

A Liminal Movement: Kinetics, Ethics, and Aesthetics in the
Short Fiction of *Yellow Book* Writers Ella D'Arcy and Mrs.
Murray Hickson

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Lydia-Aikaterini Kalogeropoulou-Mellou, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Abstract

This thesis studies Ella D'Arcy and Mrs. Murray Hickson, two important albeit forgotten women writers of the *Yellow Book*, one of the most famous and influential periodical of the 1890s. The study finds its place among recent academic interest in the subject of the emergence of the woman writer and especially her presence and influence in periodicals.

By making use of both their short stories and their letters to the publisher John Lane, the thesis aims to address the issue of the professional woman writer in the context of new journalism and the criticism against it due to its association with the newly developed educated masses. It then moves on to a socioeconomic evaluation of the periodical, that the women studied here were contributing to, seen as a commodity and the implications of the capitalist literary marketplace on their writing.

Their relative obscurity in their respective fields, in terms of their historical significance, lies in the unconventional combination of style and content in their work: refusing to adhere to the limitations enforced on by existing categories in defining the work. Positioning itself in the theoretical context of liminality, the thesis seeks to examine the notion of movement. Movement is discussed in three interrelated ways; the circulation of the periodical, the new literary movement they were developing in their protomodernist approach to aesthetics and ethics, and finally, physical mobility in explorations of a changing urban/suburban space as reflected on language and style.

Table of Contents

Table of Figures	5
Acknowledgements	6
Introduction	8
Chapter I	
Professional Matters: Women Writers of the <i>Yellow Book</i> and the Literary Marketplace of the Fin de Siècle.....	29
Chapter II	
The <i>Yellow Book</i> on the Window Display: Women Writers and the Periodical as Commodity.....	58
Chapter III	
A Liminal Setting: The Role of Setting and Language in Ella D'Arcy's Protomodernist Short Fiction	100
Chapter IV	
The Liminality of Protomodernism in Mrs. Murray Hickson: Love, Marriage and Morality.....	145
Conclusion.....	180
Bibliography.....	183

Table of Figures

Figure 1 – <i>The Yellow Book</i> - Announcement	95
Figure 2 – Mrs. Murray Hickson’s correspondence – Review List 1	96
Figure 3 – Mrs. Murray Hickson’s correspondence – Review List 2	97
Figure 4 – Mrs. Murray Hickson’s correspondence – Teddy adverts 1	98
Figure 5 – Mrs. Murray Hickson’s correspondence – Teddy adverts 2.....	99

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¹ Remember the benevolence you have received.

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Introduction

This introduction will begin with a discussion of two understudied women writers of the fin de siècle, Ella D’Arcy and Mrs. Murray Hickson, arguing for their special place among the professional women writers of the period. The discussion will then move on to an examination of their contributions to the *Yellow Book*, a periodical which has special significance in attempts to understand the period’s peculiar fascination with the aesthetic and the commercial aspects of the literary marketplace. The study then moves to an analysis of liminal theory, arguing for a liminal space (for both these women writers and the *Yellow Book* itself) between seemingly clearly defined divisions: Realism and Modernism, the aesthetic and the commercial, high and low culture. While the study admits that liminality is in itself a predefined theoretical term, the fluidity this term suggests is perhaps best placed in describing uncertainties and change prevalent in this period. Having established the need for a study based on D’Arcy’s and Hickson’s work, and one which takes into account the role of the *Yellow Book* specifically, the study then provides useful biographical information on these two women writers as a way of contextualising their contributions to the *Yellow Book* with reference to personal and literary accounts. This introduction will then conclude with a brief overview of the chapters and their contributions to the concerns of the thesis as a whole.

In their writing, D’Arcy and Hickson were creating a space for themselves and for future women writers, one that took into consideration the limitations of the literary marketplace (on a minor level) and those of the wider social structure (on a major level) and changed these through a reimagining of a social and cultural reality that was at odds with the status quo. Leading feminist scholars, such as Elaine Showalter, Ann Ardis and Lyn Pykett, emphasise the importance of remembering forgotten women writers who had assisted in the dissemination of revolutionary political ideas in terms of gender.¹ While it is important to bear in mind the marginalisation of many women writers, this in itself may not be sufficient cause in

¹ Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin De Siècle* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1990); Ann Ardis, *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism* (New Brunswick, NJ.: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Lyn Pykett, *Engendering Fictions: The English Novel in the Early Twentieth Century* (London: E. Arnold, 1995); Lyn Pykett, *The “Improper” Feminine: The Women’s Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (London: Routledge, 1992).

undertaking a study of them. Where one might locate inadequacies within the current literary framework, with particular regards to fin-de-siècle writers, is the absence of a unified examination which takes into account textual and contextual analyses of their work, as well as an analysis of both style and content within their work, and uses this information to lay claims in support of their 'rediscovery'. As a result, this thesis finds its place among recent academic interest in the periodical press of the nineteenth century, yet marks a distinct approach of incorporating theoretical studies of liminality in a close reading of the short fiction of two women writers. The texts are approached thus on a dual level; that of form (in their association with the periodical) and that of content (style and plot).

Linda Peterson has attempted to understand why popular women writers of the period did not manage to make an everlasting impression. Peterson explains that 'the rise and fall of any individual woman author was dependent on the literary field in which she produced her work', an argument further supported by Benjamin Franklin Fisher who argued that D'Arcy has been marginalised in critical studies due to her 'magazinish' reputation.² As a result, Peterson links the demise of long-running periodicals and the short lives of new ones with the inability to make a long lasting impression on the world of letters on behalf of New Woman authors. Peterson, though, acknowledges the complexity of the issue and admits that 'the erasure of the New Woman author cannot be simply a matter of biography or aesthetics, that is, of the personal tragedies, idiosyncrasies, or career diversions of individual writers or the lack of lasting literary value of their work as a group'.³

In order to measure the value of the literary output of marginalised writers, it is therefore necessary to examine them beyond the limitations of a value system predicated on a long presence of prolific input in the literary market. I suggest instead that indirect influence should be given primary role in such endeavours. Their lasting influence comes to focus once we observe them as cultural critics, creators and commentators. The materiality of the text, which extends beyond just looking at a material object, and also includes the knowledge that the text is a product of various social, historical and economic institutions, allows this study to

² Linda Peterson, *Becoming a Woman of Letters* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 223; Benjamin Franklin Fisher, 'Ella D'Arcy: A Commentary with a Primary and Annotated Secondary Bibliography', *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 35.2 (1992), 179-211 (p. 182).

³ Peterson, p. 222.

take into account the *Yellow Book* in terms which go beyond its commercial appeal. In a theoretical context, I have come to view texts not as authoritative examples of an individual but rather as contested spaces for social, historical and literary conflict. Far from a New Criticist attitude of valuing the text as a finished object above other considerations of socioeconomic nature, I reposition the text back in its liminal space, between literary imagination and literary practice.

This in essence means that the presence of D'Arcy and Hickson in a periodical that was influential in the wider cultural and aesthetic context is of utmost importance. To ignore women writers of periodicals of the late nineteenth century simply because of their limited output is to repeat the same critical mistake that for decades had insisted on a largely masculinist attitude of the 'little magazine' and modernism in general. In contributing work to a periodical that was admittedly moulding and reflecting cultural tendencies of the fin de siècle, both D'Arcy and Hickson may be seen not only as cultural commentators, but as shaping culture itself.

In addition to her literary contributions, D'Arcy was most notably also employed as the *Yellow Book*'s sub-editor. Katherine Lyon Mix in her study of the *Yellow Book* published in 1960 contends that during interviews, D'Arcy was reticent to answer questions as to her role as sub-editor of the *Yellow Book* and underplayed her significance in this role. In describing her sub-editing role, D'Arcy simply states that she only 'helped' Henry Harland, editor of the *Yellow Book*, in any way she could, despite evidence to the contrary. As D'Arcy told Mix, "I was around a good bit, and I helped as I could. But I never was really an editor".⁴ Anne M. Winholz also remarks that 'correspondence survives which suggests that her position at the *Yellow Book* was more significant than she recalled' and 'Harland in letters to Richard Garnett and John Lane described her with the title 'sub-editor', informing the latter, "I pay Miss D'Arcy as sub-Editor from my own pocket".⁵

Women's editorial work has not received much critical attention but there have been a few notable examples studying the phenomenon in recent years,

⁴ Katherine Lyon Mix, *A Study in Yellow: The Yellow Book and Its Contributors* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press; London: Constable and Co., 1960), p. 190. One might infer from this, given the context of their discussions, D'Arcy meant 'sub-editor' as opposed to 'editor'.

⁵ Anne M. Winholz, 'The Woman Who Would Be Editor: Ella D'Arcy and the "Yellow Book"', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 29.2 (1996), 116-130 (p. 117); Letter excerpt as quoted in Karl E. Beckson, *Henry Harland: His Life and Work* (London: Eighteen Nineties Society, 1978), pp. 60-2.

especially with reference to modernist magazines. Editorship was of great importance in the modernist era as it underlined a sense of control in terms of literary politics. George Bornstein has argued that modernists ‘saw clearly that editors set the field of literary study, both by deciding what works came to the public and by determining the form in which those works appeared’.⁶ The writer/editor’s control in periodical press is not only limited to the writer’s textual production, but extends further beyond that to the level of controlling the form in which the text ultimately appears as well as the sequence in the periodical.

Even though, as I pointed out, D’Arcy later deemphasised her sub-editing role for the *Yellow Book*, her part in this is undeniable. Her strong dislike of Ethelind Frances Colburn Mayne (pseudonym used was Frances E. Huntley), one of the *Yellow Book* women contributors, led to her taking extreme editorial action: ‘With no authority but her own, D’Arcy banished Mayne from the office, removed a story of hers that was scheduled for the next edition, and deleted phrases in praise of Mayne written by Harland under his Yellow Dwarf soubriquet’.⁷ As a result, D’Arcy emerges as more than a ‘magazinish’, but rather a cultural force to be reckoned with. Her ability to shape texts, shape forms, as an editor, and, as a writer, to shape readers’ conscience in a manner similar to Hickson’s, reflects on another identity, that of a cultural creator and commentator. Despite the fact that there exists a great abundance of D’Arcy’s contributions to periodical press in the form of her short stories, very little is known about her role as sub-editor. Therefore, it is dangerous to speculate exactly how her capacity as sub-editor affected the periodical in her editorial choices (particularly with regards to women writers).⁸

Returning to the idea of what value a study of D’Arcy and Hickson may offer us in wider considerations of the place of professional women writers of the fin de siècle, one might argue specifically for their role as protomodernist writers. The place of these two women writers as undervalued writers takes on particular

⁶ George Bornstein, *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 1-2.

⁷ Jad Adams, ‘Mayne, Ethelind Frances Colburn (1865–1941)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38305>> [accessed 19 January 2013].

⁸ Conversely, a lot of material exists which discusses Harland’s position as editor and the editorial choices he makes as editor of the *Yellow Book*.

resonance when one is able to trace their influence within the works of such notable modernist writers as Thomas Hardy and Katherine Mansfield.⁹

This study, while acknowledging their place amongst other well-known professional women writers of the fin de siècle, nevertheless looks to set D'Arcy and Hickson apart to some degree. The study does not attempt to claim that the influence of these two women writers surpasses that of the majority of their contemporaries. Nor does this study claim that the approach these women writers take on in their writings is markedly peculiar in its protomodernist sensibilities. However, what the study does claim is the special place for these two women writers in particular as undervalued professional women writers of the fin de siècle, who nonetheless were instrumental in framing and giving voice to those social insecurities and gender debates that were a formative part of the fin de siècle. The 'special place', thus, becomes a representative, imagined territory in which a theoretical approach that takes into account the liminal seems best posited in defining this space. I will return to this idea of the liminal later in this introduction, but for now I want to say something about the significance of the *Yellow Book* and its role within this study.

The *Yellow Book* was published by John Lane and edited by Henry Harland and Aubrey Beardsley. It ran for thirteen volumes in total from April 1894 to April 1897. It was a periodical that combined art and literature, presenting them in parallel but not in connection to one another. A number of male writers that are still relatively famous were connected to the periodical such as Max Beerbohm, Arthur Symons, Hubert Crackanthorpe, Henry James, Richard Le Gallienne and W. B. Yeats as well as a few female writers, such as George Egerton and Edith Nesbit. The *Yellow Book* was published quarterly, in cloth-bound volumes and the cover, back cover, spine, as well as the contents page were all designed by Beardsley who promoted a decadent and sexually charged type of drawing. The cost of each volume – five shillings – was considered a high price when even books of the same publishing house cost considerably less. The *Yellow Book* made a point of including no advertisements at a time when all periodical press was abound with such pages, yet it did include a substantial list of publications, both by the Bodley Head and other London publishers, which was placed at the end of each volume. The *Yellow*

⁹ However, substantiating this claim, though eminently justifiable, requires an extended study beyond the scope of which this thesis can account for.

Book was associated erroneously to the Oscar Wilde scandal and as a result Beardsley was dismissed after only four volumes had been published. Although the quality of the literary output did not drop, the illustrative side of the periodical certainly suffered and without Beardsley's sexually provocative drawings, the public's attention to it gradually diminished.

The *Yellow Book* stands at the crossroads of mass and elite culture. While it underlined aestheticism's emphasis on sensory experience – the foundation for advertising and marketing strategies that came to form the culture of consumption as we know it – its own marketing strategy was structured around a certain negation of the market. Although it held a status of an easily distinguishable periodical (in terms of form and content), its writers did not escape the general categorisation that denied them (to a certain extent) individuality and claim to fame, something that was perhaps more pronounced in its female writers. Henri Lefebvre's theory on the dishonesty of materiality is at the heart of this: 'Things and products that are measured, that is to say reduced to the common measure of money, do not speak the truth about themselves. [...] Not that they do not speak at all: they use their own language'.¹⁰ To study, then, a commodified periodical and to expose the falseness of its claims means that one has to unlock its 'own language', which can only be done if the periodical is seen in its context, both materially and socioculturally.

