl’s kisses are something pure... you don’t know what you have lost! You have seen a fruit that has been handled, that has lost its bloom? You have seen primroses, spring flowers gathered and thrown away in the dust? And who enjoys the one or picks up the others? And this is what you remind me of (D’Arcy, “The Pleasure Pilgrim” 52).

In contrast with the German women who hold traditional roles, Miss Thayer is a new type of heroine, a modern woman who does not keep the obedient and passive role in a relationship. She symbolizes the pleasure to be found in the modern American woman. The two main male characters talk about her and discuss her negative influence over the other English women:

She is simply the newest development of the New Woman -she who in England preaches and bores you, and in America practices and pleases? Yes, I believe she's the American edition, and so new that she hasn't yet found her way into fiction. She's the pioneer of the army coming out of the West, that's going to destroy the existing scheme of things and rebuild it nearer to the heart's desire (46).

Moreover, the American girl is described as a multifaceted woman: she works on her own, she reads, she sings and loves art and she travels:

She's an adventuress. [...] She doesn't travel for profit, but for pleasure [...]. And she's clever, she's read a good deal; she knows how to apply her reading to practical life. Thus, she's learned from Herrick not to be coy; and from Shakespeare that sweet-and-twenty is the time for kissing and being kissed. She honours her masters in the observance (44).

She is described as a progressive woman who has had relationships with different men. The elements that characterize the protagonist and that define her as the new type of woman aspiring to be independent are her education, her wide experience and knowledge of the world, her experience with men, her liberality and her superiority over men in all sorts of situations. The author represents the new woman in the character of Miss Thayer. In many aspects, readers can identify the heroine with the author.

The USA and England are introduced as opposite countries in customs and ways of life. America represents modern life that is viewed as a dangerous influence against conservative Europe. In "The Pleasure Pilgrim," D'Arcy characterizes the American woman, the protagonist, as a liberal and open-minded girl with a past who bases her life in pursuing her desires. However, in "Sir Julian Garve," by the same author, Europe is

represented as the place of culture: “He’s an American. [...] Come to Europe to study art or literature” (D’Arcy, “Sir Julian Garve” 297).

In addition, George Egerton includes ‘The Woman Question’ in her story “A Lost Masterpiece.” The story is told by a male narrator who criticizes the girl who has broken the rules and “threatens society” and “good morals.” This is reflected in the following quotation:

Is she a feminine presentment of the wandering Jew, a living embodiment of the ghoulish spirit that haunts the city and murders fancy?... “one that, for aught I know, might have worked a revolution in modern thought; added a new human document to the archives of man... the new era; when such simple problems as Home Rule, Bimetallism, or the Woman Question will be mere themes for schoolboard compositions—who can tell? Blame her, woman of the great feet and dominating gait and waving umbrella-handle! –blame her! I can only regret it—regret it!” (Egerton, “A lost Masterpiece”196).

The female protagonist as a threat to society using very negative adjectives referring to the devil itself: “living embodiment of the ghoulish spirit”. Although the tone is irritated, even misogynist, at the same time she is described as part of “the new era” in which the woman will have a different role.

In the short story “The Other Anna” by Sharp, the author develops the plot around the duality traditional Victorian woman vs. New Woman: Miss Anna Wilson, the main character, who plays the role of a model, and Miss Anna Angell, who embodies the prototype of Victorian woman. The information we have about the other Anna (Miss Angell) is told by Miss Wilson to the artist, Askett, while she is being painted. We only know that the other Anna is in love, but that she cannot tell her feelings to her beloved: “he doesn’t know; men never do. And she can’t tell him; women never can. It’s much harder lines; her life is being quite spoiled because she mustn’t say anything” (Sharp, “The Other Anna”.190). In this quotation, we can see the different roles of the two female characters: Miss Wilson, an open-minded girl in connection with the art world, and the passive Anna, whose surname, Angell, is related with this characteristic and the Victorian “angel of the house.”

### **2.4.3. REALITY vs. FICTION**

These women writers used their fiction not only to criticize or denounce social aspects with which they did not agree, such as marriage or the situation of inferiority of women, but also to express their feelings and dreams, to explore their most intimate emotions, their anxieties, hopes and desires. These short stories were the haven in which they became what they desired, so that they were their most powerful weapon. “In Dull Brown” and “The Other Anna,” Evelyn Sharp dramatizes ‘New Women’ who desire socio-economic independence as well as equality in their personal relationships.

