CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION AND OBJECT OF THIS STUDY:

This study will deal with various philological aspects of *The Yellow Book,* a late nineteenth-century literary journal. First of all, we will examine the different characteristics of the journal, such as the type of magazine it was, its duration, price, editors, editorial, and the moments it went through, and we will also explain the intention of its publication. Then, we will focus on its context, inquiring into the different movements of the period which might have been related to the magazine, such as Decadence, Aestheticism, Fin de Siècle, etc. Subsequently, we will consider the content of the journal, its authors and contributors as well as the publications. After that, we will reflect upon the critique *The Yellow Book* received and the readers' response to it, and we will finish with a conclusion. This information will be covered with the purpose of considering to what extent and in what ways does the journal reflect the spirit of the epoch?

Besides the analysis of the thirteen volumes of the journal, the study is mainly based on three works of criticism: *The Yellow Book: A Centenary Exhibition*, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* and *Women Who Did: Stories by Men and Women 1890 – 1914.*

2. DISCUSSION

2.1. THE JOURNAL

As a starting point of discussion, it would be interesting to begin with the following question: what was *The Yellow Book*? As mentioned above, *The Yellow Book* was a quarterly literary periodical of the nineteenth century that lasted around three or four years. More specifically, it was founded in 1894 and it stopped being published in 1897. The number of published volumes was thirteen and the magazine went through different moments before it stopped publication. *The Yellow Book* was not just "any" journal. First of all, it was considered "the most important and notorious British magazine of the 1890s" (Stetz and Lasner 5). For this reason, we will also need to contemplate the intention of the magazine in order to understand what it was. The fact that it became so popular was not by sheer chance. The magazine itself reached the public with instructions for the readers as to the proper way of receiving it. *The Yellow Book* was launched with a potent message from the very beginning about how

completely new and original it was. What was so new about it? *The Yellow Book* was new in form and content:

> The Yellow Book differed from other periodicals in that it was issued clothbound, made a strict distinction between the literary and art contents (only in one or two instances were these connected), did not include serial fiction, and contained no advertisement except publishers' list.
>
> (Welcome to The Literature Network!)

The journal described itself as something "fresh, brilliant, varied, and diverting," written by a "freer hand" (Stetz and Lasner 8). Thus, the founders of *The Yellow Book* "deliberately tied it to the contemporary surge of interest in book-collecting, a pursuit that signified membership in a leisured and aristocratic sphere." (9). At the same time, another clear characteristic of *The Yellow Book* was how controversial it was. All these reasons would have been enough to set a price of five shillings per copy.

The beginning of everything was the summer of 1893, when a group of English-speaking artists, critics and their families decided to meet together in France. Their connection was based on being into "avant-garde theories and styles, including impressionism, realism, naturalism, and symbolism, though their own productions varied widely in philosophy and method." (13). They were interested in culture and art, and they wanted to become influential. In this context the idea of *The Yellow Book* was born. According to Henry Harland, the editor of the journal, the moment of creation was 1 January 1894, "when he and Aubrey Beardsley sat together in a London drawing-room" (12). and planned the new publication.

It was launched in 1894. During the publication of the first numbers, the publishers of the magazine were Elkin Mathews and John Lane. However, later, Lane and Mathews formally dissolved their partnership, following Lane's intentions, and "*The Yellow Book* would go automatically to the new firm of 'John Lane, The Bodley Head'." (17). Thus, in the end, the editors of the magazine were John Lane and Henry Harland. From this moment on, John Lane got major control of the publishing firm. One of the characteristics of the magazine was the fact that it tried to control the response to it with great caution. It paid special attention to every critique, which was then used to shape the future contributions to *The Yellow Book*. One critique, written anonymously, was titled "A Yellow Melancholy". After the publication of the critique, The Bodley Head devised a second Prospectus in answer to it. Thus, the answer "would serve up controversy itself as a selling point" (10). However, despite all the efforts of the magazine in establishing its own success, it only lived for three years. Although The

Bodley Head tried to control the reception of *The Yellow Book*, it could not control all the narrative around it. As Margaret D. Stetz and Mark Samuels Lasner comment:

> By inflating their magazine to mythic proportions as "the most interesting, unusual, and important publication of its kind that has ever been undertaken" even before its release, they virtually guaranteed that it would also fall prey to the fate that awaits objects of mythic status- that of becoming the occasion for rumors, gossip, and misconceptions. (11)

Nevertheless, this "inflation" of the image of the journal, was not the only cause of its end. As we will comment in more detail later, the controversial figure of Oscar Wilde and his arrest played an essential role in the story. The relation between *The Yellow Book* and Oscar Wilde was an important element that lead the magazine to its end in 1897.