In contrast to other periodicals of the time, the *Yellow Book* did not include interviews of writers with an analysis of their professional and/or domestic self. Without any such information, it is even harder to unlock the truth about those writers and the texts, as echoed in Lefebvre's argument about constructed materiality. Furthermore, with such a relative absence of a public persona at the age of the advent of the literary celebrity, where exposure meant sales, the chances of these writers finding fame and posterity were further undermined. D'Arcy repeatedly rejected portraits of her for possible inclusion in the periodical and no portrait of Hickson exists to my knowledge. In short, their public persona was shrouded. Although both these women expressed interest in the workings of the fin-de-siècle literary marketplace, they refused to market themselves as celebrities, deferring themselves to their literary output.

¹⁰ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), pp. 80-1.

The reticence D'Arcy and Hickson demonstrated in deferring always to their work, is something that seems to be at odds with the *Yellow Book's* strategy of omnipresence in London bookstores, as encouraged by Lane. However, this reticence is in some ways in keeping with the *Yellow Book's* wishes to appear as a periodical that does not have commercial appeal as its primary motivating factor. Indeed, it seems that this side of the periodical, the one that claimed to exist *in spite of* the market, gradually became at odds with the period's ever-increasing focus on consumption.

Throughout, this thesis employs the term liminal as a theoretical framework by which to base ideas of movement, change and fluidity when looking to define the writings of both D'Arcy and Hickson. Much of this is predicated on the notion that their writing lies uneasily between two oft-studied, and well-defined literary periods: Realism and Modernism. In particular, what this study shows is that both these writers were in dialogue with modernity, and that this informed much of the content and style of their work. While their work exhibits many traits that may indeed be termed protomodernist, it is not enough to view their work simply in this regard. What this study contends is that these writers not only negotiate realism and modernism successfully as protomodernists, but that they do this in a way that marks them apart as protomodernist writers: namely by employing a peculiar, sophisticated appreciation of modernity that seems more at home within the historical context of modernity rather than protomodernism. Of course, given the gulf between protomodernism and modernism is not one that is easily discernable, it is difficult to make this distinction wholly clear beyond what one may 'infer' from reading these writers against the work of their protomodernist contemporaries, and in turn, reading this against the work of established writers of modernity. This discussion, while it lays beyond the scope of this thesis, seems one that could furnish a more lengthy study and perhaps help in the re-invigoration and re-investment into protomodernist and modernity studies. To return specifically to this study, given that modernism forms a pivotal term by which this study measures (to some degree) the success of the writing of its two female authors as protomodernists, it is important to work through certain conceptions of modernism in a way which will later inform the close readings of chapters III and IV that deal specifically with the short fiction writing of D'Arcy and Hickson. I begin with a discussion of modernity and gender.

Dean Irvine concludes that the gendered clash that was articulated in the fin de siècle in the appearance of a feminised New Press versus the male patriarchal elite culture underlined modernism too.¹¹ Irvine suggests that for the modernists of little magazines, ‘mass-circulation magazines and the poetry they published became objects of derision, variously disparaged as examples of bourgeois, consumerist, and feminized mass culture’.¹² The artificiality of such an attitude, though, comes to focus when we consider that ‘late-nineteenth-century inventions for printing mass-market periodicals (cheap paper, the rotary press, the Linotype machine) effectively enabled the production of inexpensive little magazines’.¹³ Located in the centre of such cultural debates of high and low- brow, mass and elite, the *Yellow Book* used its exclusivity in order to promote itself, similarly to ‘little magazines’, against a market that in reality it depended on for its production, circulation and consumption.

The gendered space then of periodical production is a prominent feature of modernism as much as it also echoes fin-de-siècle anxieties of feminised mass culture. Modernist women writers were ambivalent towards the gendered character of historical and cultural modernity. As Bornstein has argued, in a manner that echoes fin-de-siècle approaches to gendered interpretations of culture, ‘where modernist and proletarian avant-gardes typically defined themselves using a masculinist discourse and rhetoric in opposition to a genteel, feminised bourgeoisie and mass culture, radical leftists went further in simultaneously attacking and distancing themselves from an effete, feminised, and decadent modernist literary culture’.¹⁴ This discussion on gender-power relations, with reference to modernity and modernism, has found particular articulation in recent years. Based primarily around Rita Felski’s question of how our understanding of modernity would be altered if we turned to texts written by women rather than ‘taking male experience as

¹¹ Dean Irvine, *Editing Modernity: Women and Little Magazine Cultures in Canada 1916-1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

¹² Irvine, p. 5.

¹³ Irvine, pp. 5-6.

¹⁴ Bornstein, p. 10.

paradigmatic', several studies have been produced, most significantly in light of the aims of this thesis, by Bonnie Kime Scott, Ardis, and Alissa Karl.¹⁵

In locating the significance of the *Yellow Book* for this study, one should not negate its place as a fin-de-siècle periodical, but also how one may read it as an example of a modernist periodical. Like its fin-de-siècle equivalents, the Modernist periodical press also finds itself at the crossroads and seems to share the same anxieties with the fin de siècle in terms of gender, culture, and the economy of the literary marketplace. Moreover, the significance of 'novelty' attached to the commercial aspirations of the periodical is one which is common to both fin-de-siècle and modernist audiences. Karl argues of Gertrude Stein that by transcribing the economic necessity for newness in capitalist production and consumption into the 'make it new' imperative so often associated with modernism, Stein connects the consumer and commercial mechanisms that 'were used to create and circulate the brand of modernism'.¹⁶ Elsewhere, Karl stresses that 'consumption and consumer institutions are just as vital to generating modernism as are writing and creative production', an idea that found particular resonance in the aestheticism of the *Yellow Book*.¹⁷ In a parallel way, by means of cultural influence, the *Yellow Book* and the fin de siècle emphasised the accumulation of commodities in their being aesthetically pleasing, so that the accumulation of cultural commodities came to be associated with culture itself. This reflects the idea of the commodification of the text as 'the modernist text as commodity stands in for the modernist text as it is read'.¹⁸ This idea is particularly important in light of the *Yellow Book*, given what this periodical may represent more broadly in terms of the cultural and commercial aspirations of the fin de siècle.

At frequent points, this study refers specifically to the writing of D'Arcy and Hickson as concerned with the liminal space. This idea is based on the contention that their work is both defined by its historical context (the space between two, well-

¹⁵ Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 10; *The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by Bonnie Kime Scott (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); *Women's Experience of Modernity: 1875-1945*, ed. by Ann Ardis and Leslie W. Lewis (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Alissa Karl, *Modernism and the Marketplace: Literary Culture and Consumer Capitalism in Rhys, Woolf, Stein and Nella Larsen* (New York; London: Routledge, 2009).

¹⁶ Karl, p. 89.

¹⁷ Karl, p. 96.

¹⁸ Karl, p. 99.

defined literary movements) and, on another level, helps communicate the role their work plays in its resistance to ready categorisation (their work is concerned with the gaps, the unspoken aspects of gendered social dynamics in the fin de siècle and the need to give voice to these otherwise taboo topics). In conceiving of the liminal from which to launch explorations of both D'Arcy and Hickson's writing, one must acknowledge the influence of scholars such as Lefebvre, Doreen Massey, Michel de Certeau, Tim Cresswell and Peter Merriman, who although they do not directly influence the approach employed in studying the work of these two women writers, do provide useful ways of envisioning how they may stand both within and outside of historical limits.¹⁹ In particular, this thesis draws heavily from an understanding of Massey's work where, following on a feminist tradition, Massey elaborates on the relation between identities and places, arguing for a notion of place that is determined by the construction of subjectivity. She claims to fight against the dualism of either/or, yet her work is generally structured as a defence to masculine tactics. Massey echoes many feminists' idea of boundaries as a masculine concept suggesting that the need for the security of boundaries, seen as requirements for a counter-positional definition of identity, is culturally masculine. The approach of this thesis is to ascribe particular significance to the liminal approach of its two women writers in negating these clearly defined boundaries, thus in some ways attempting to negate the problems identified above by Massey. Massey's notion of space-time also informs the study. Massey has argued that 'central [...] is the argument that space must be conceptualised integrally with time; indeed that the aim should be to think always in terms of space-time', and stresses that 'what is at issue is not social phenomena in space but both social phenomena and space as constituted out of

¹⁹ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Stephen Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Tim Cresswell and Peter Merriman, eds, *Geographies of Mobilities: Practices, Spaces, Subjects* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); Doreen Massey, *Spatial Divisions of Labour: Social Structures and the Geography of Production* (London: Macmillan, 1984). Massey's study is an interpretation of the spatial organisation of the social relations of capitalist production based on the Marxist tradition. For Massey, 'behind major shifts between dominant spatial divisions of labour within a country lie changes in the spatial organisation of capitalist relations of production, the development and reorganisation of what we shall call spatial structures of production' (p. 7). Industrial but not cultural geography is studied, an issue she addresses at her other book, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity, 1994), see esp. ch. 9 'A Woman's Place' where Massey looks at the disruption of relations between men and women in the nineteenth century through the prism of the spread of capitalist relations of production. More specifically, she argues that 'the old patriarchal form of domestic production was torn apart, the established pattern of relations between the sexes was thrown into question' (p. 191). She sees this as a process that varied throughout the country but was always crucially influenced by the nature of the emerging economic structures.

social relations'.²⁰ This is an idea that finds particular resonance in this study given its desire to locate the social dynamics of the fin de siècle in the work of D'Arcy and Hickson respectively. Elsewhere, of particular note is the work of Cresswell, namely his chapter on 'The Vagrant/ Vagabond: The Curious Career of a Mobile Subject' which is especially useful in postmodern ethics as a metaphor for a rootless existence. In accordance with Zygmunt Bauman's theory of the liquid modernity, Cresswell builds his argument on the liquid concept of modernity where 'all that is solid has not quite melted into air but become watery, dislocate, overflowing, provisional, transitory and, most of all, mobile'.²¹ This thesis reads the stories of D'Arcy and Hickson as set against the background of liminal modernity where transitory social and gender states are reflected through protomodernist writing.

In general, it may be said that this thesis focuses on the liminality of the sub/urban space, the Victorian/Modern, high art/commercialism, and how all of these seeming dichotomies may inform notions of a gender divide during the fin de siècle. Liminality as conceived of in this study is one that places equal emphasis on change (as the middle space) itself, rather than cause and/or consequence alone. That is to say that in as much as one can understand change merely from the perspective that change alone offers, this thesis looks at the liminal, the moments where negotiations of identity and space take place: the in-between moments that lead to assimilation, accommodation, or schism. This clarification with regards to their radical nature of the liminal space does not at the same time argue for a reading of the work of both D'Arcy and Hickson that negates their place with a knowable historical and social context. On the contrary, this thesis is equally concerned with social and historical context as a means of furthering explorations into the liminal space of protomodernism. What follows is biographical accounts and analysis of both D'Arcy and Hickson which seek to frame these writers in the context of their particular social and historical moment, experiences one might reasonably assume would inform their writing in turn.

Biographical information in relation to D'Arcy is surprisingly scant and is further complicated by the process of her transmission of her literary papers. As

²⁰ Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, p. 2.

²¹ Tim Cresswell, 'The Vagrant/ Vagabond: The Curious Career of a Mobile Subject' in *Geographies of Mobilities*, p. 250; Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

Fisher, the only scholar to date to undertake consistent research into D'Arcy, points out, 'D'Arcy's ill health in combination with a customary desultoriness prevented that transmittal, and therefore most papers she may have had apparently passed into oblivion. Consequently, many avenues into the Ella D'Arcy world have been obscured or closed'.²² Fisher also comments that due to the lack of reliable archival sources, it is difficult to reach conclusions with certainty. Fisher offers another instance of this:

Some uncertainties about the primary bibliography may have come from D'Arcy's own unreliable memory. For example, Mix, whose information came mainly from D'Arcy herself, stated in *A Study in Yellow* that "[o]ne of her first stories was accepted by Dickens for All the Year Round." With D'Arcy's birth occurring in 1856 or 1857 and Dickens's death in 1870, either the former was a prodigy or else supernatural forces had to have intervened in this situation! If indeed a D'Arcy story was taken by the famous periodical, which continued long after the founder's death, I have not been able to locate it or information that would verify its publication there.²³

Fisher notes the paradox that although D'Arcy is mentioned in numerous studies of the fin de siècle and she has been compared to writers who are still remembered and studied, such as Henry James, she has regrettably fallen into general oblivion. He attributes this to her very limited output as well as her reputation. She is mainly, if not solely, to the minds of many seen as a 'magazinish'. Based on this contention, one of the reasons her writing may have received such relatively little attention in recent studies of the fin de siècle may be to do with the fact that few critics focus specifically on what one may term, as 'magazinish' writers. D'Arcy's other role as sub-editor of perhaps the most influential and certainly one of the most famous periodicals of the 1890s, has tended to overshadow scholarly interest in her writing contributions to the same periodical. The lack of scholarly interest in D'Arcy's writing is particularly odd given the numerous reviews that survive and detail the sheer power of her work. Fisher makes the contentious claim that it was D'Arcy's

²² Fisher, 'Ella D'Arcy: Letters' in *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 35.3, 1992 (336-338), p.336.

²³ Fisher, p. 338.

frustration with publishers (who would not publish her daring work) that made her less prolific as a writer. Yet, as was pointed out in the autobiography of her close friend, Netta Syrett, D'Arcy was notoriously lazy with regards to her writing.²⁴

The chief information available about D'Arcy's life is best summed up in Alan Anderson's collection of her selected correspondence with John Lane. Although there are no records for her birth, there is a record of her death that places her birth in 1856 or 1857. She was born in London and died in St. Pancras Hospital on September 5, 1937. Anderson also points out the peculiarities of D'Arcy's memory:

In her Who's Who entry (1901 et seq.) Ella described herself as 'daughter of the late Anthony Byrne D'Arcy of Drummartin Castle, County Dublin'. This gives a rather misleading impression. Drummartin, or Dromartin Castle was in fact a ten-room Georgian house, recently demolished, in Kilmacud Road, Dundrum. [...] Anthony D'Arcy's connection with the house remains unclear: it may have been owned by the family during his childhood or youth.²⁵

Information with regards to D'Arcy's earlier life was given to Mix who states that she was educated in Germany and France and studied art at the Slade School. Although there is a lack of available information about her education in Germany and France, it is true that the records of Slade School show M. D'Arcy registered there for 1880-1881. However, eye problems deterred her from pursuing a career in art even though in her letters to Lane she repeatedly declared her desire to become Art Editor after Beardsley was removed from the position.²⁶ D'Arcy's first publication under her own name seems to be 'The Elegie' which was published in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1891.²⁷ However, she seemed to have published in *Temple Bar* and *Argosy* under the pseudonym 'Gilbert H. Page' until the French influence of

²⁴ Netta Syrett, *The Sheltering Tree* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1939).