George Egerton deals with this theme in a different way. In “The Captain’s Book,” Egerton includes various biographical data focused on the figure of her father. His dream was to write a book and be famous but he only wrote a volume of memories while fishing in Ireland. The portrait Egerton makes of her father can be considered contradictory, half accusing and half admiring. In her fiction, the captain destroys himself because his thoughts are reflected exclusively on his great literary work he will produce some day. He only thought about his fiction but he had a disordered and irresponsible life towards his family as reflected in this quotation:

Debts increased, little children clamoured for food and raiment; yet the Captain, ever dreaming of his book, trod lightly and whistled through life, mellow in note as a blackbird... Even when the wife of his choice, patient victim, closed her tired eyes from sheer weariness {...}.The Captain found solace in weaving her in as the central figure of his book, an apotheosis of heroic wifehood (Stetz 92).

The Captain’s reality is an unhappy marriage, and he takes refuge in his literary dream; his eagerness to write a book is just to avoid reality. His wife is describing as a “patient victim” who is tired of living. At the beginning of the story, the Captain is shown to be purer and better than the people around him, because he is a creative person and has artistic instincts, so he contrasts favorably with his trivial children, who become practical and materialistic, but afterwards he victimizes everyone who believes in him. As Margaret Stetz states in her thesis:

Ironically, his egotistical sacrifice of others is all in vain: he dies in the end, leaving no book, only a volume of blank paper. The final impression left by

“The Captain’s Book” is disturbing, and it seems to suggest that Egerton, in the early stages of her career, already identified herself more with failure than with success (92-93).

The story ends with the next quotation that refers to the meaning of the Captain’s life: he had dreamed his life and his life was the book. Fiction plays an important role in the Captain’s life to the extent that he forgets reality. The figure of the Captain can be analyzed as parallel to these women writers, since fiction was the means through which they freed themselves.

She opened the wonderful book –paused at the title with a look of surprised— turned the pages with eager fingers- all fair, all unsullied- and in trembling letters across the title—pages of the golden book, that had been alike the dream of his life and its fate –his own name (Egerton, “The Captain’s Book” 116).

### **3. CONCLUSION**

Throughout this analysis, I have analyzed the main characteristics and themes of the short stories these women writers published in *The Yellow Book*. The four writers studied are a good example of the “New Woman” since their fiction was innovative for their time and include controversial themes such as marriage or the “New Woman Question”. The fact that these writers questioned a main social institution, marriage, was a first step in furthering the role of women in society. Their fiction was a means through which they could denounce a woman’s disadvantage in relation to men. As we have seen, most of the stories deal with the theme of marriage from a negative point of view, since this institution was linked to the traditional ideology of subordination of women regarding men. These writers included a new model of heroine who rejects following the traditional patterns of marriage. The new woman described in their stories is not the Victorian woman, with a maternal and obedient spirit but a progressive woman who wants an active role equal to men. Their narrative denounced implicitly the situation of women’s oppression. In order to analyze the theme of marriage, I have considered three main stages or sequence: causes of marriage failure such as class differences and money; the consequences, bitterness, lovelessness and lack of communication and finally, the divorce as the failing of marriage. The fragments and quotations selected to justify the way these women developed these themes are

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examples connected directly with social reality. The section of women writers gives us a wider vision about their lives creating a strong connection between fiction and reality. Furthermore, it is also important to highlight *The Yellow Book* as the promoter of these women's fiction symbolizing its liberal ideology in comparison with other magazines and newspapers of the time. Thanks to *The Yellow Book*, we can know about this period's major figures, in art, literature or politics from the twentieth century to the present day.

Finally, the most significant aspect is the connection between the themes and the ideological line these four writers deal with their fiction. Although the themes were varied, their fiction shared the important point of the characterization and defense of women's rights and disassociating women from their traditional role of wife.

#### **4. APPENDIX I**

Ella D'Arcy contributed the largest number of stories. Her eleven contributions in chronological order were:

1. "Irremediable," Volume I, April 1894.
2. "Poor Cousin Louis," Volume II, July 1894.
3. "White Magic," in Volume III, in October 1894
4. "The Pleasure- Pilgrim," in Volume V, April 1895
5. "The Web of Maya," in Volume VII, October 1895
6. "An Engagement," in Volume VIII, January 1896
7. "The Death Mask," in Volume X, July 1896
8. « The villa Lucienne, » Volume X, July 1896
9. "A Marriage," in Volume XI, October 1896
10. "At Twickenham," in Volume XII, January 1897
11. "Sir Julian Garve," in Volume XIII, April 1897

Next in number of contributions is Evelyn Sharp. She published six stories:

1. "The end of an Episode," in Volume IV, January 1895.
2. "Puppies and Otherwise," in Volume V, April 1895
3. "A New Poster," in Volume VI, July 1895
4. "In Dull Brown," in Volume VIII, January 1896
5. "The Restless River," in Volume XII, January 1897
6. "The Other Anna," in Volume XIII, April 1897