2.2. CULTURAL CONTEXT

2.2.1. Late Victorians and The New

The magazine appeared in the last decade of the nineteenth century, a period which is now famously called *fin de siècle*. This late Victorian period was a peculiar time. There were two different attitudes to be found in British society during this historical moment. On the one hand, it was a period of great advancement in many respects: it was a time of increasing influence of the British Empire, there were improvements in science and investigation, the Industrial Revolution was still going on, there were advances in medicine and in technology, and there was a rapid population growth. It was a time of peace and prosperity in which a strong sense of national identity grew in Victorian Britain. All these changes meant progress and hope. However, there were also those who focused on the dangers and the dark side of those changes. This is the so-called *Fin de Siécle*, a French term which means "end of the century", but that also embraces the anxieties of the moment in its meaning. In the second half of the century, many intellectuals felt bound to denounce the damage and injustices of Victorian society, and they did it with a very pessimistic mood.

Nevertheless, this epoch cannot be reduced to a division between two perspectives. It was a moment of transition between the Victorians and the moderns. It was a moment of change, where it is usual to find different tendencies before concepts and ideals are again redefined. For this reason, as Angelique Richardson comments on *Women Who Did*,

> [t]he *fin de siècle* was an explosive cocktail of endings, beginnings and transitions, a remarkably dynamic time in which aesthetes, dandies and decadents rubbed shoulders with social purists, rational dressers, striking match-girls, smoking and cycling New Women – and alarmed reactionaries. (xxxi)

Of course, all the new tendencies appearing in the *fin de siècle* are going to be clearly reflected in art and literature.

But, in order to go into these questions in more depth, we should have a better understanding of the Victorian period. The late nineteenth century could be considered a kind of time for rebellion against what had always been established. New scientific beliefs had emerged, like the theory of evolution by Charles Darwin, that changed the way people thought about themselves and their interaction with the world around them. And this, of course, meant a great impact in relation to religion, which was the belief system that determined the set of views about the different aspects of life and, therefore, what conditioned most people´s daily life. Therefore, apart from the new developments in technology of the Industrial Revolution, it could be said that most of the changes that took place in this period were changes in world views and in thought. Thus,

> If there is one transcending aspect to Victorian England life and society, that aspect is change – or, more accurately, upheaval. Everything that the previous centuries had held as sacred and indisputable truth came under assault during the middle and latter parts of the nineteenth century. (Welcome to The Literature Network!)

For example, an important characteristic of the time was a change around moral issues. The Victorian period was characterized by very strict moral values. In fact, there was such a strict moral code that our common perception of the period is that the Victorians were “prudish, hypocritical, stuffy (and) narrow-minded” (Murfin 496). For this reason, we find writers ridiculing this hypocrisy, and writers offering new role models.

How did *The Yellow Book* fit into this context? We have seen very clearly that the journal was part of this tendency, introducing itself as something different and completely new. The Prospectus of the magazine itself announced that it “would prove the most interesting, unusual, and important publication of its kind that has ever been undertaken” (Stetz and Lasner 7). We can also find numerous artists of the end of the nineteenth century writing against the spirit of their time. In this line of thought, in contrast to the traditions and conventions of the time, we discover that everything was

redefined as “new”: New Women, New Journalism, New Literature, Neo-paganism, Art noveau, etc.

2.2.2. The New Woman

Precisely, there is the appearance of a new model for women, which is the so-called “New Woman”. The New Woman was a new feminist ideal of the nineteenth century as a response to a society dominated by men. It was an ideal of womanhood in opposition to the conventional values existing during the Victorian era. The ideal of a woman interested in marriage and children was threatened by a new ideal of a free, independent and educated woman. The concept was coined by Sarah Grand, an Irish feminist writer in her article “The New North American Review**”** (10). However, “the New Woman of the *fin de siècle* had a multiple identity. She was, variously, a feminist activist, a social reformer; she was also often a fictional construct, a discursive response to the activities of the late nineteenth-century women´s movement.” (Richardson and Willis 9). In contrast to this, “During the Victorian period men and women´s roles became more sharply defined than at any time in history”. (The British Library). There were two well differentiated spheres allotted to each gender: the public sphere allotted to men and the private sphere allotted to women. This division was thought to have been dictated by nature, so it was something that had to be kept that way. For this reason, scholars such as Robin Gilmour comment that in Victorian literature

> The “poetical vision” of marriage was encouraged by the endings of thousands of novels, by highly popular books of wifely instruction (…). Underlying most of these works is the assumption that men and women occupy separate but complementary “spheres”, which come together in marriage to complete the lack in the other. (Gilmour 189)

Going against such state of affairs, the first waves of feminism appeared in the nineteenth and twentieth century, particularly in relation to women´s suffrage, although, even earlier, Mary Wollstonecraft had already published one of the earliest feminist works in the English-speaking world, *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), where she defended more equality between men and women, stating that women were also human beings. So, in spite of the fact that the concept of the New Woman seems to appear as a new notion or ideal of womanhood and as something opposed to the conventions existing until that time, it may not be considered so revolutionary after all.