²⁵ Ella D'Arcy, *Some Letters to John Lane*, ed. by Alan Anderson (Edinburgh: Tragara Press, 1990), p. 5.

²⁶ As she points out to Lane in her letter to him (April 11, 1896). Twice mentioned in the letter as quoted in Anderson, pp. 22-23.

²⁷ 'The Elegie: A Story', *Blackwood's*, 150 (1891), 613-38; repr. *Living Age*, 2 January 1892, 9-27, repr. *Monochromes*.

decadence proved too daring for publication by conservative publishers such as *Blackwood's*.²⁸ The French decadent influences, however, were at home within the pages of the new periodical, the *Yellow Book*, with Harland taking an immediate liking to D'Arcy and her writing. Karl Beckson points out that Harland visited her in Hythe, where she lived at the time and wrote to Richard Le Galienne that '...she is interesting-looking, very good-natured, though perhaps a trifle inclined to take things somewhat too seriously in this least serious of possible worlds...'.²⁹

Soon after, D'Arcy moved near the Harlands who lived at 144 Cromwell Road and Anderson mentions that she organised 'his Sunday afternoon soirees and the more imposing evening receptions'.³⁰ It was during these perhaps, that D'Arcy established and expanded her circle of literary friends. The relationships of D'Arcy to other artists of the time are not to be undervalued. They were a main part of her life, both professional and personal, and in the affectionate tone of a later article which discusses these literary evening receptions, it is clear that D'Arcy held them in general in high regard. As one of the very few writings after the 1890s that is still available to us, this description of the Harlands' parties – in which she names and elaborates on a number of artists, favourably or not, that formed the literary circles of the time – is pivotal in informing our understanding of D'Arcy's literary circle.³¹ More specifically, she mentions Frederick Rolfe, the Crackanthorpes, 'Victoria Cross' (Vivian Cory), Kenneth Grahame, Max Beerbohm, Evelyn Sharp, Netta Syrett, Ethel Colboume [sic] Mayne, Charlotte Mew, Ralph Hodgson, Edmund Gosse, Henry James, George Moore, H. G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw among others.

Yet her group of literary friends extended beyond the *Yellow Book* circle. In *The Secret Lives of Somerset Maugham*, Selina Hastings notes of Maugham's friends:

²⁸ All of the following were published under the Gilbert H. Page pseudonym: 'The Expiation of David Scott', *Temple Bar*, 90 (1890), 516-52, repr. *Monochromes*; 'An April Folly', *Argosy*, 51 (1891), 334-44, repr. *Living Age*, 30 May 1891, 506-12; 'The Smile', *Argosy*, 52 (1891), 348-51; 'A Modern Incident', *Argosy*, 52 (1891), 381-86; 'Unqualified Assistance', *Argosy*, 54 [Summer supp. No. 76] (1892); 'In a Cathedral', *Argosy*, 54 (1892), 532-36; 'Kensington Minor', *Argosy*, 55 (1893), 345-52; 'Kathleen: Maid of All Work', *Good Words*, 35 (1894), 779-84.

²⁹ Karl Beckson, *Henry Harland: His Life and Work* (London: Eighteen Nineties Society, 1978), p. 60.

³⁰ Anderson, p. 7.

³¹ Benjamin F. Fisher, 'Ella D'Arcy Reminisces', *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 37.1 (1994), 28-32.

As well as Gerard Kelly's circle of artists this included a little contingent of women writers, with whom Maugham became a great favourite – women of earnest intention if modest talent, such as Netta Syrett, author of *Nobody's Fault* and *Roseanne*, and Ella D'Arcy whose short stories had appeared in *The Yellow Book*. They entertained Maugham to tea, were delighted when he escorted them to the theatre and were grateful when on one of his absences from Paris he lent them his apartment.³²

It is interesting to note here the location of Maugham's apartment: 'At Maugham's request Kelly found him a small apartment near his own in Montparnasse, on the fifth floor of 3 rue Victor Considerant, with a view over the cemetery where Maupassant is buried, and near the great bronze Lion de Belfort'.³³ As has been pointed out by Fisher, D'Arcy's stories are very much affected by Maupassant and his school and D'Arcy who often read at the balcony could very well have looked over and found her inspiration literally close to her. Syrett talks about such a trip to Paris in her autobiography and recalls D'Arcy's unique character:

though her prose was indeed distinguished, and she herself very clever and amusing, she was the laziest woman I ever met! She once came for a fortnight to a little flat in Paris which had been lent to me, and every morning during my own hours of work I used to lock her into her room, with strict orders to write. Instead, she read French novels on the balcony, and when I released her, merely laughed and owned she hadn't even taken up her pen.³⁴

³² Selina Hastings, *The Secret Lives of Somerset Maugham* (London: John Murray, 2009), p. 103.

³³ Hastings, p. 98.

³⁴ Syrett, p. 98. It is unclear here if this is Maugham's flat and if there were more than one instances of common trips to Paris.

Information about D'Arcy's life after the 1890s is even more difficult to locate. We know that she travelled often to the Channel Islands and Paris before returning to London. We also know that she published a few stories in *English Review* and later translated in English *Ariel*, Andre Maurois' account of Shelley's life.³⁵ In the 1930s, she translated poetry and prose by Arthur Rimbaud but failed to find a publisher who would publish her biography of him.³⁶

Kathleen McCormack provides useful biographical information on Hickson and it is her research that informs much of the following.³⁷ Mabel Greenhow Kitcat chose to publish her short fiction under the name she acquired from her first marriage, rather than the one she received from her second husband in 1896. Having written a short novel, *A Latter-Day Romance* (1893), which was reviewed as 'not without literary merit', she went on to produce stories that appeared in dozens of 1890s periodicals under the name Mrs. Murray Hickson or, occasionally, Mabel Murray Hickson.³⁸ Eventually collected in volume form, they fall into two categories: the Teddy stories, which are set in a village where rivers and cricket grounds feature prominently and are seen through the eyes of a child; and more contemplative portrayals of characters suffering through unhappy marriages. In abandoning the sentimentality of the Teddy stories, and dealing directly with the troubled love relationships of adults, her short fiction begins to exemplify a protomodernist style.

Hickson was born on 2 February 1859 in the Surrey village of Esher, some fifteen miles southwest of London. Although as an author she participated in the urban literary circle formed by the many periodical writers of the time, she never left Esher. In the rural environment of Esher she found her early inspiration as pictured in the Teddy stories, yet she comments on the changing nature of the area which was

³⁵ Andre Maurois, *Ariel: The Life of Shelley*, by Andre Maurois, trans. by Ella D'Arcy (London: John Lane; New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1924; repr. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1952); 'Our Lady of Antibes', *Century Magazine*, 59 (1899), 51-57; 'In Normandy', *Temple Bar*, 130 (1904), 690-712; 'Agatha Blount', *English Review*, 2 (1909), 435-70; 'From the Chronicles of Hildesheim', *English Review*, 3 (1909), 619-28; 'Every Day Brings a Ship', *English Review*, 4 (1910), 429-55; 'An Enchanted Princess', *English Review*, 7 (1910), 30-46, repr. *Living Age*, 28 Jan 1911, 232-42.

³⁶ This information was supplied by D'Arcy to Mix, yet the manuscripts are still missing.

³⁷ Kathleen McCormack, 'Mabel Kitcat', in *Dictionary of Literary Biography: Short Fiction Writers of the Late Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Bill Thesing (Detroit: Brucoli Clark Layman, 1994), pp. 212-216.

³⁸ *Spectator*, 9 June 1894, p.27; Mrs. Murray Hickson, *A Latter-Day Romance* (London: Bliss, Sands and Foster, 1893).

getting increasingly (sub)urbanised at the fin de siècle and the beginning of the twentieth century. Her poetry, collected in a posthumous volume in 1923 under the title *Some Verses*, reveals this tension of the changing environment by means of the increasing appearance of motor cars and the construction of main roads in Esher.³⁹

Well respected both by her literary associates, such as Harland, and the social acquaintances who enjoyed her ‘charming word pictures’ and prose style of ‘unaffected elegance and force’, she had more difficulty winning the praise of professional critics.⁴⁰ The *Athenaeum* described *A Latter-Day Romance* as ‘a melancholy and unwholesome little tract, the object of which is apparently to point out that young persons of either sex, but more especially of the female one, should not be brought up on the curious principle that pure and simple egotism is the only law of life’.⁴¹ Despite such reviews, her short-story collections often went through several editions, as did her volume of poetry.

After her second marriage her literary output did not diminish, however a change in her subject matter is noticeable. Hickson seems to be divided between women characters proud of their marriages to male athletes, as portrayed in her Teddy stories, and a marked disillusionment of wives neglected from the sports scene, as portrayed in her largely autobiographical verses. Childless and excluded from the sports of golf and cricket that occupied much of her husband’s time, and formed much of the content of her Teddy stories, Hickson penned another set of stories that expressed discontent with the restrictive life of a gentlewoman, and provided alternatives by means of extramarital affairs. During the 1890s her short

³⁹ Mabel Kitcat, *Some Verses* (London: Ballantyne, 1923(?)).

⁴⁰ *London Times*, 14 November 1922. As quoted in McCormack, p. 213.

⁴¹ ‘A Latter-Day Romance’, *Athenaeum*, 3446, 11 November 1893, p. 659.

stories appeared in *Longman's*, *Vanity Fair*, *Englishwoman*, *Chapman's*, *Cassell's*, and the *Yellow Book*.⁴²

Hickson wrote an appreciative article of the *Yellow Book's* editor ('Henry Harland in London') which is centred as much on her personality as it is on Harland's.⁴³ In this article, she attempts to provide proof of his kind nature through excerpts of his letters to her, suggesting they indicate his gentleness in rejection, and support of her writing.⁴⁴ This self-referentiality is prominent throughout the article but also serves to show that Hickson had established a close relationship with the *Yellow Book* circle and found it to be a warm, welcoming and supportive circle. She tries to underline the importance of the *Yellow Book* as a quality periodical, despite the criticism it received at the time, and shows a certain pride in her connection with it claiming to still consider the stories she published in it, such as 'The Vigil' and 'At the Crossroads' (both 1895), among her most serious and worthwhile.

Apart from her *Yellow Book* stories which were included in *Shadows of Life* (1898), her other publications of Teddy stories were immensely popular.⁴⁵ *Concerning Teddy* (1897), the first volume to appear after her marriage to her second

⁴² During the time of writing this thesis, digitisation of the nineteenth-century periodicals is still in progress. It was impossible, therefore, of making sure I have tracked all of the stories by Hickson, some of which might have also been anonymous. Apart from her *Yellow Book* stories, I have managed to track down her stories published in *Cornhill*, *Windsor Magazine*, and *Longman's* which belong to the Teddy stories as well as one poem 'Twentyland'. 'Love the Debt', *Cornhill Magazine*, 44.259 (1881), 107-28; 'Love and sport', *Longman's Magazine*, 1882-1905, 30 (1897), 173-178; 'A Smoking Concert', *Longman's magazine*, 1882-1905, 30.178 (1897), 354-65; 'An Auto-Da-Fe', *Longman's magazine*, 1882-1905, 30.180 (1897), 517-27; 'The Patience of Prudence Morrison', *Longman's magazine*, 1882-1905, 33.197 (1899), 446-57; 'Twentyland', *Longman's magazine*, 1882-1905, 40.240 (1902), 549-50; 'Two Boys and a Robin', *Longman's magazine*, 1882-1905, 29.172 (1897), 347-57; 'Airs and Graces', *Longman's magazine*, 1882-1905, 38.228 (1901), 559-67; 'An Ambassador', *Longman's magazine*, 1882-1905, 40.235 (1902), 50-67; 'Teddy's Second Innings', *Longman's magazine*, 1882-1905, 32.190 (1898), 340-8; 'Martha', *Yellow Book*, 7 (1895), 267-79; 'Our River', *Yellow Book*, 10 (1896), 169-72; 'Two Studies', *Yellow Book*, 5 (1895), 104-16; 'The Story of Mary Braintree', *The Windsor Magazine: An Illustrated Monthly for Men and Women*, 7 (1897), 729-34.

⁴³ Mabel Kitcat, 'Henry Harland in London', *Bookman*, August 1901, 609-613.

⁴⁴ One of the most important parts of the letters cited is one in which Harland invites Hickson to Paris and in order to convince her he writes: 'And, finally, we will talk! Oh! we will talk, talk, talk—of literature—of shop—which means of Everything—for our shop contains everything, contains all others.' (613) Although to talk shop is a common phrase, the commercial undertone of it and the connection that Harland makes with literature mark another one of the discrepancies I have come across in the tactics of the *Yellow Book*, caught between aestheticism and commercialism, more of which can be found in chapters I and II. Furthermore, the fact that the setting of this is Paris, with its connection to high art and intellectual eliticism on the one hand and consumption in the form of shopping fantasmagoria on the other, is another contrast set against the urban environment, issues I examine in chapters II and III.

⁴⁵ Mrs. Murray Hickson, *Shadows of Life* (London: John Lane, 1898).

husband, Kitcat, contains a collection of stories that were first published in *Longman's*.⁴⁶ The stories in the volume divide into sections separated by numbers or asterisks, and use the imagery of flowers and trees to create a pastoral tone. The rural setting seems to be essential to the sentimentality of the stories and the childish, naïve character of Teddy. The other Teddy collection and Hickson's final, *Chronicles of Teddy's Village* (1899), opens with a Teddy story but already marks a change in the subject matter that is taken from *Shadows of Life*, namely a representation of relationships with unsatisfactory partners and potential adulteries.⁴⁷ 'A Prophet in His Own Country' is a largely autobiographical story that may be seen to pass comment on this shift. The story features a woman artist who has abandoned 'little sketches of the village children' for drawings that her neighbours do not approve of, a parallel to her abandonment of Teddy in favour of the *Shadows of Life* stories. In the final story, 'A Postscript', Miss Millicent muses that: 'Some time ago, acting upon an impulse which I can only characterize as unpardonably mischievous, I lent to my dear old friend Miss Trotwood a copy of that much-abused Quarterly known as the *Yellow Book*.' Like in her Harland article, the *Yellow Book* features prominently and from this passage the sentiment seems to be one of solidarity towards the periodical.