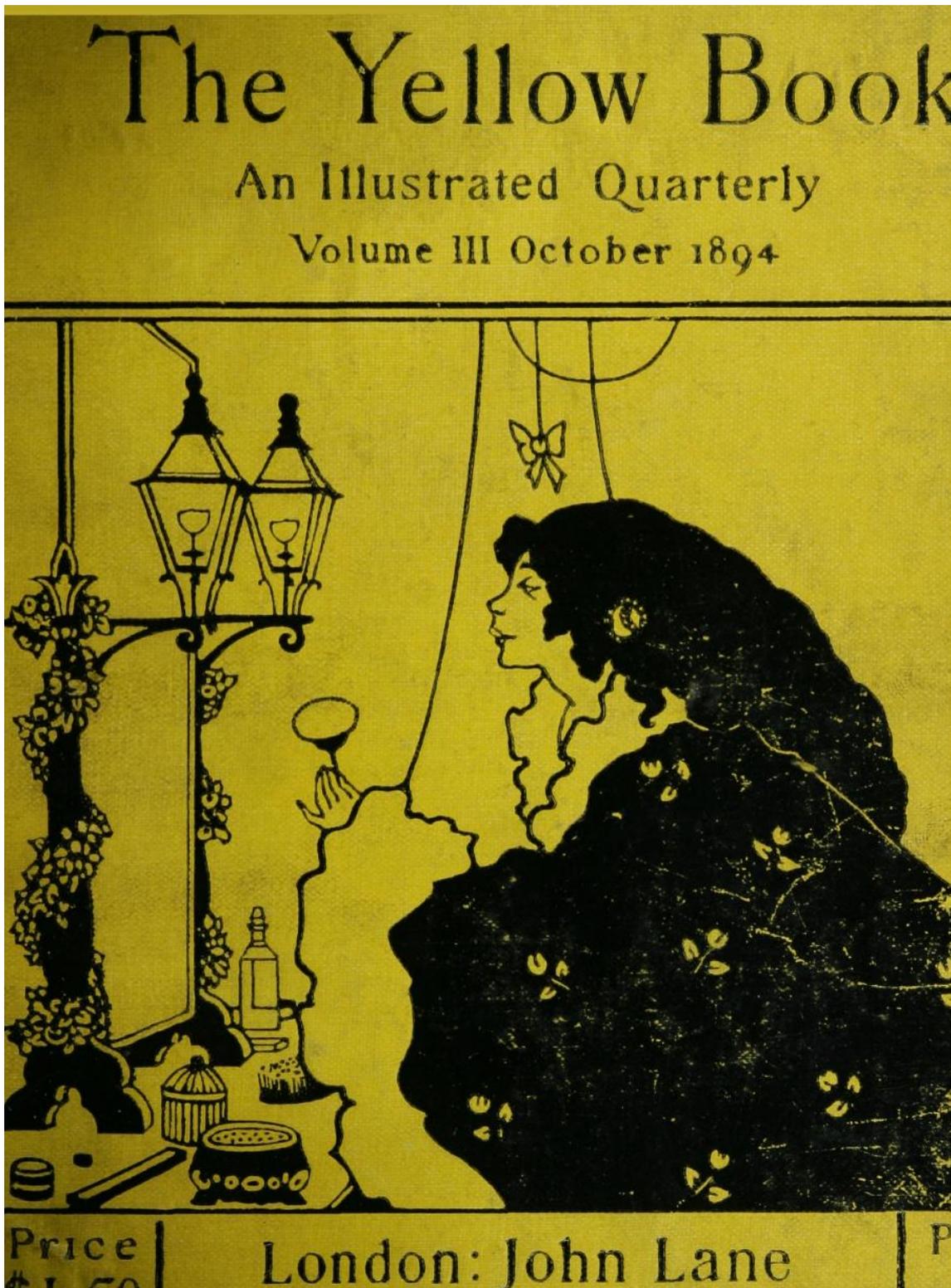
Netta Syrett wrote three significant stories that dealt with the concept of marriage in a negative way. The concept of New Woman is reflected in her fiction. The titles are the following:

1. "Thy Heart's Desire," in Volume II, July 1894
2. "A correspondence," in Volume VII, October 1895
3. "Far above Rubies" in Volume XII, January 1897

George Egerton only wrote two stories that are the following:

1. "A lost Masterpiece: A City Mood, Aug. '93," in Volume I, April 1894.
2. "The Captain's Book," in Volume VI, July 1895.

**APPENDIX II**



Facsimile of The Yellow Book, an illustrated quarterly Volume III. The Yellow Book. (London: Beardsley, Aubrey, 1894) Print.

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