The concept of the New Woman was something quite controversial but, at the same time, as Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis comment in their book:

> It is important not to impose late twentieth-century feminist agendas upon considerations of the nineteenth century Woman Question. Victorian feminism is not a simple story of a radical break with tradition. For example, even by the *fin de siècle*, many New Women wanted to achieve social and political power by reinventing rather than rejecting their domestic role. (Richardson and Willis 9)

In the same manner, Sally Ledger comments on the different ways of understanding the New Woman. As she explains, there were two types of New Woman related to two different generations: the first one belonging to the 1880s and 1890s and the second one to the 1920s and 1930s. However, she defends that, together with the new socialism, the new imperialism, the new fiction and the new journalism, the New Woman was "part of that concatenation of cultural novelties which manifested itself in the 1880s and 1890s" and, therefore, it "has been rather more loosely applied to proto-feminists in literature" (Ledger 1). In other words, we can see through literature that although we find more than one new model for women, the concept of "New Woman" was associated to something revolutionary, rather than being a minor redefinition of the traditional role.

All in all, the ideal of New Woman was one of the new conceptions appearing in the Victorian period as part of the numerous changes of the nineteenth century. Thus, many authors and artists dealt with this ideal of New Woman. Among them were Olive Schreiner, Sarah Grand, Mona Caird, George Egerton, George Gissing and Thomas Hardy. As we will see later, we find these authors publishing in *The Yellow Book*.

2.2.3. Decadence

At the same time, the New Women were considered daughters of Decadence. As Sally Ledger states, "although ideologically they had surprisingly little in common (…), the New Women and the decadents of the *fin de siècle* were repeatedly lumped together in the flourishing periodical press of the 1890s" (94). The Decadent movement is an artistic and literary movement that flourished in France and spread through Western Europe and the United States in the nineteenth century. "Decadent writers used elaborate, stylized language to discuss taboo and often unsavoury topics, such as death, depression, and deviant sexualities" (*WiseGeek*). The name Decadent started as a derogatory term used by critics: "French literary critics in the 19th century used the term

to dismiss writers who they felt were unimportant (…), but some writers embraced the term and began identifying their own work as *Decadent*, taking ride in their opposition to everyday morality and mores" (*WiseGeek*). In relation to some of these Decadent writers, the editors of the Encyclopedia Britannica let us know that "In England the Decadents were 1890s figures such as Arthur Symons ("the blond angel"), Oscar Wilde, Ernest Dowson, and Lionel Johnson, who were members of the Rhymers´ Club or contributors to The Yellow Book." (*WiseGeek*)

Furthermore, the Decadent movement is also usually associated to Aestheticism. The editors of Encyclopedia Britannica refer to both groups together, stating that they "aspired to set literature and art free from the materialistic preoccupations of industrialized society, and, in both, the freedom of some members' morals helped to enlarge the connotation of the term, which is almost equivalent to *fin de siécle*" (Encyclopedia Britannica). Aesthetes set an opposition between art and life. They emphasized aesthetic values over social-political questions in art, including literature. The famous slogan of aestheticism is "art for art's sake". It grew as a reaction against utilitarianism and the strict moral values of Victorian society. However, "the Decadent movement underwent a process of refinement which developed until it finally toppled into the absurd, the distasteful and the futile" (CLIL Methodology). "Aestheticism and artificiality, for Decadents go hand in hand" (Paul Fox 152). Oscar Wilde is considered the most representative artist of this movement. He claimed "that life imitates art rather than the other way around. (…) Wilde, among others, "performed" these maxims" (The British Library). He was famous for dressing elegantly, like a dandy, and for exhibiting taste and sensitivity, like the artist that he was. Oscar Wilde was not a contributor to *The Yellow Book*; however, he was going to play an important role in its development.

What was the relationship between these two movements and the New Women? It was a world dominated by men, who saw women "not only as heroines of drama, but also as competitors in the marketplace, [since] women were a major presence in the new literary world of the 1880s and 1890s. They were writing with unprecedented candour about female sexuality, marital discontent, and their own aesthetic theories and aspirations". (Showalter viii)

In this context *The Yellow Book* was born. Let us then "open" the journal and see what we can find in its pages about all this.