As my approach to D'Arcy and Hickson seeks to take into account their position within the wider writings of professional women writers of the period, much of the first two chapters will address the rise of professional woman writers during the fin de siècle. In these chapters, I consider changes in education and economy as crucial and seek to analyse the way education and economy impacted on the women's entry into the literary marketplace. In Chapter I, entitled 'Professional Matters: Women Writers of the *Yellow Book* and the Literary Marketplace of the Fin de Siècle', I analyse the distinction between mass and cultural elite specifically in terms of social and gender issues, as this was formulated by the end of the nineteenth century. I present a variety of texts to demonstrate the ubiquity of the argument as discussed in intellectual, journalistic, scientific and literary texts. Building on that, I argue that women's entrance into the literary marketplace during the fin de siècle, and their identification with a professional status, are all signs of resistance to

⁴⁶ Mrs. Murray Hickson, *Concerning Teddy* (London: J. Bowden, 1897).

⁴⁷ Mrs. Murray Hickson, *Chronicles of Teddy's Village* (London: Ward, Lock and Co., 1899).

gendered stereotypes which promoted masculine dominant attributes as superior and viewed feminine traits as inferior. As a result, I show that ideas of the aesthetic and economic in the context of the fin-de-siècle literary marketplace were deeply intertwined, as negative criticism of women writers often directly linked to their prominence into the economic literary field.

Chapter II, 'The Yellow Book on the Window Display: Women Writers and the Periodical as Commodity', aims to investigate the close economic relations of culture and commerce, writing and business, by shedding light on the literary marketplace of the 1890s as seen through the publishing practices of the Bodley Head in general, and the *Yellow Book* in particular. It will also analyse the business and marketing attitudes employed by D'Arcy and Hickson with relation to the commodification of literature. To address these issues, I start with a general overview of the socio-cultural and financial interrelations as studied by prominent theorists of the nineteenth and twentieth century. I then look at the specific ways in which these socio-cultural and financial interrelations affected the *Yellow Book* as a publication and as a commodity. Finally, I investigate the marketing attitudes employed by the two women writers named above that are in dialogue with the changing nature of literature at the fin de siècle.

In Chapters I and II, I establish a solid theoretical framework where: (i) I contend that criticisms of professional women writers and their association to New Journalism during the fin de siècle were often motivated by a resentment towards their prominence within the literary marketplace, (ii) situate the *Yellow Book* specifically within the literary marketplace of the fin de siècle by showing its engagement with contemporary concerns between high art and commerciality, and (iii) argue finally how it is in the example of the *Yellow Book* in particular and its study of both form and content that one can find a connection between the points above, namely how women's writing was received during a time of intense socioeconomic concerns (the rise of the educated mass) reflected on aesthetic conflicts (high versus low art). In Chapters III and IV, I move to consider more closely the literary output of D'Arcy and Hickson in terms of their short fiction. This approach is informed by the context of the theoretical and social framework established in the Introduction and the first two chapters, thereby looking to situate these close readings within a larger appreciation of their place as products of the

social and cultural anxieties of the fin de siècle. In Chapters III and IV, I consider the relationship between style and content in D'Arcy's and Hickson's short fiction, and show how the writing of these women may be termed protomodernist, a kind of style that incorporates realism and modernism.

In Chapter III, 'A Liminal Setting: The Role of Setting and Language in D'Arcy's Protomodernist Short Fiction', I argue that setting in D'Arcy's stories is the primary factor by which she creates a dynamic and original story, overthrows expectations, creates a space for articulating new ideas as well as new literary styles, and signposts shifts in identity through movement from one place to another. Focusing on the idea of liminality, I look at the influence of realism and naturalism on D'Arcy and discuss how, as her stories progress from one place to another, her innovative choice of style heralds the advent of protomodernist writing. Even though this style does not offer any solutions or answers (or even attempts to), it clearly defines a new space and focuses on the importance of mobility and change. I place my analysis in the context of a critical discourse that focuses on the setting in the fin de siècle and the movement from one place to another and I argue for its direct links to a sense of identity.

In Chapter IV, 'The Liminality of Protomodernism in Mrs. Murray Hickson: Love, Marriage and Morality', I argue that the idea of liminality finds resonance in the combination of aesthetic and social by means of the moral discussions in Hickson's stories. I suggest that Hickson unites the two through a discussion of fin-de-siècle morality, filtered through the female characters of her stories. Hickson, writing on the brink of modernity, makes an excellent study of how middlebrow fiction viewed but also informed the formation of the modern woman by shaping the conscience of readers into exploring taboo themes pertaining to women's issues, challenging restrictive social identities and expectations, and imagining alternatives for existing gender roles. Finally, the Conclusion attempts to summarise the thesis whilst suggesting fruitful future avenues of exploration.

Chapter I

Professional Matters: Women Writers of the *Yellow Book* and the Literary Marketplace of the Fin de Siècle

*'It is now the author [...] who mounts into the rostrum, hammer in hand, and having at his side a bundle of type-writing, distributes to the struggling middle-men a printed synopsis of the material on offer, and proceeds to start the bidding with a wholesome reserve price.'*¹ – Arthur Waugh – *The Auction-Room of Letters*

*'[This modern man of letters] of whom there are many – or this woman, for many women now belong to the profession – goes into his study every morning as regularly as a barrister goes to chambers.'*² – Walter Besant – *The Pen and the Book*

*'A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction.'*³ – Virginia Woolf – *A Room of One's Own*

This chapter serves as a theoretical background against which the two writers, Ella D'Arcy and Mrs. Murray Hickson, can be examined as women writing and publishing in the fin de siècle. I will first analyse the distinction between mass and cultural elite as a social and gender issue, as this was formulated at the end of the nineteenth century.⁴ I will present a variety of texts to demonstrate the ubiquity of

¹ Arthur Waugh, 'The Auction-Room of Letters', *Yellow Book*, 6 (1895), 257-265 (p. 258).

² Walter Besant, *The Pen and the Book* (London: Thomas Burleigh, 1899), p. 24.

³ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1989), p. 4.

⁴ For studies on feminised mass culture and modernity see: Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader, 1837-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 1995); Suzanne Clark, *Sentimental Modernism: Women Writers and the Revolution of the Word* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); Alfred Habegger, *Henry James and the 'Woman Business'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Tania Modleski, *Feminism Without Women* (London: Routledge, 1991); *Modern Times: Reflections on a Century of English Modernity*, ed. by Mica Nava and Alan O'Shea, (London: Routledge, 1996).

the argument as discussed in intellectual, journalistic, scientific and literary texts. Building on this, I will look at women's entry into the literary marketplace of the fin de siècle, and the beginnings of their identification as professional writers. In particular, I will focus on the role these women played in overturning the gendered stereotypes that promoted dominant masculine attributes as superior and viewed feminine as inferior. I also discuss the interconnection of the aesthetic and economic in the context of the fin-de-siècle marketplace, and thus expose cultural anxieties as firmly rooted in the control of the economy. Throughout the thesis, I look to the *Yellow Book* as a case study by which I explore all these ideas. While it might appear unusual to include the self-declared aestheticism of the *Yellow Book* in a general grouping of mass culture and New Journalism, in the process of this thesis I will expose the underlying commercial character of the periodical as a cultural commodity. It would be quite absurd to argue that the *Yellow Book* was attacked for employing New Journalism techniques, the likes of which could be seen in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, for instance. Yet, the purpose of both, namely the need to reach certain sets of people, makes them resemble two sides of the same coin: using the masses versus the elite debate in order to sell. I argue that the periodical in general is fundamental to the reformation of the literary marketplace as this came into prominence in the fin de siècle. More particularly, the periodical, pertaining to narcissistic culture and with a focus on various advertising and marketing techniques, was associated primarily with feminine attributes. By means of its association with a feminised New Journalism, the literary marketplace, it has been argued, was gradually becoming feminised. In the case of the women who wrote for the *Yellow Book*, they adapted to a literary marketplace that was initially hostile to them and helped change it.⁵

⁵ On the status of the woman writer in the late nineteenth century see: Ann Heilmann, 'New Woman Fiction and *Fin de Siècle* Feminism', *Women's Writing* 3 (1996), 197-216; Lyn Pykett, *The "Improper" Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing*; 'Portraits of the Artist as a Young Woman: Representations of the Female Artist in the New Woman Fiction of the 1890s' in *Victorian Women Writers and the Woman Question*, ed. by Nicola Diane Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of their Own* (London: Virago, 1978); Rita Kranidis, *Subversive Discourse: The Cultural Production of Late Victorian Feminist Novels* (London: Macmillan, 1995); Ann Ardis, *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism* (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 1997); *Victorian Women Writers and the Woman Question*, ed. by Nicola Diane Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); *New Woman Writers, Authority and the Body*, ed. by Melissa Purdue and Stacey Floyd (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009).

In order to properly position the *Yellow Book* as a periodical which both promoted highly aestheticized values while at the same time appealing to a broader audience that included the newly educated masses, it is first useful for us to invest in a better understanding of the ways in which the Elementary Education Acts of 1870 to 1893 changed the cultural landscape.

The Education Act of 1870 has often been described as the first to provide education ‘for the masses’. Criticism against it was strong and the discourse varied. For the purposes of this chapter, however, I will focus mainly on two points: (i) the rise of the educated masses and (ii) the rise of the educated women (phenomena often intertwined). Both of these were viewed with hostility by the ruling classes as they posed a threat to the status quo.

John Carey points to education as the single most important factor that distinguished the new masses in England: ‘The difference between the nineteenth-century mob and the twentieth-century mass is literacy. For the first time, a huge literate public had come into being, and consequently every aspect of the production and dissemination of the printed text became subject to revolution’.⁶ I would suggest that this distinction between the literate and non-literate masses may be located earlier: namely, as a direct result of the Education Act of 1870. I would therefore contend that we would certainly see the beginnings of this change in the fin de siècle.

The mob, then, turns into the mass, an entity which from its conception is, ironically, simultaneously elusive and identifiable. Carey suggests that the masses, as such, do not exist:

The mass [...] is a metaphor for the unknowable and invisible. We cannot see the mass. Crowds can be seen; but the mass is the crowd in its metaphysical aspect – the sum of all possible crowds- and that can take conceptual form only as a metaphor. The metaphor of the mass serves the purposes of

⁶ John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice Among the Literary Intelligentsia 1880-1939* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), p. 5. Carey’s study of intellectuals has been criticised by a number of scholars. For an alternative view see Stefan Collini, *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). For a close study of the professionalization of intellectual life see Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain, 1850-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), especially ch. 6 ‘Their Title to be Heard: Professionalization and its Discontents’.

individual self-assertion because it turns other people into a conglomerate. It denies them the individuality which we scribe to ourselves and to people we know.⁷

This argument has two consequences. The mass, being an unknowable entity, can only acquire definition by: (i) imposing on it an imaginary attribute or (ii) attempting to understand it through means of association, that is to say, by likening it to something else and creating an imaginary alignment between the two. In the first instance, Carey underlines the usefulness of ascribing the attribute of the newspaper and the new type of journalism to the masses.

The New Press, then, was invented as a result of this new entity, ‘the mass’, in order to sustain it, gratify it and extend it. Alfred Harmsworth (later Lord Northcliffe) who launched the *Daily Mail* in 1896 summarises the feeling of this press, thus: ‘giving the public what it wants’.⁸ Although being given what one wants is gratifying, this idea was particularly challenged by the cultural elite, intellectuals who believed it was up to them to determine and uphold the distinction between ‘want’ and ‘need’ for society at large. It is therefore apparent that a rupture was created within the idea of education, one that brought into prominence a seemingly absolute distinction between the intellectual elite and the newly educated masses. This distinction between ‘want’ and ‘need’ is one which I return to in relation to the *Yellow Book* in chapter II.

The threat of the masses turned many intellectuals to declaring political or even polemical attitudes against the masses. Friedrich Nietzsche’s message in *The Will to Power* is that a declaration of war on the masses by higher men is not only essential but unavoidable, too.⁹ The idea is further emphasised by Nietzsche in the *Genealogy of Morals* as he explicitly connects the egalitarian state-idea to the embodiment of the will to power in decline. The decline is so threatening as to annihilate man and his future:

⁷ Carey, p. 21.

⁸ Henry Hamilton Fyfe, *Northcliffe: An Intimate Biography* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), p.83.

⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. by W. Kaufmann (S.I. Random Press, 1968).

To talk of intrinsic right and intrinsic wrong is absolutely nonsensical; intrinsically, an injury, an oppression, an exploitation, an annihilation can be nothing wrong, in as much as life is essentially (that is, in its cardinal functions) something which functions by injuring, oppressing, exploiting, and annihilating, and is absolutely inconceivable without such a character. It is necessary to make an even more serious confession: — viewed from the most advanced biological standpoint, conditions of legality can be only exceptional conditions, in that they are partial restrictions of the real life-will, which makes for power, and in that they are subordinated to the life-will's general end as particular means, that is, as means to create larger units of strength. A legal organisation, conceived of as sovereign and universal, not as a weapon in a fight of complexes of power, but as a weapon against fighting, generally something after the style of Dühring's communistic model of treating every will as equal with every other will, would be a principle hostile to life, a destroyer and dissolver of man, an outrage on the future of man, a symptom of fatigue, a secret cut to Nothingness.¹⁰

Although an interpretation of Nietzsche's theory that aligns the will to power to social Darwinism has been contested (particularly by Martin Heidegger who denounced the political associations to Nietzsche's 'will to power'¹¹), the biological interpretation and influence of Nietzschean thought on many fin-de-siècle and early-

¹⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. by Horace B. Samuel (New York: Modern Library, 1925), pp. 65-6.

¹¹ Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, trans. by David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991). See especially Vol 3, *The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics* for Heidegger's analysis of Nietzsche's 'will to power'.

twentieth-century authors is not to be underestimated.¹² W.B. Yeats, for example, who was part of the *Yellow Book* circle, recommended Nietzsche as ‘a counteractive to the spread of democratic vulgarity’.¹³ The fear of the masses and disgust towards them spread across continental Europe. Apart from Nietzsche, Gustave Flaubert had earlier discussed the issue disapprovingly and underlined the impossibility of ever elevating the masses. He wrote in a letter to George Sand in 1871: ‘I believe that the mob, the mass, the herd will always be despicable.’¹⁴ Knut Hamsun, the Norwegian writer (who deeply influenced George Egerton, author of *Keynotes* (1893), published by John Lane) wrote about this in *Hunger* (1890), which in turn influenced Thomas Mann and Hermann Hesse, all of whom present a Nietzschean antidemocratic view of the masses.¹⁵

Andreas Huyssen views Nietzsche’s ascription of feminine characteristics to the masses as fundamental to Nietzsche’s own identity of the ‘artist-philosopher-hero’ set in opposition to the Other (the Other being the mass, the feminine, and the inauthentic).¹⁶ Huyssen locates the ‘consistent and obsessive’ association of the mass with the feminine, while he sees high culture as associated with the masculine within the fin de siècle. He marks the ubiquity of this distinction in political and aesthetic discourses.¹⁷

One might ask, what was the connection between the educated masses and the New Press, and also how this may relate to the perceived dichotomy of the masses versus the cultural elite. One might locate this connection between the

¹² Substantial work has been published in recent years with regards to Nietzsche and modernity. See Matthew Rampley, *Nietzsche, Aesthetics, and Modernity* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); David Owen, *Nietzsche, Politics and Modernity: A Critique of Liberal Reason* (London: Sage Publications, 1995); Peter Sedgwick, *Nietzsche’s Economy: Modernity, Normativity and Futurity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Nancy S. Love, *Marx, Nietzsche and Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986); Andrea Gogrof-Voorhees, *Defining Modernism: Baudelaire and Nietzsche on Romanticism, Modernity, Decadence, and Wagner* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999). Also with reference to Nietzsche and democracy see Fredrick Appel, *Nietzsche Contra Democracy* (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1998); *Friedrich Nietzsche, 1844-1900: Economy and Society*, ed. by Jurgen G. Backhaus and Wolfgang Drechsler (New York: Springer, 2006).

¹³ Carey, p. 4.

¹⁴ Flaubert-Sand correspondence as quoted in Herbert Lottman, *Flaubert: A Biography* (London: Methuen, 1989), pp. 237-8.

¹⁵ George Egerton, *Keynotes* (London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane: 1893); Knut Hamsun, *Hunger* (first published 1890; trans. in English by Egerton, London: L. Smithers and Co., 1899). For an extensive analysis of Nietzsche and eugenics see Dan Stone, *Breeding Superman: Nietzsche, Race and Eugenics in Edwardian and Interwar Britain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002).

¹⁶ Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*, p. 51.

¹⁷ Huyssen, p. 47.

educated masses and the New Press in the financial opportunities that journalism offered. If the masses could profit from journalism, in a way in which they were unable to previously, then they could use this new-found wealth as a means of social and cultural mobility by circumventing the need for approval from the traditional cultural elite. This further opened the gap between intellectuals and the masses: ‘A gulf was opening, on one side of which the intellectual saw the vulgar, trivial working millions, wallowing in newsprint, and on the other side himself and his companions, functionless and ignored’.¹⁸ Identifying then the masses with anything mechanical and soulless, the intellectuals stood firmly against them, focusing their energies on promoting their own work as original and superior examples.

Carey argues further that ‘[f]or some male intellectuals, a regrettable aspect of popular newspapers was that they encouraged women. In the Nietzschean tradition the emancipation and education of women were signs of modern shallowness.’¹⁹ The alignment of a mechanical and soulless press to educated women is one that I will be returning to later on, in particular in the treatment of femininity and the negative connotations it engenders with regards to activity and creativity. Given the mass is fluid and unidentifiable, intellectuals often ascribed certain qualities to it as a means of exacting control. We can trace the idea of the act of naming functioning as a control mechanism as far back as the biblical text: Adam names the animals as a way of exercising power over them. Jose Ortega y Gasset, a philosopher who was greatly influenced by Nietzschean thought, identified the mass as unambitious and common, yet brutal at the same time.²⁰ In reaction to this perceived threat, offered by the newly educated masses, the cultural elite attempted to wrestle back power by rewriting or reinventing the mass as a potent and corrupting force.²¹ In creating derogatory images of the educated masses, the cultural elite would often portray the mass as a soulless entity, feverishly working mechanically in the field of the New Press, yet unable to grasp a higher aesthetic level. A characteristic example of this attitude may be found in the cartoons of

¹⁸ Carey, p. 8.

¹⁹ Carey, pp. 7-8.

²⁰ Jose Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses* ([S.I.]: Allen and Unwin, 1932).

²¹ Elsewhere, Carey makes it clear how notions of the mass may easily be subject to change: ‘since the mass is an imaginary construct, displacing the unknowable multiplicity of human life, it can be reshaped at will, in accordance with the wishes of the imager. Alternatively, it can be replaced by images, equally arbitrary, of “typical” mass men or mass women’. Carey, p. 23.

Punch, where New Women were repeatedly lampooned for their inability to grasp the finer aspects of aesthetics despite their labours.²²

Given the close association drawn between New Journalism and femininity (a result, perhaps, of the desire by the cultural elite to undermine the efforts of New Journalism) we may be able to extrapolate from this what the cultural elite defined as feminine: a lack of originality, creativity, and basic reasoning skills.

One of the major literary proponents of this idea of the connection between New Journalism and femininity (and the negative connotations therein) was George Gissing. Gissing expressed this scepticism about whether the masses could ever be educated in any real sense frequently in his writing. As far as the female characters in Gissing's work were concerned, they appeared at an even more pronounced disadvantage given their gender. In Gissing's *The Whirlpool* (1897), Harvey Rolfe blames women's education for generating 'the filth and insolence of a draggle-tailed, novelette-reading feminine democracy'.²³ In *The Year of Jubilee* (1894), the main female characters (Fanny, Beatrice and Ada) are given private education at a young ladies' academy. After they've navigated through what are deemed as serious subjects—namely, chemistry and botany— it is inferred in the novel that they still lack a proper education, attaining instead 'the last rag of pseudo-civilization'.²⁴

An idea that seems prevalent in Gissing's work (and is by no means unique to the work of this author as a participator in the fin-de-siècle cultural and literary discourse) is that female education may be damaging on two counts. The first is that the education women received gave them a sense of self which was beyond what their nature could substantiate. The second problem was that this process was in many ways damaging to their delicate femininity. A string of female characters in Gissing's work are a sad testimony for the inevitable breakdown, both physical and mental, that results from an overtaxing female education pursued with a passion that is dangerous and unfeminine. Cecily Doran, Gissing's depiction of the New Woman in the *Emancipated* (1890), has overstepped her boundaries with her educational pursuits. The outcome is not only detrimental for herself but for her child as well: 'Education has made her an individuality; she was nurtured into the disease of

²² See, for example, *Punch*, 26 May 1894, p. 252.

²³ George Gissing, *The Whirlpool* (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1897), p.15.

²⁴ George Gissing, *In the Year of Jubilee* (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1894), Vol. 2, p. 207.

thought. This child of hers showed in the frail tenure on which it held its breath how unfit the mother was for fulfilling her natural functions'.²⁵

In *The Year of Jubilee*, Jessica Morgan is described as 'a ghost of girlhood, a dolorous image of frustrate sex', 'carrying several volumes and notebooks', 'nourishing ambitions and having a 'hysteric determination'.²⁶ The character's ruined complexion and the falling of her hair are directly linked to her work towards her matriculation. It is inferred that she is biologically devoid of strong reasoning, analytical and critical skills and therefore she cannot hope to reach a higher understanding ('Her brain was becoming a mere receptacle for dates and definitions, vocabularies and rules syntactic' as she simply repeats a 'thrice-boiled essence of history' and 'ragged scraps of science').²⁷ When the examinations come, her overtaxed body fails her and she is carried out delirious only to attempt a doubtful recovery at the Salvation Army, her face half-hidden by a 'hideous bonnet', her feminine beauty destroyed as we witness a face 'hardly to be recognised, bloodless, all but fleshless, the eyes set in a stare of weak-minded fanaticism'.²⁸

Intellectual and scientific views of the mass developed in parallel, one feeding the other. The views explored in Gissing's work, found parallels in the work of his contemporaries within the scientific community. Herbert Spencer, in his *Principles of Biology* (1898), famously argued that 'overtaxing a woman's brain with intellectual work might unfit her for maternity and make her less fertile'.²⁹ Furthermore, an article by the well-respected Darwinian George Romanes (on which Gissing had made notes) pointed out that as 'the average brain-weight of women is about five ounces less than that of men, on merely anatomical grounds we should be prepared to expect a marked inferiority of intellectual power in the former'.³⁰ Therefore, Romanes argues, women's intellectual inferiority as well as 'a comparative absence of originality' and 'creative thought' are to be biologically

²⁵ George Gissing, *The Emancipated* (London: Richard Bentley, 1890), Vol. 2, p. 233.

²⁶ George Gissing, *In the Year of Jubilee*, Vol. 1, pp. 29-31.

²⁷ Ibid, Vol. 2, p. 160.

²⁸ Ibid, Vol. 3, p. 260.

²⁹ Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Biology* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1898), Vol. 2, pp. 512-13.

³⁰ George J. Romanes, 'Mental Differences between Men and Women', *The Nineteenth Century*, 123 (1887), 654-72 (pp. 654-5); The fact that Gissing has made notes on the text is mentioned in David Grylls, *The Paradox of Gissing* (London: Macmillan, 1986), p. 161; For an analysis of Darwin's influence on Gissing see Christina Sjöholm, 'The Darwinian Influence on Gissing's *In the Year of Jubilee*', *The Gissing Journal*, 36.1 (2000), 1-11.

expected and excused.³¹ Although Romanes endorses women's education, he stresses the fact that they are far behind in relation to men and any attempts to hasten the process should be reigned as young women cannot physically stand the strain of severe study: 'The physique of young women as a class is not sufficiently robust to stand the strain of severe study, and therefore that many are likely to impair their health more or less seriously under the protracted effort and acute excitement which are necessarily incidental to our system of school and university examinations'.³²

Romanes, further attempts to align the idea of femininity to notions of passivity by arguing: 'In the courage of endurance [women] are commonly superior; but their passive courage is not so much fortitude which bears and defies, as resignation which bears and bends'.³³ Elsewhere, he also contends:

In the ethics of intellect they are decidedly inferior. They very rarely love truth, though they love passionately what they call 'the truth', or opinions which they have derived from others, and hate vehemently those who differ from them. They are little capable of impartiality or doubt; their thinking is chiefly a mode of feeling; though very generous in their acts, they are rarely generous in their opinions or in their judgments. They persuade rather than convince, and value belief as a source of consolation rather than as a faithful expression of the reality of things.³⁴

In the ways in which Romanes defines women's abilities here, we can see parallels with the way New Journalism was treated by the intellectual elite of the time. That is to say that New Journalism was unable to offer any meaningful truths because it relied more on notions of feeling aligned to femininity and less on notions of reason, thought and originality that were the perceived hallmarks of masculine identification.

In considering the state of education during the fin de siècle, one cannot ignore the influence of Matthew Arnold. For the purposes of this thesis, my

³¹ Romanes, p. 655.

³² Romanes, p. 669.

³³ Romanes, p. 657.

³⁴ Romanes, pp. 657-8.

particular interest in Arnold's work lies with his association to femininity. While Arnold did not speak openly about women as writers or readers, nevertheless Arnold couches his criticism of New Journalism in clearly defined feminine terms. Approaching cautiously with this distinction in mind, let us consider the ways in which Arnold discusses firstly, the relationship between education and the masses through their connection to the state and culture, and secondly, the association of these with femininity. Arnold's position with regards to femininity has frequently been contested by scholars. More broadly, there are two dominant but seemingly contrasting views: one expressed by some of his contemporary critics that aligns Arnold's work with femininity itself, and another, expressed by scholars such as Margaret Beetham and Laurel Brake, viewing Arnold's stance as hostile to feminine qualities.³⁵ I would argue that these seemingly contrasting positions need not be so, and in fact a third, more productive way of reading Arnold may be to take both these arguments into account. What I mean by this is an approach which does not treat these arguments as mutually exclusive conceits, but finds in both of them truths about Arnold's work.

Jane Garnett comments in her introduction to *Culture and Anarchy* that social criticism in the Victorian period was gendered, and insofar as Arnold was influenced by the Catholic and the Celt, as well as by the Indo-European and the Hellenic (contrary to the masculine Hebraism) he was inevitably drawn to underline the cultural importance of qualities gendered feminine.³⁶ Furthermore, 'by his own role as cultural critic, engaging with the over-certainties of a hegemonic laissez-faire political economy, he put himself in this cosmopolitan mainstream'.³⁷ This stance was perceived as counter-cultural to dominant English values (gendered masculine). These instances help summarise much of the criticism that followed Arnold's writing, viewing it as effete and over-refined.

³⁵ Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine 1800-1914* (London: Routledge, 1996); Laurel Brake, *Subjugated Knowledges: Journalism, Gender, and Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (Washington Square, N.Y.: New York University Press, 1994); Laurel Brake, 'Endgames, the Politics of *The Yellow Book* or, Decadence, Gender and the New Journalism' in *The Endings of Epochs, Essays and Studies Vol. 48*, ed. by Laurel Brake (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1995).

³⁶ Jane Garnett, 'Introduction' in *Culture and Anarchy*, ed. by Jane Garnett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. xxv.

³⁷ Garnett, p. xxv.

The associations of the 'effete' with his work were not well received by Arnold. The 'effeminate horror' 'of practical reforms', for which his work was accused, he considered a 'stigma'.³⁸ It is ironic then, that Arnold should perceive the same associations with femininity in New Journalism that his work had often been accused of harbouring, and treat this trend with the same disregard that his work had been shown.

With the growing reading power of the masses and the growth of New Journalism came the fear that the space for high literature was being eradicated. (Waugh characteristically saw the literary marketplace taking the form of an auction-room). In his article 'Up to Easter', Arnold voices clearly his disapproval of the New Journalism, referring to it as 'feather-brained':

But we have to consider the new voters, the democracy, as people are fond of calling them. They have many merits, but among them is not that of being, in general, reasonable persons who think fairly and seriously. We have had opportunities of observing a new journalism which a clever and energetic man has lately invented. It has much to recommend it; it is full of ability, novelty, variety, sensation, sympathy, generous instincts; its one great fault is that it is feather-brained. It throws out assertions at a venture because it wishes them true; does not correct either them or itself, if they are false; and to get at the state of things as they truly are seems to feel no concern whatever. Well, the democracy, with abundance of life, movement, sympathy, good instincts, is disposed to be, like this journalism, feather-brained.³⁹

The connection between New Journalism and 'the new voters', in other words, the educated masses is clear in the passage above. A feminised press is a

³⁸ Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, ed. by Jane Garnett (first published in *Cornhill Magazine* 1867-8; then in book form 1869; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 127-8.