2.3. PUBLICATIONS

2.3.1. Authors

This part will deal first with the authors and secondly with their works in *the Yellow Book*. The volumes open with a table of contents where there is a list with the names of the contributors divided into two sections: the section “Letterpress” and the section “Pictures” in the first volume, and the sections “Literature” and “Art” in the rest of volumes. However, we only find this separation in the table of contents. The different works are mixed within the journal. We will be showing this separation as well in the tables below, for a better indentification of the artists.

The number of writers and artists that contributed to the magazine is approximately 200. However, not all of them had the same degree of participation. There are a few who had a large number of contributions, as opposed to the great majority who had just one publication in the magazine: “Though *The Yellow Book* was a cooperative enterprise, it was by no means a democratic one” (Stetz and Lasner 22). The number of contributions from each artist was related to being or not a member of the Bodley Head list, and so were the fees: “The fees paid to authors and artists for their work varied considerably, determined by how much prestige their names would lend an issue" (22).

In the literature section, we find 97 authors, of which only around 25 are female writers. The number may vary because we must take into account the possible pseudonyms used by these, which many times imply a change of gender.

The following is a table with the different writers and their participation in *the Yellow Book* in the literature section. Because it is not possible to get the whole information about the pseudonyms the writers of the journal used, the table strictly complies with the names appearing in the actual publications of the magazine.

Contributions (literature section)	Authors
13	Henry Harland
12	
11	
10	Ella D´Arcy
9	LL.D

8	Olive Custance, Richard Garnett
7	Richard Le Gallienne, Rosamund
6	Evelyn Sharp
5	Max Beerbohm, William Watson, Hubert Crackanthorpe
4	John Davidson, C.S, Leila Macdonald, Nora Hopper, Stanley v. Makower
3	Dauphin Meuner, Netta Syrett Henry James, Ménie Muriel Dowie, Ernest Wentworth, “The Yellow Dwarf”, Baron Corvo, Alma Strettal
2	Arthur Christopher Benson, George Egerton Arthur Waugh, H.B Marriott Watson, Edmund Gosse, Arthur Symons, Dollie Radford, Norman Gale, James Ashcroft Noble, C. W. Dalmon, Theo Marzials, S. Cornish Harkins, Mrs. Murray Hickson, G. S. Street, B. Paul Neuman, Mrs Ernest Leverson, Frances E. Hutley, J. A. Blaikie, Lena Milman, Frances Nicholson, John Buchan, R.V Risley, Frank Athelstane Swettenham, Charles Katty, René de Coutans, Francis Watt, Stephen Philips
1	John Oliver Hobbes, George Moore, Fred. M Simpson, George Saintsbury, Frederick Greenwood, Charles Willeby Charlotte M. New, Austin Dobson, V, O, Katharine de Mattos, Philip Gilbert Hamerton, Ronald Campbell Mafie, Alfred Hayer, Graham R. Tomson, Dolf Wyllarde, Victoria Gross, Charles Sydney, Charles Newton-Robinson, Norman Hapgood, E. Nesbit, Marion Hepworth Dixon, Ellen M. Clerke, Ernest Dowson, Theodore Wratislaw, Arthur Moore, Lionel Johnson, Annie Macdonell, Morton Fullerton,

	H.D. Trail, Charles Kennett Burrow, W.A. Mackenzie, The Hon. Maurice Baring, Anatole France, Charles G.D. Roberts, Enoch Arnold Bennet, Prince Bojidar Karageorge vitch, Charles Miner Thompson, Rose Haig Thomas, R. Murray Gilchrist, Edgar Prestage, Theodore Watts, Harold Frederick, Susan Christian, A.C. Benson, Lily Thicknesse, Ellis J. Wynne

One example of the use of pseudonyms is the case of the female author Rosamund Mariott-Watson. She used to write under the pseudonym of Graham R. Tomson, which curiously appears in *The Yellow Book*. In this case, it would mean that Rosamund Mariott-Watson is present in eight volumes of the magazine instead of seven, and there would be a male author less in the counting. In the same way, Henry Harland himself appears under his actual name as well as under pseudonyms such as "The Yellow Dwarf".

However, this type of information and the exact number of male and female authors is not necessary to answer our main question, which is in what ways does the journal reflect the spirit of the epoch. What *is* interesting to our approach is the very fact that women used pseudonyms to sign their publications. It is interesting because it reflects part of the ideology of the time, in which women were expected to play a certain role in society, as we have commented before. While men were expected to work within the public sphere, women where expected to stay in home. It was a time in which many women "took up their pens to become serious contributors to what had been a male-dominated literary scene. Not content with focusing only on the confined space of home, many of these women used writing to tackle complex political and social issues" (Home).