³⁹ Matthew Arnold, 'Up to Easter', *Nineteenth Century*, 123 (1887), 629-643 (pp. 637-8). Romanes's and Arnold's articles form part of the same volume of the *Nineteenth Century*. The reader would therefore have the opportunity to encounter both discussions and their connotations with regards to femininity.

threat, it seems, to the perfect harmony of Arnoldian culture. The new voters are incapable of thinking fairly or seriously. Since they are not the 'serious men of letters', they cannot be expected to produce serious literature.

Teresa Mangum has argued that women writers of the 1890s 'were still contending against the predisposition of Victorian readers to undervalue female artists by equating creativity with masculinity'.⁴⁰ Using Arthur Waugh's essay 'Reticence in Literature' published in the *Yellow Book*, she identifies the public's prejudice with regards to gender norms: 'A woman could only become an artist by first becoming "unwomanly", for the passive, nurturing traits many Victorians associated with womanhood would presumably prevent women from understanding or experiencing the individualistic, self-serving, unaccommodating requirements commonly associated with an artistic temperament'.⁴¹

In a similar vein, Arnold stressed the dominant masculine virtues of reason, detachment, and seriousness in creation. Since women formed a great percentage of the contributors to the *Yellow Book*, the *Yellow Book* itself represented something of which Arnold feared in the growth of New Journalism. As Beetham has suggested, 'it was the feminisation of the press which Arnold feared as much as its democratisation'.⁴² In this sense feminisation was akin to the democratisation of the press.

In Arnoldian theory, the negative associations of the feminine were with passivity, a lack of imagination and critical thought. As such, these associations were counterproductive and dissonant to the pursuit of the harmonious whole he advocated. In *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold discusses the significance of culture in society and argues for its beneficial and civilising role against the forces of anarchy. The vehicle for administering culture is the state, from which any deviation results into anarchy in society and in turn an inability to achieve perfection. As Ernest Gellner suggests, 'civil society depends on the fundamental, perceptual, communicational, and referential harmony, the *sensus communis*, to which aesthetic

⁴⁰ Teresa Mangum, 'Style Wars of the 1890s: The New Woman and the Decadent' in *Transforming Genres: New Approaches to British Fiction of the 1890s*, ed. by Nikki Lee Manos and Meri-Jane Rochelson (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), p. 49.

⁴¹ Mangum, p. 49.

⁴² Beetham, p. 125.

judgement testifies and that it works to produce'.⁴³ In Arnold's concept, the individual is singled out from the society only in terms of his/her difference, a disruption to the harmonious whole. However, according to Arnold's appropriation of John Stuart Mill's theory, and through the lens of Darwinism, 'the common reason of society can check the aberrations of individual eccentricity [...] and it will do so in the main sufficiently, if left to its natural operation'.⁴⁴ The 'civilising' element of society is one which Arnold locates very clearly within a ruling or intellectual class, as seen below:

But for us, – who believe in right reason, in the duty and possibility of extricating and elevating our best self, in the progress of humanity towards perfection, – for us the framework of society, that theatre on which this august drama has to unroll itself, is sacred; and whoever administers it, and however we may seek to remove them from their tenure of administration, yet, while they administer, we steadily and with undivided heart support them in repressing anarchy and disorder; because without order there can be no society, and without society there can be no human perfection.⁴⁵

The ruling or intellectual class Arnold advocates for his ideal society bears more than a passing resemblance to the ideals of the cultural elite of the fin de siècle and their attempts to stifle the growth of the educated masses. In this case, the educated masses represent the deviant elements of social order. Since femininity is a defining feature of New Journalism, then at least on some level, women writers themselves come to represent something of the deviant. While I do not argue for the specificity of a female citizenship in the role that women writers played with the growth of New Journalism, it is difficult to ignore the gendered sentiments attached to New Journalism (as discussed earlier). Further still, we should not overlook the significance of the increase in the prolificacy of women writers during this period, as their contribution to New Journalism was significantly marked.

⁴³ Ernest Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and its Rivals* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1994), p. 16.

⁴⁴ Arnold, p. 92.

⁴⁵ Arnold, pp. 148-9.

Marc Redfield notes that ‘it is the function of Arnoldian criticism to help move the state toward its own idea of itself by pointing out imperfections’.⁴⁶ In such a reading, deviant societal members help reinforce social norms by the challenges they offer to these norms. The resistance offered by New Journalism to the established literary landscape may constitute an act of deviancy. By association, this may also extend to the women writers discussed in this thesis as they were themselves writing against the norm. But this is not to say that New Journalism (or in the specificity of this thesis, women writers of the fin de siècle) were merely reinforcing the cultural constructs of their time in their opposition to these systems. As I explain in later chapters, the resistance by women writers was not overt but rather worked within the established systems in carving out new avenues for a liminal combination of tradition and revolution. D’Arcy and Hickson (along with other *Yellow Book* women writers) were part of the formation of this tradition of cultural disruption in the ways in which their fiction exposed the hidden desires, taboos, and dark elements of an oppressive patriarchal society.

Thus far, I have elaborated on the general theoretical discussion with regards to education, journalism and women as relevant to the issue of the professional woman writer in the fin de siècle. Having set up this framework, I will now return my attention specifically to women writing for the *Yellow Book*. To do so, I will combine views on New Journalism, as advanced by its supporters and in polemics regarding it, with women’s work in and for this specific periodical. My focus will be on the fear projected largely onto New Journalism as a distaste for its perceived feminine qualities, and a wider fear of the democratisation of the press and the role women specifically play in this. Although class may be said to play as important a part in the democratisation of the press, gender bias also contributed significantly and should not be ignored. The entry, for example, of upper-class women into the industry was condemned on the grounds not of their class but their gender. In contrast, educated men were in comparison relatively free to involve themselves in the literary marketplace. There was a widespread fear of the feminisation of the press and that men’s writing would become infected by what were traditionally considered ‘feminine attributes’, leading to the creation of a lowly, sensationalised press. Given

⁴⁶ Marc Redfield, *The Politics of Aesthetics: Nationalism, Gender, Romanticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 181.

the obvious power the press wielded within the literary landscape, it was feared that such a change would ultimately lead to the feminisation and debasement of all literature and art.

A number of scholars have highlighted the connection between Arnold's fears of a democratisation of the press and the rise of women writers, most notably Beetham and Brake. Beetham has discussed the close link between the woman writer and Arnold's fear of the New, 'democratised' Press. Brake has written extensively on women writers and New Journalism as well as Arnold's fear of the feminisation of the press – with specific reference to the *Yellow Book*. However, my approach differs from Brake's in terms of its perception of the *Yellow Book*. Henry Harland claimed that '*The Yellow Book* [was] conceived in fog and darkness and brought forth in sweetness, light and joy'.⁴⁷ This is reminiscent of Arnold's definition of culture as 'sweetness and light', and although (as I will show later in this chapter) there were many instances of Arnold-related, conservative and anti-democratic writing, it must be noted that the *Yellow Book* also allowed for more liberal expressions. These views were particularly echoed by the women writers of the periodical. It was reportedly the intention of the *Yellow Book* editors to avoid any discussion of politics. Still, this could only be seen as one of its marketing strategies. Through the texts and the drawings, it mediated varied ideologies while questioning sexuality, desire, gender and social norms. As Brake herself admits, the omission of politics is only 'apparent' while it is substituted by 'cultural politics'. She concludes that the 'apparent exclusion of politics in favour of a proclaimed focus on literature and visual art, their "aesthetic" discourses of naturalism, symbolism, nihilism, erotica, and graphics cohabit with insistent discourses of gender, with sexual as well as cultural politics'.⁴⁸

Brake argues that '*The Yellow Book* addresses the subject of Woman. These inscriptions are interactive within the magazine, and with writing outside it, part of a male and misogynist discourse of wit around the subject of the Woman Writer'.⁴⁹ Even though the *Yellow Book* was not a feminist or strictly radical periodical, it did include instances of writing which questioned set rules and norms on gender and

⁴⁷ *The Artists of The Yellow Book and the Circle of Oscar Wilde* (London: Clarendon Gallery, 1983), p. 16.

⁴⁸ Brake, 'Endgames', p. 39.

⁴⁹ Brake, 'Endgames', p. 49.

sexual desire. I would not then follow Brake in ascribing misogynist attitudes to it. She argues that '[...]appearing in the precise year that Ann Ardis identifies with a shift in attention from the social phenomenon of the New Woman to its literary form in the New Woman *novel*, the *Yellow Book* is timed to articulate the anxieties of its culture about the subjects of Woman and the Woman Writer'.⁵⁰ To support her argument, she offers two texts 'from its first piece in its first number in which a character notes nervously 'in the age we live in one gets lost among the genders'⁵¹ to the voicing of male panic in Vol. IV'.⁵² These are indeed instances where the woman writer is seen as an alarming prospect, but I would differ from the all-pervasive nature of Brake's argument. In the same volumes that Brake comments on (and it is also true of all *Yellow Book* volumes), there are disparate views expressed throughout on the nature of women. Even the mere existence of women contributing regularly in the periodical complicates any reading of this periodical as an anti-female creation.

Where I depart from Brake, then, is in her argument that the *Yellow Book's* discourse forms an essentially male-centric perspective. Brake argues, '*The Yellow Book*, despite its deployment of D'Arcy in an editorial capacity and its regular contributions by women, is so suffused with male discourses of gender, in work by women and men, that these male discourses characterise the journal as much as its "aestheticism"'.⁵³ She repeatedly cites Henry James's 'The Death of the Lion', in which the writer argues for male authorial companionship away from New Journalism and the women readers and writers who kill the lion (male artist). However, it has to be remembered that this was not an idea generally endorsed by the editors and publisher of the periodical. In fact, James was employed due to his reputation in an attempt to make the periodical appeal to an even wider audience, rather than because he agreed with a general agenda set by the *Yellow Book*. James recognised this and decided to write a meta-commentary about writing for the

⁵⁰ Ardis, *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism*, p. 12; Brake, 'Endgames', p. 49.

⁵¹ Henry James, 'The Death of the Lion' in *Yellow Book*, 1 (1894), 7-52 (p. 44).

⁵² Brake, 'Endgames', p. 49.

⁵³ Brake, 'Endgames', p. 39.

periodical and his unwilling participation in the culture of publicity, as Anne Diebel has pointed out.⁵⁴

To expand on Robert Colby's argument, if 'periodical journalism helps us to reconstruct the struggle of the writing fraternity for status and independence', then the *Yellow Book* in particular, with its many women contributors and D'Arcy's position as a sub-editor, is an excellent case study, even if we are extending the argument to also include a 'sorority'.⁵⁵ Although not a feminist or a women's journal, the *Yellow Book* was directed towards an elitist and conservative society, while at the same time providing a challenge to established gender notions within the literary marketplace and, by extension, society in general. In contrast to Brake's argument that the *Yellow Book* had a discourse that was typically male and misogynist, I would argue that this periodical imbued women writers with a voice.

The understanding of these women as professional writers is imperative in informing our understanding of their role at the forefront of the literary marketplace as it came into formation in the fin de siècle.⁵⁶ When viewed in the context of print, the contributions of these professional women writers may be seen as part of a powerful political tool that the press can offer in the ability to alter gender perceptions. Beetham argues that '[t]he debate about the New Woman Fiction was crucial to the larger question of the place of print in the politics of gender formation' and that this 'was not only a matter of content but of how print worked to create gendered selves and of how gender entered the forms and institutions of print'.⁵⁷ In addition, Beetham underlines that although this dynamic has been addressed, it has not been undertaken with a study of the periodical as a text in its own right. The

⁵⁴ Anne Diebel, "'The Dreary Duty': Henry James, *The Yellow Book*, and Literary Personality", *The Henry James Review* 32.1 (2011), 45-59.

⁵⁵ Robert A. Colby, 'Authorship and the Book Trade' in *Victorian Periodicals and Victorian Society*, ed. by J. Don Vann and Rosemary T. VanArsdel (Aldersot: Scolar, 1994), p. 161.

⁵⁶ On women writers and professionalisation see: Margaret Diane Stetz, 'New Grub Stret and the Woman Writer of the 1890s' in *Transforming Genres: New Approaches to British Fiction of the 1890s*, ed. by Nikki Lee Manos and Meri-Jane Rochelson (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); Stetz, 'Keynotes: A New Woman, Her Publisher and Her Material', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 30.1 (1997), 89-106; Stetz, 'Sex, Lies, and Printed Cloth: Bookselling at the Bodley Head in the Eighteen-Nineties', *Victorian Studies*, 35.1 (1991), 71-86; Penny Boumelha, 'The Woman of Genius and The Woman of Grub Street: Figures of the Female Writer in British *Fin de Siècle* Fiction', *English Literature in Transition*, 40 (1997), pp. 164-180; Gaye Tuchman, *Edging Women Out: Victorian Novelists, Publishers and Social Change* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Lesa Scholl, *Translation, Authorship and the Victorian Professional Woman: Charlotte Bronte, Harriet Martineau and George Eliot* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

⁵⁷ Beetham, p. 118.

periodical, being updated regularly and containing ‘tit-bits’ of cultural information is perhaps the ideal text from which to collect interesting data about the cultural reality of the era. More specifically, the *Yellow Book* is an excellent case in point for Beetham’s argument. With a woman, Ella D’Arcy, as its sub-editor and with numerous women contributors (from the first to the last issue), it allowed for disparate female voices to find expression.⁵⁸ These women continuously questioned and reinvented the gendered selves that society had ascribed to them, sometimes merely by their entry into the male-dominated literary marketplace, when other periodicals had turned their work down deeming it too daring and controversial. Despite numerous conservative essays and narratives that appear within the pages of the *Yellow Book*, accusing women of lowering literary standards, many of these women writers fought back through radical texts which referenced gender, sex and desire as frequent topics. The radical elements in the writing of these women helped challenge the view that the growth of the New Press – identified with the appearance of the educated masses and women writers – would result in (amongst other disastrous consequences) mechanical homogeneity and formulaic writing which lacked originality and/or creativity. In the growing professionalisation of women writers, there was fear surrounding the knowledge that women writers were now forcefully entering the literary marketplace (formerly a male-dominated institution) in greater numbers than ever before. What is more, these women were taking pride in their writing and demanding payment for their literary output, in stark contrast to women writers of previous generations who largely viewed payment for literary work as improper for a lady.⁵⁹

The professionalisation of women writers helps bridge two important aspects of the fin de siècle that underwent drastic changes: the role of education and the economy. As Beetham points out, it is crucial that the position of the woman writer is studied in the context of the demand for access to paid work and that in seeking

⁵⁸ While I do not contend that the *Yellow Book* holds a monopoly in its ability to give women the literary space to express thoughts and feelings through their writing, I would argue for the specific role this periodical plays in relation to its experimental writing, and its willingness to give representation to texts that other periodicals of the time deemed too daring.

⁵⁹ For a discussion of the idea of monetary remuneration being considered as improper for a lady and the sexual connotations of such payment see Linda Peterson, *Becoming a Woman of Letters* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009); Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley and Jane Austen* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1994). Further analysis on this aspect, with particular attention to D’Arcy and Hickson, is taking place in the next chapter.

such work, both economically rewarding and meaningful, women of the fin de siècle ‘unsettled not only the gendering of public and private politics but a gendered economic theory and practice’.⁶⁰ The effect of this in political terms cannot be stressed enough. In many of the stories by the two writers studied in this thesis, the death or disability of the male provider results in female characters taking on the role of breadwinners. At the same time in real life, women writers were also acting in the role of breadwinners by looking to make a successful living out of their writing. The reversal of these gender roles has social, political and economic repercussions. As Beetham also notes, for many readers of periodicals, ‘the professional woman writer was a figure of hope, the fantasised solution to the contradictions of a femininity predicated on the male breadwinner’.⁶¹

A number of scholars have written on the subject of women and the literary marketplace, specifically as writers and/or journalists. Mary Poovey argues that the professional persona of women writers was very much defined by the social and psychological force of proper femininity, albeit in an earlier period of literature which forms the subject of her study. Poovey argues that “‘style”, understood in the largest sense of this term, represents ideology as it has been internalised and articulated by an individual’.⁶² In this way she sees ideology as style, as the lived experience of cultural values which are naturally reflected on the writings. Poovey, thus, argues that she ‘treat[s] all of the works [she] interpret[s] as narratives that, simply by virtue of their position within society and history, necessarily participate in the representation and evolution of ideology’.⁶³ Periodicals, as Poovey sees them, are ‘examples of the public discourse of middle-class society’ and as such, they ‘reproduce the system of values – the ideology – of this society’.⁶⁴ My reading of periodicals differs from Poovey’s. The *Yellow Book*, although created for and by

⁶⁰ Beetham, p. 131.

⁶¹ Beetham, pp. 132-3. Elsewhere, Beetham expands on this point in her exploration of the sexual politics of the time: ‘Journalistic and fictional explorations of women’s demands for “self-dependence” and work were imbued with a different and specifically sexual anxiety. The absolute correlation of gender and sexuality meant that the powerful binary oppositions which linked masculinity with activity/production and femininity with passivity/consumption worked across the categories of the economic and the sexual. Women’s claims to the ‘masculine’ roles of breadwinner and independent self therefore threatened not only men’s economic power but their sexuality’. Beetham, p. 132.

⁶² Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley and Jane Austen*, p. xiii.

⁶³ Poovey, p. xiii.

⁶⁴ Poovey, p. xiii.

mainly the middle and upper-middle classes, and despite the many instances of its cultural and ideological conformity, allowed for the presentation of ideas that were dramatically in contrast to the dominant gender and social ideology of the period. Poovey contends that ‘the very act of a woman writing during a period in which self-assertion was considered “unladylike” exposes the contradictions inherent in propriety: just as the inhibitions visible in her writing constitute a record of her historical oppression, so the work itself proclaims her momentary, possibly unconscious, but effective, defiance’.⁶⁵ The attitude of the *Yellow Book* women writers studied in this thesis adds to what Poovey describes here. These women respond to this dominant ideology not just creatively and imaginatively, but in pragmatic terms as well. In other words, it is not just their texts but also their professional position within the literary marketplace that offers defiance.

Such great changes in the literary landscape, and by association in society in general, were perhaps inevitably to be met with virile criticism. This mainly took the form of criticism directed at New Journalism, with critics addressing and castigating writers for debasing literature. The problem that women faced during this time was twofold: on the one hand, there was a prevailing view that women formed a poorly-educated audience, whose demand for cheap and light reading brought the press to its low position. At the same time, women were condemned for seeking education, for reading and talking about subjects that up to then only men were considered capable of addressing seriously. Yet, most importantly, women were at this time infiltrating the professional world of print and journalism by becoming writers, editors, journalists, typists, and secretaries. It is interesting to note that in this pattern there is a dynamic of women entering, occupying the marketplace and even if there is an outcry about it, they are bringing it to the epicentre of cultural reality. This is significant because, in this instance, femininity is not related to passivity (an attribute that until then was gendered as feminine).

Anne Varty has argued that ‘the “new journalism” of the late nineteenth century was largely shaped by women’s interests and often written by women’.⁶⁶ Varty builds on W. T. Stead, who claims about the future of the press and the female

⁶⁵ Poovey, p. xv.

⁶⁶ *Eve’s Century: A Sourcebook of Writings on Women and Journalism 1895-1950*, ed. by Anne Varty (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 2.

audience that: 'The Press of the Twentieth Century... will tend more and more to be homely, easy to read, commonplace, and full of pictures and stories. It will constantly seek to cater for fresh readers and for readers who will command advertisers. That is to say, it will tap the unreading ocean of womanhood'.⁶⁷ Varty acknowledges that although this might seem like a cynical money-driven attitude, it also generated a positive cycle of representation and reporting back. That is to say, the more women were represented in the press (even if, cynically viewed, for male-dominated businesses to make money), the more visible they became in public life. In turn, since more women became visible in public life, it only seemed natural to report this increasing visibility back.

The New Journalism then was presenting women both with a voice and a public identity. Following on from this, T. P. O'Connor, a well-respected politician and journalist, when writing in the *New Review* also drew on this connection in his article praising New Journalism. O'Connor argues that the characteristics he envisions as defining New Journalism help create a more wholesome, interesting picture for the reader.⁶⁸ For O'Connor, the attention to detail as well as personal information offer a more complete story. Although these characteristics are commonly attributed to New Journalism in articles of the period as well as contemporary scholarly criticism, what is interesting about this article is that O'Connor identifies from early on New Journalism with women. O'Connor starts by describing the 'old ways', how the lack of personal information made for an unfinished picture: 'There was a day when any allusion to the personal appearance, the habits, the clothes, or the home and social life of any person, would have been resented as an impertinence and almost as an indecency'.⁶⁹ In reference to the 'old' newspaper article, O'Connor comments on the passionless and lifeless nature of a reported speech delivered in the House of Commons: '[Y]ou had no information as to how the speech was delivered or how received. You were told nothing of the personality of the persons who made the speech'.⁷⁰ In his example, he discusses at the same time two areas that were characterised by their exclusion of women, namely the House of Commons and 'old journalism'. However, speaking of New

⁶⁷ W. T. Stead, 'Great thoughts', *Christian Graphic* 3 (1895), p. 363.

⁶⁸ T. P. O'Connor, 'The New Journalism', *New Review*, 1 (1889), 428-34.

⁶⁹ O'Connor, p. 431.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 431.

Journalism as a better representation of his time, O'Connor selects a report which centres on a scandal surrounding the circumstances by which a woman is taken to court. He comments, '[i]f such a trial as that of Mrs. Maybrick had taken place fifty, or even twenty, years ago, the one thing which even the most sensational newspaper would publish would be the report of the evidence, and perhaps a report of the change of the presiding judge'.⁷¹ But thanks to the advent of New Journalism, not only are these facts given in the report, but a whole host of other discussions take place which create a better-informed image of the woman in question. O'Connor continues by stressing the importance of the New Press for allowing everyone a voice and a public identity: 'personal journalism goes further than the public man. No one's life is now private; the private dinner party, the intimate conversation, all are told'.⁷² Indeed, the New Press went further than the public man and allowed for the establishment of the public woman: the woman writer, journalist and editor who could finally voice her opinion and have a pronounced public identity. In fact, he goes to embrace 'feminine' issues which were supposed to interest women only and were found in small 'women's sections' in newspapers. The celebrated feminine issues include 'charity, philanthropic effort, amusement, and society', arguing that these values are of equal interest for both sexes. O'Connor expands on this:

Why should not the public be told of how the party of Mrs. Smith went off; of how Miss Robinson looked; of the dress Miss Jones wore? These are things which deeply interest a large number of people. They are the subjects about which we talk over the dinner-table; and it is the sound principle to which we shall all come at last in literature and journalism, that everything that can be talked about can also be written about.⁷³

Note the inclusive 'we' and the conclusion drawn from this that despite the view that these issues constitute light matters, they are nevertheless significant in their fuller representation of a lived life. O'Connor's argument, therefore, in its championing of

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 432. In 1889, Florence Maybrick was found guilty of using arsenic to murder her husband.

⁷² Ibid, p. 432.

⁷³ Ibid, p. 434.

New Journalism over the old traditions, hints at the potential for this new form of writing to provide better representations of the society at large. On one simple level, New Journalism does this by its inclusion of female voices that were denied access in the old traditions.

Evelyn March-Phillips in her article 'Women's Newspapers' published in the *Fortnightly Review*, stresses the importance of women working in journals and the effect this has on encouraging larger female readership numbers, as well as encouraging other women to take up the journalistic profession:

It is a deplorable fact that almost all these journals are edited by men. One would think women should know best what will please women, but as editors we are told they are deficient in the capacity which grasps a business situation and comes to a quick and definite judgement on financial matters, while they seem wholly unable to master the intricacies of the law of libel. Many are sub-editors, and manage special departments, and on every paper, I think I may say, the bulk of the work is done by women. The woman journalist, to whom, cry her down as it may, the press of to-day owes much of its brightness and life, has been, in great measure, created by writing on subjects she understands, in journals for her own sex.⁷⁴

Her argument is thus closely associated to Stead's and O'Connor's who identified the need for a feminine inclusion in the literary marketplace. However, March-Phillips goes further by outlining the ways in which New Journalism may already owe a lot to the endeavour of women.

While there are a few examples of the positivity attached to the role of women and femininity in New Journalism, the majority of criticism from this period is framed negatively. The purpose of this negative criticism may be said to emanate from the desire of the male-centric, intellectual elite to maintain the status quo in cultural and economic terms. As Beetham argues, 'the construction of certain

⁷⁴ Evelyn March-Phillips, 'Women's Newspapers', *Fortnightly Review*, 56 (1894), 661-70 (pp. 667-8).

qualities as ‘feminine’ is part of the larger process of keeping cultural difference in place’.⁷⁵ Indeed, in D’Arcy’s letters to the *Yellow Book*’s publisher and editor (John Lane and Henry Harland, respectively) we see a professional, straightforward, business-like woman, demonstrating what would be described as a masculine approach in work. As Hilary Fraser, Stephanie Green, and Judith Johnston have noted, ‘it is the engagement between gender and commerce that forms a central discourse in the *Yellow Book* and this is at its most “scandalous” in those examples where the feminine enters the marketplace’.⁷⁶ In this example, the importance of the marketplace is in its ability to act as a liminal space through which the rigid norms of aesthetic and financial control are contested, and to some degree, circumvented.

In attempting to reach a wider audience, the *Yellow Book* looked to market itself in a way which would be more appealing when compared to its competitors. The innovative (marketing and advertising) ways by which the *Yellow Book* was able to achieve these aims marks it out as a particularly useful periodical when discussing the aesthetic innovations of the New Press. In particular, with its connection to aestheticism and the equal focus on both literature and art, the physical appearance of the periodical was an integral part of its selling proposition. Fraser et al., when discussing the *Yellow Book*, argue that this periodical ‘offered a novel publishing phenomenon, the literary and cultural commodity, in which an association with the feminised practice of commodity consumption was central in establishing the air of fashionable sophistication that helped to promote [it]’.⁷⁷ Stressing the contribution of fin-de-siècle women writers of periodicals, Fraser et al. argue that ‘this participation was framed by a discourse in which the boundaries of the feminine seemed to be in question while, paradoxically, the use of the feminine as a mechanism of commerce relied on a set of discursive markers that were apparently fixed and coherent’.⁷⁸ The

⁷⁵ Beetham, p. 126.

⁷⁶ Hilary Fraser, Stephanie Green, and Judith Johnston, *Gender and the Victorian Periodical* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 184.

⁷⁷ Fraser et al., p. 183. The role of the commodity will be further discussed in the following chapter. For a detailed discussion on production and consumption with specific attention to Victorian aesthetics and aesthetic consumption see Regenia Gagnier, *The Insatiability of Human Wants: Economics and Aesthetics in Market Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Catherine Gallagher, *The Body Economic: Life, Death and Sensation in Political Economy and the Victorian Novel* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006); Mary Poovey, *Genres of the Credit Economy: Mediating Value in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008); Deanna K. Kreisel, *Economic Woman: Demand, Gender and Narrative Closure in Eliot and Hardy* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2012).

⁷⁸ Fraser et al., p. 175.

argument is further substantiated by Beetham's conclusion that 'since femininity was always located in and defined by appearance, as masculinity was not, the stress on the visual character of the periodical was a further "feminisation"'.⁷⁹ The fact that during that era periodical press was increasingly filling its pages with such New Journalistic items as celebrity interviews, portraits of writers and pictures of their homes has led Beetham to conclude that the culture of the periodical press was 'narcissistic'.⁸⁰ Beetham discusses this in terms of self-referentiality and the scissors-paste technique. However, for the purposes of my argument the characterisation of the periodical press as narcissistic is significant for two reasons. Firstly, it places the periodical in the epicentre of vanity, appearances, desire and allure, all essentials of advertisement but also usual characteristics attributed to femininity. Secondly, and as a direct consequence of the former, it shifts femininity and the marketplace from incompatible entities to natural allies. In other words, the changing nature of the literary marketplace in the 1890s marks a shift from the old marketplace that was traditionally perceived as a masculine setting (where men were controllers and distributors of money and power) to a reformed marketplace that reflects and celebrates attributes traditionally gendered as feminine.