Nevertheless, the acknowledgement of women works still complied with the ideology of the two gender spheres. Women were taken less seriously than men in the public sphere, so writers felt inhibited when it came to sign their works. For example, in 1850 Charlotte Brontë wrote in her Preface to the novel *Wuthering Heights* written by her sister Emily Brontë, on the reasons her sister had had for not using her own name and choosing pseudonyms:

> Averse to personal publicity, we veiled our own names under those of Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell; the ambiguous choice being dictated by a sort of conscientious scruple at assuming Christian names positively masculine, while we did not like to declare ourselves women, because—without at that time suspecting that our mode of writing and thinking was not what is called 'feminine' -- we had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice; we had noticed how critics sometimes use for their chastisement the weapon of personality, and for their reward, a flattery, which is not true praise. (Brontë 1).

Forty years later, prejudices had not been completely overcome.

2.3.2. Artists

As regards the Art section, we can see that there are a few contributors more although the number of women is less. Here we find the illustrations of 106 artists, out of which only around 10 of them are women. Furthermore, most of the artists participate in just one volume and only a few of them publish more than once. An interesting aspect about the magazine is that "*The Yellow Book* seems remarkably fair for its time in offering any payment whatsoever to visual artists, whose works were usually reproduced without compensation in Victorian periodicals" (Stetz and Lasner 23).

Here we have a second table with the participation of artists in the section of pictures:

contributions (section pictures)	Artists
13	
12	
11	
10	
9	
8	
7	
6	

5	Walter Sickert, Patter Wilson, Charles Conder
4	Aubrey Beardsley, Alfred Thomton, P. Wilson Street
3	E. A. Walton, ARA, D. Y Cameron
2	Getrude Prideaux-Brune, Lawrence Housman, Will Rothenstein, Sydney Adamson, George Thomson, William Hyde, Max Beerbohm, R. Anning Bell, F. G Cotman
1	Constantin Guys, Sir William Eden Bart, Wilfred Ball, Fred. Hyland, William Strang, Joseph Pennell, Will Rothenstein, Sir Frederick Leighton, J. T. Nettleship, Charles W. Furse, John S. Sargent, E. J. Sullivan, W. Brown Mac Dougal, Francis Forster, Bernhard Sickert, Aymer Vallance, Philip Broughton, Albert Foschter, H. J. Draper, W. W. Rusell, Miss Sumner, Robert Halls, John Lavery, Alexander Rache, Frank Bramley, Henry . Rheam, Elizabeth Stanhop Forbes, Carolina Gotch, Stanhope A. Forbes, T. C. Gotch, Percy R. Craft, John Crooke, John da Casta, Fred Hall, Frank Richards, A. Tanner, Watter Langly, A. Chavellier Tayler, Norman Garstin, A. Frew; D. Gauld, Whitelaw Hamilton, William Kennedy, Harrington Mann, D. Martin, T. C Martin, F. H. Newbery, James Paterson, George Piric, R. M. Stevenson, Grosvenor Thomas, E. Hornel, George Henry, J. Crawhall, Kellock Brown, J. E. Christie, Stuart Park, James Guthric, E. H. New, Mary J. Newill, Florence M. Rudland, Celia A. Levetus, Sydney Meteyard, J. E. Southalll, C. M. Gere, E. G. Treglown, Evelyn Holden, A. J. Gaskin, Bernard Sleigh, Miss A. J. Gaskin, Mrs. Stanhope Forbes, Katharine Cameron, J. Herbert Me Wair, Margaret Macdonald, Nelly Syrett, Charles Robinson, Francis Howard, C. F. Pears, Ethel Reed, Mabel Dearmer, Aline Szold, Charles Muirhead Bone, Katharine Cameron, A. Bauerk, E. J. Sullivan, E. Philip

However, in contrast to the message given by the journal itself at the beginning in relation to the “freshness” and the “freedom,” we find that “this perpetual interplay and exchange between *The Yellow Book* and the Bodley Head´s list of publications was significant, for it shows that the magazine was designed from the start to be an extension of the firm´s catalogue” (28)

2.3.3. Works

We have seen the name of all the authors and artists and the number of volumes in which each of them participated. We shall now focus on the content of their publications, the kind of authors they were, the kind of ideas they wanted to transmit. Since it is not possible to carry out an analysis of every single piece of work published in each volume for reasons of space and time, we will try to concentrate on understanding the magazine as a whole, setting a few of the most representative examples through its authors.

As we have seen, the magazine represented itself as the newest of the new. But what was so new in *The Yellow Book*? Starting with the section of “Letterpress” or “Literature”, one of the first innovations we find is a number of short stories written by different authors.

> By the end of its run, *The Yellow Book* had not merely encouraged but developed a new kind of short story - psychologically ambiguous, ironic, wry, heedless of conventional plot structure, and likely to focus self-consciously upon authors as characters or upon the process of storytelling itself for its subjects. (42)

Those short stories were really acclaimed and successful. *The Yellow Book* was definitely influential and it managed to get the reception from the public that the publishers wanted to get. The magazine even made the short story become an aesthetic literary work. Nevertheless, the magazine was not created just by men. With respect to the artistic part, Margaret D. Stetz and Mark Samuels Lasner comment that “the magazine´s visual style was not determined solely by male aesthetes´ interpretations of feminine beauty and ornament” (45). Indeed, they go on to state that the new short story was mainly shaped by authors such as Ella D´Arcy, who was *The Yellow Book´*s assistant editor. Ella D´Arcy published in ten volumes of *The Yellow Book.* She was a writer of short stories and was interested in female psychology. Her fame grew since the

publication of her work *Irremediable* in the first volume of the journal and she became very influential. For instance, in her work Th*e Pleasure Pilgrim* she "demonstrated how exploding the belief that women could be defined by male authorities might also lead to exploding the authority of conventional narrative and the finality of conventional endings-- indeed, to the kind of revolution in literary form that inaugurated modernism." (45)

Similarly, other New Woman writers challenged narrative conventions. Among them we can find in *The Yellow Book* female writers such as Olive Schreiner and George Egerton. George Egerton´s stories were "so innovative in form that they are difficult to categorize definitively" (The Yellow Nineties – Home). But apart from the form, obviously New Woman writers wrote *about* the question of gender. The three main themes were marriage, labour market and suffrage. For example, Olive Schreiner "advocated free love." Male authors such as George Gissing also "proposed celibacy for strong-willed and independent women who wanted to enter the public sphere" (The Victorian Web).

In this sense, the most innovative and revolutionary element of *The Yellow Book* seemed to be the space given for women. The magazine gave the opportunity to various women to express their own ideas and, especially, to present their own concepts of the "New Woman". It was revolutionary because it was "the only High Art periodical to allow women a voice in defining the concept of "Woman" for themselves" (Stetz, and Lasner 43). And they had the opportunity to do it through literature and through the visual arts.

> Women writers needed to rescue female sexuality from the decadent´s images of romantically doomed prostitutes or devouring Venus flytraps, and represent female desire as a creative force in artistic imagination as well as in biological reproduction. (Showalter xi).

For this reason, we do not find just one "modern" or "new" concept of the "Woman" in *The Yellow Book*, but different versions given by different authors. For instance, according to Elaine Showalter, George Egerton was the paradigmatic figure among the New Women writers (xii). George Egerton was born in 1859 and her real name was Mary Chavelita Dunne Bright. Her most famous work is called *Keynotes* whose success made her become famous and achieve career advancement: "Those stories that have a clearly female narrator have been of particular interest, as they tend to enable Egerton to state most vividly the critique of sexual politics that is at the heart of her literary project" (Purdue and Floyd 1). Then she published two short stories

called *A Lost Masterpiece* and *The Captain´s Book* in the second and sixth volume of *The Yellow Book*. However, these stories in *The Yellow Book* were not as successful, and in the case of *A Lost Masterpiece* the reason could be that it is not told by a female narrator, or at least not by a clear female narrator. Melissa Purdue and Stacey Floyd comment on this ambiguity and relate it to the question of gender at that point in British literary and cultural history:

> Egerton's text actually invites us to read its narrator as, if not necessarily actually male, at least highly masculinized, and the way in which this masculinized figure articulates the experience of inspiration, as well as the experience of losing a literary idea, presents an intriguing exploration of the gender anxiety around masculine literary authority in the 1890s. (2)

Male novelists of the time used to satirise women writers in relation to their work, and this type of message received many answers in return. Elaine Showalter comments on one "interaction" between Vernon Lee and Henry James. Vernon Lee, whose real name was Violet Paget, dedicated her first novel *Miss Brown* to Henry James. In this work Paget writes a satire of the aesthetic movement, to which James wrote back that she took the aesthetic movement too seriously and with too much implication of sexual motives (Showalter xv). Thus, we can find an interesting dialogue between men and women through literature and art; and magazines such as *The Yellow Book* became a tool to carry out such debates which could also be showed to the world:

> The first few numbers of the *Yellow Book* confirmed the assumption that studying and explaining "Woman" from a masculine point of view would be a hallmark of the new. (…). But by the time of the Yellow Book´s final issue in April 1897, it was clear that the one-sided lecture on the subject of women had become a dialogue, in which female artists and authors spoke freely and participated in nearly equal numbers, changing the quality of the conversation about gender roles in art and in life. (Stetz and Lasner 44).

Besides, part of what the New Woman writers were challenging in that period was female sexuality. Sexual content was another element of the newness *The Yellow Book* sold. Sexuality was another boiling theme of the period due to the importance of morality in the nineteenth century. For example, since the Contagious Diseases Act in 1869, every woman suspected of being a prostitute was prosecuted, and a National Vigilance Association was formed to combat pornography. Besides, biological arguments started to be used in order to set rules: "The social purity campaigns which had set out to challenge the idea of the male sexual urge as a biological fact now began

to privilege nature over nurture, arguing that men were essentially sexually reckless while (unfallen) women were innately moral" (Richardson 8).

Thus, one of the things feminists were going to do was to transform once again the social argument. For example, George Egerton was seen as one of the most sexually-charged of the New Women writers. She promoted sexual rights for women and pushed readers into embracing their sexuality. For instance, *Discords,* her second collection of short stories, deals with motherhood and women´s sexuality**.** Writers such as Egerton claimed that women's sexuality had no longer to follow Victorian patriarchy, so women could find sexuality out of marriage. She claimed that they could "begin to relate to (…) other women in terms of cooperation and mutuality" (Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies).

Therefore, the theme of sexuality was not a question merely belonging to women and their vindications; it also concerned men due to the question of homosexuality. Private male homosexual acts were considered a criminal offence, something that led Oscar Wilde to prison. In this sense, "reasons for the emergence of a distinctly gay subculture within 1890s' Decadence movement include the promotion of (…) Platonic relationships" (Victoria and Albert Museum). Aubrey Beardsley and his drawings were associated to homosexuality, evoking the atmosphere of the moment. Thus, several contributors of *The Yellow Book* included lesbian or bisexual women such as "Vernon Lee" (Violet Pager), Olive Custance or Charlotte Mew, as well as homosexual men such as A. C. Benson, Laurence Housman, "Baron Corvo" (Fredereick Rolfe) or Reginald Turner.

2.3.3.1. Art

When it comes to the section of Pictures, we can see a clear distinction between the literary and art content. In defence of aesthetic values, Harland and Beardsley were opposed to the idea of having the texts and images as complementary works of art. In the Prospectus we can see that "…`The Pictures will in no case serve as illustrations to the letter-press, but each will stand by itself as an independent contribution´, as though to continue the tradition of the illustrated story would be to commit a crime against Art" (Stetz and Lasner 8).

This aspect is completely related to the artistic movements *The Yellow Book* followed in the section of Pictures: Art Nouveau and the Arts and Crafts movement. It is considered that the former movement is rooted in the latter. Art Nouveau was a philosophical movement and a style of art that became fashionable in the 1890s, taking

its name from the French movement. It rejects utilitarianism and defends that objects do not have to be utilitarian in order to be beautiful. The Arts and Crafts movement was born in the second half of the nineteenth century and is associated to William Morris. This movement is mainly concerned with decorative art. As well as Art Nouveau, the Arts and Crafts movement defended the idea that art should be affordable for everyone. It was considered an anti-industrial movement: within this movement, artists were "united by a common set of aesthetics, that sought to reassert the importance of design and craftsmanship in all the arts in the face of increasing industrialization, which they felt was sacrificing quality in the pursuit of quantity" (Visual Arts Encyclopedia).

The common decorative elements of Art Nouveau usually include "leaf and tendril motifs, intertwined organic forms, mostly curvaceous in shape" and it is typical to see "lavish birds, flowers, insects and other zoomorphs, as well as the hair and curvaceous bodies of beautiful women". (Visual Arts Encyclopedia). To conclude, we can see next two images by Aymer Balance and Aubrey Beardsley as an example of this type of work of art published in *The Yellow Book*:

(Fig. 1. Balance, *For the Backs of Playing Cards*, Volume II)

(Fig. 2. Beardsley, *The Mysterious Rose Garden*, Volume IV)

2.4. END OF THE JOURNAL

One of the reasons why the direction of *The Yellow Book* started to change from being a popular publication to passing almost unnoticed is the message the journal itself

publicized when it first came out. The magazine might have had good marketing strategies to achieve success in the beginning, "but by 1896-97, its newness was, paradoxically, turning into a matter of convention; increasingly, there were identifiable (and even predictible) "types" of *Yellow Book* drawings, poems, and, especially, stories" (Stetz and Lasner 39). In this sense, we could say that its decline was inevitable.

However, this was not the only reason why the magazine´s reputation started to falter. The situation was global. Aubrey Beardsley was fired after the fourth volume and among the artists there was the notion that "in losing its first editor, *The Yellow Book* immediately lost all creative energy" (34). But what seemed to be more notorious was a scandalous event which, apparently, was related to the magazine: Oscar Wilde´s arrest. He was arrested because of homosexual conduct, according to the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act. Oscar Wilde did not contribute any work to *The Yellow Book,* but he was connected enough to the magazine. First of all, his name was alphabetically the "last name" in the Bodley Head´s list of Books in BELLES LETTRES (31), which is the reason why Aubrey Beardsley decided to publish an illustration of Oscar Wilde's *Salomé.* As Sally Ledger states in an article published in *English Literature in Transition (1880-1920),* the center of the content of *The Yellow Book* were New Women and aesthetic women, as well as male aesthetes and decadents (5-26), and Oscar Wilde was known for his aesthetic philosophy. He was the decadent *par excellence*. Moreover, the New Woman and the decadent were also frequently linked, but this link was an uneasy one. The stories New Women writers published in *The Yellow Book* were seen as Decadent publications. For example, "the New Women writers were threatening daughters of decadence. [Society] saw connections between New Women and decadent men, as members of an avant garde attacking marrige and reproduction." (Showalter ix).

Besides, there was not only this connection between New Women and decadents, but also a connection between decadence and disease. In the *fin de siécle,* the aim of positive science was to find a diagnosis for decadence. This diagnosis pointed out two sides of the disease: one moral and the other one physical. For example, among the symptoms related to morality, they pointed out "apathy, loss of moral sense, frequent tendencies or doubt," and among the physical ones "prominent ears, deficiency of beard, irregularity of teeth or excessive asymmetry of face and head" (Bernheimer and Kline). Thus, the authors of *The Yellow Book* seemed to worry about the link between Oscar Wilde´s arrest and the magazine:

> Allegedly at the center of this all-male, London-based enterprise was Oscar Wilde, who brought in Aubrey Beardsley to fill the magazine´s pages

> with semi-pornographic, black-and-white drawings of nudes. After Oscar Wilde´s arrest (…), Aubrey Beardsley decided that it was safer to abandon this highly visible symbol of perversity. (Stetz and Lasner 12)

And to top it all, John Lane, shocked by the new posters appearing in New York bearing the words "ARREST OF OSCAR WILDE. Yellow Book under his arm," decided to fire Beardsley immediately. "Although the book in question appears to have been a yellow-bound copy of the novel *Aphrodite* by Pierre Louÿs, this episode solidified the link, in the public imagination, between the disgraced author and the magazine" (32).

All this led to the close-down of the magazine in April 1897.

3. CONCLUSION:

As we have seen, *The Yellow Book* was a journal born in the nineteenth century that lasted three years. It was considered by some the most important magazine of the 1890s. It was new in form and content, polemical, and it described itself as something completely new and worthy. The journal was created by a group of English-speaking artists who were interested in culture and art, with the intention of becoming influential.

It came out in the last decade of the nineteenth century, the so-called *fin de siècle*, which was a moment of big changes and transformations. It was also a time in which we find two different theoretical views of what the changes of the period meant, and both varied and interacted in many different ways. In other words, we find many distinct movements with diverse ideas about the old and the new. In this context *The Yellow Book* appears, clearly representing part of the newness, describing itself as something fresh and varied. Despite the fact that the authors that participated in the magazine were related to the membership of the Bodley Head, in their contributions we find diversity of ideas, perspectives and messages. It reflects in various ways traditional views, as was a male view and conception of women, and also incorporates the novelties of the time, as was the female view of women themselves in response. Furthermore, it showed as well the mixture of movements and growing trends of the epoch, such as Art Noveau, Decadentism, New Women, Arts and Crafts and Aestheticism, following the amalgam the end of the nineteenth century was.

We have further seen that in order to maintain its newness, *The Yellow Book* had to be open to every movement that emerged in that time. It paid special attention to

every critique, which was then used to shape future contributions, taking advantage of these and thus becoming a polemical journal.

As a conclusion, it was a magazine that was open to new trends and listened to the changes of the time, offering its pages to different voices. Therefore, *The Yellow Book* did not just present the different movements, the views and the changes of the epoch, but was also a meeting point for all of them, becoming a journal which promoted a space for dialogue and freedom.

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