Waugh, in his essay 'The Auction-Room of Letters', published in the *Yellow Book*, deplores the position in which literature finds itself as a result of a growing interest in commerce and finance. Given the publication in which this article appears, it may appear odd that Waugh chooses to denounce the growing significance placed on commerce and finance in the changing literary marketplace. (While the *Yellow Book* claims to represent a literary space less concerned with the pursuit for monetary gain, it nevertheless formed a significant part of the commercial enterprise that many periodicals of the time were engaged in). For Waugh, literature is first and foremost about dignity: 'Where, then, in all this turmoil of the market, is the boasted dignity of letters?'⁸¹

Writing in the same periodical, D'Arcy seems less keen on making high claims about the 'dignity of letters', but instead focuses on the potential monetary reward. This is further underlined by one of D'Arcy's letters to her publisher in

⁷⁹ Beetham, p. 126.

⁸⁰ Beetham, p. 127.

⁸¹ Waugh, p. 265.

which she writes: ‘You will remember, in considering this letter that I have none of the vanity popularly attributed to authors, that I don’t care a hang whether I’m ever published or not, (I do care for money, having none), and that I shan’t be the least disappointed by your refusal. Or annoyed. We will remain friends’.⁸² D’Arcy’s frank assessment and pragmatic approach tells us a lot about the way in which professional women writers of the period could demand recognition and reward for their work. In the following chapter, through D’Arcy’s correspondence with Lane, I explore more thoroughly this relationship between the aesthetic and financial implications of her work in the *Yellow Book*.

Finally, this chapter that analysed representations of the literary marketplace of the late nineteenth century, the New Journalism, and the New Press in general, would be incomplete if it did not take into account Gissing’s novel, *New Grub Street*. This is not because of the historical or cultural accuracy of the novel, but mostly for the influence this novel has had on those who study the literary marketplace of the 1890s. Carey goes so far as to argue that ‘Gissing seems, in fact, to have been the earliest English writer to formulate the intellectuals’ case against mass culture, and he formulated it so thoroughly that nothing essential has been added to it since’.⁸³

My approach to *New Grub Street* draws from Stetz’s view of it with relation to women writers. Stetz has observed that ‘[...] while dismissing most of his other fictions, critics have endorsed almost unquestioningly the truth-claims of *New Grub Street*, accepting the novel as an accurate representation of the situation of English fiction writers in general at the end of the Victorian period’.⁸⁴ She lists a considerable number of critics who view this text as historical documentation such as R.C. Churchill, John Stokes, John Cross, Adrian Poole and Nigel Cross. Instead, Stetz proposes that *New Grub Street*, despite its appeal, cannot be greeted as a universal truth as it talks of a universality based on male experience alone. She adds that a century of feminist theory has ‘established conclusively that the act of writing and the material conditions of being a professional writer are not identical for

⁸² Ella D’Arcy to John Lane, April 13th 1897. Ella D’Arcy, *Some Letters to John Lane*, ed. by Alan Anderson (Edinburgh: Tragara Press, 1990), p. 30. The letter is analysed in depth in the next chapter.

⁸³ Carey, pp. 93-4.

⁸⁴ Margaret Diane Stetz, ‘*New Grub Street* and the Woman Writer of the 1890s’ in *Transforming Genres: New Approaches to British Fiction of the 1890s*, ed. by Nikki Lee Manos and Meri-Jane Rochelson (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), p. 22.

women and for men'.⁸⁵ Aiming to get information about how the world of professional authorship looked to women of the era, she turns instead to texts that 'afford an otherwise unattainable insight into how the profession of letters in the 1890s appeared to women'.⁸⁶ When read in conjunction with journalistic profiles of female authors and with the autobiographies of fin-de-siècle writers such as Evelyn Sharp, Netta Syrett, and Ella Hepworth Dixon, 'these female-authored fictions suggest the limits of Gissing's interest in delineating the conflicts and satisfactions of a writer unlike himself'.⁸⁷ My approach in this thesis is similar to that of Stetz, in that my ultimate goal on some level is to better understand the complex position in which female writers of the 1890s found themselves. For this reason, this study turns its attention to both short stories and letters of two women writers who contributed frequently to the *Yellow Book*. In addition, I consider the *Yellow Book*, as a periodical which is updated regularly, a useful medium through which to take in the totality of the cultural views and attitudes expressed in the era.

Stetz explains that for women writers 'it [was] the Victorian gender system – the set of cultural expectations about women's roles and possibilities – that most determines the material conditions of their professional careers, if they are even allowed to embark on such a career at all'.⁸⁸ The advent of New Journalism helped challenge many of these preconceived systems of gender power relations. In her analysis of Gissing's characters, Stetz argues that: 'the change in market conditions produced by the spread of literacy among previously illiterate classes is the single most important element affecting the day-to-day lives of authors'.⁸⁹ While the male-dominated, educated elite struggled to deal with the change, women writers tried to take advantage of this new literary marketplace in any way they could. As a result, women found the reality of the New Press much more welcoming and managed to materialise their talent in a professional way despite the difficulties they faced. Indeed, Gaye Tuchman has demonstrated that women 'had to work harder than men to achieve less acclaim' and were less 'able to take advantage of opportunities to

⁸⁵ Ibid. p. 25.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 27.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 27.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 30.

⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 30.

derive income' from the profession of letters.⁹⁰ Stetz also reminds her readers that 'for a sheltered, middle-class, late-Victorian woman (...) merely to enter the premises of a newspaper, a publishing house, or any place of business was an alien and potentially intimidating experience that put her distinctly at a disadvantage'.⁹¹ While women writers faced difficulties in entering the literary marketplace, acquiring a professional career was one of the most powerful and publicly vocal ways of overturning gender assumptions and forging more positive notions based on femininity.

To conclude this chapter, it seems fitting to appropriate one of Harland's statements about the *Yellow Book* which stresses its importance in the literary marketplace and the changes it brought about. He claimed that 'during this time [the 1890s] we made most of the London critics gasp a bit and we forced the recognition of any number of principles and ideas for which we had been striving. It let down the bars of prejudice and tradition in the London publishing offices and so it served its turn'.⁹² Harland, looking back at the history of the *Yellow Book*, speaks of the tremendous influence this periodical had on the literary world and how it was concerned with the breaking of 'prejudice and tradition', and granting a palpable voice articulating the anxieties of the new: the New Press, the New Journalism, the New Woman, but above all the new professional status of the woman writer. During the fin de siècle, the *Yellow Book* formed part of broader cultural concerns over the perceived feminisation of literature, and helped mark the rise of the professional woman writer. In order to better understand the importance of the professional woman writer during the fin de siècle, I will explore in the next chapter how the financial changes of the era brought about a commodification of literary work, and how this in turn influenced the presence and marketing of women writers of the period with specific attention to D'Arcy and Hickson.

⁹⁰ Gaye Tuchman, *Edging Women Out: Victorian Novelists, Publishers and Social Change* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 211.

⁹¹ Stetz, p. 34.

⁹² *The Artists of The Yellow Book and the Circle of Oscar Wilde* (London: Clarendon Gallery, 1983), p. 19.

Chapter II

The *Yellow Book* on the Window Display: Women Writers and the Periodical as Commodity

‘[A]t this stage in the history of mankind there is no problem that does not ultimately lead back to that question and there is no solution that could not be found in the riddle of commodity-structure [...] [T]he problem of commodities must not be considered in isolation or even regarded as the central problem in economics, but as the central, structural problem of capitalist society in all its aspects.’¹ – Georg Lukacs – History and Class Consciousness

‘The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as an immense accumulation of commodities.’² – Karl Marx – Capital: A Critique of Political Economy

This chapter aims to investigate the close economic relations of culture and commerce, writing and business, by shedding light on the literary marketplace of the 1890s as seen through the publishing practices of the Bodley Head in general, and the *Yellow Book* in particular. It will also analyse the business and marketing attitudes employed by Ella D’Arcy and Mrs. Murray Hickson with relation to the commodification of literature. To address these issues, I start with a general overview of the socio-cultural and financial interrelations as studied by prominent theorists of the nineteenth and twentieth century. I then look at the specific ways in which these socio-cultural and financial interrelations affected the *Yellow Book* as a publication and as a commodity. Finally, I investigate the marketing attitudes

¹ Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone (London: Merlin Press, 1971), p. 83.

² Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Vol I*, trans. by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1996), p. 45.

employed by the two women writers named above that are in dialogue with the changing nature of literature at the fin de siècle.

Of course the professionalisation of authorship, or even female authorship, is not new. As Robert Colby points out, Besant had written in his *Autobiography* that ‘the discontent of authors extended back to the previous century. [...] Indeed the title of James G. Hepburn’s study of literary agency [...] *The Author’s Empty Purse*, is taken from Chaucer. George Haven Putnam’s famous article “Author’s Complaints and Publisher’s Profits” (Forum, Sept 1891) goes back even further, quoting from Horace and Martial’.³ However, it is during the late nineteenth century that professional authorship as a term is discussed more intently, and writers begin organising themselves in this sense. Women writers of the 1890s, in particular, were professionals not only in the sense that they were committed to their writing on a full-time basis and were receiving monetary compensation for this. It was more specifically because in this period women writers began to see and identify themselves as professionals within the literary marketplace, taking on more proactive roles in the marketing and selling of their writing. As evident in both D’Arcy’s and Hickson’s letters to John Lane and Henry Harland, both women can be seen repeatedly enquiring about the sales, advertisement, marketing, and reviews which they received for their writing. Their interest in the reviews lies not only in the critical reception of their work, but also on how these criticisms would impact on their ability to promote, publicise and sell their work. In short, they are trying to understand, enter and alter (where they can) a deeply patriarchal institution, that of the world of letters, by capitalising on the increasingly commodified nature of the literary marketplace.

As Christoph Lindner comments, ‘by the mid-nineteenth century, the increasing influence of capitalism on everyday life generated in Britain what has come to be known as a “commodity culture” – a culture organised around the production and exchange of material goods’.⁴ The industrial revolution which had begun almost a century ago was supported by a competitive market economy. A

³ Robert A. Colby, ‘Authorship and the Book Trade’ in *Victorian Periodicals and Victorian Society*, ed. by J. Don Vann and Rosemary T. VanArsdel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), pp. 143-161 (p. 144).

⁴ Christoph Lindner, *Fictions of Commodity Culture: From the Victorian to the Postmodern* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2003), p. 3.

capitalist economic system had gradually pervaded and an industrial-based marketplace reigned which ‘traded in a new form of good: the capitalist commodity’.⁵ Lindner suggests that ‘free market economy changed not only the dominant mode of production and its supporting systems of distribution and exchange – not only the way in which commerce was conducted and sustained – but also the conduct and sustenance of society itself’.⁶ As Thomas Richards notes, ‘fundamental imperatives of the capitalist system became tangled up with certain kinds of cultural forms, which after a time became indistinguishable from economic forms’ and by mid-century, ‘the commodity became and has remained the one subject of mass culture, the centrepiece of everyday life, the focal point of all representation, the dead center of the modern world’.⁷ The commodity was not simply part of the economic world, it had by now infiltrated other areas of life and was gradually coming to define identities of individuals, societies and even nations, too. Characteristically, the Great Exhibition of 1851 was little more than a reduction of whole nations into ‘manufactured goods’, in other words, commodities. As Richards notes, ‘all human life and cultural endeavour could be fully represented by exhibiting manufactured articles’.⁸ In addition, Walter Benjamin has pointed out that ‘the world exhibitions erected the universe of commodities’.⁹ Commodity culture, especially by means of an abundance of advertisements, had been introduced to the public which had allowed and even prompted its entry into their private and social worlds.

Lindner, in his discussion of nineteenth- and twentieth-century texts in relation to commodity, has reached the conclusion that ‘the commodity figures [...] as a living object of consumer fetish that excites desires yet strangely denies satisfaction’.¹⁰ Lindner’s comments here could very well be a summary of the *Yellow*

⁵ Lindner, p. 4.

⁶ Lindner, p. 4.

⁷ Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (London: Verso, 1991), p.1.

⁸ Richards, p. 17.

⁹ Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. by Harry Zohn (London: Verso, 1983), p. 166. See Rolf Tiedemann for analysis of the concept of Benjamin’s ‘phantasmagoria’ (stemming from the arcades in Paris) used almost interchangeably for Marx’s ‘commodity fetishism’ in *Benjamin: Philosophy, Aesthetics, History*, ed. by Gary Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). Also, Graeme Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996) for an analysis of Benjamin’s theory of the cult of the commodity and its idolised association to modernity.

¹⁰ Lindner, p. 3.

Book, which figured prominently as an aesthetic commodity of supreme craftsmanship and projected a collectability status, however, disapproved of the commerciality of culture and any attempts of inclusion of a mass (consumerist) audience. The discussion of commodity is important to the *Yellow Book* because of its ambiguous relationship with regards to aesthetic production and consumption and the claims it made with regards to its social specifying status: by paying the price of 5 shillings, its readership acquired entry to the higher social and aesthetic world of the *cognoscenti*.

Marx may have written the *Capital* in 1867, but the first English edition was not published until two decades later. Marx was not the first to analyse capitalism based on the commodity but he was certainly one who, as Lindner points out, ‘abstracts it, categorizes it, systematizes it’ and perhaps more importantly ‘demystifies it’.¹¹ Lindner expands on the interrelation between commodity, economy and society:

Though the commodity influenced cultural forms in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, by the middle of the nineteenth century it developed into a cultural form of its own. The discourse of economic exchange became *the* discourse of social exchange; and the commodity, as the prime organizer of the capitalist economic system, lent itself to nineteenth-century society as *its* prime organizer.¹²

By means of the commodity, the economic and the social were no longer to be understood as separate spheres. In contrast, the space separating these spheres was gradually narrowing, with culture projecting and expressing this change. Culture, then, as part of the social was soon seen in economic terms.

We cannot talk of a commodity culture, or the consumption of commodities without addressing production and circulation. It is otherwise an incomplete cycle, one that denies a socioeconomic view of the text of a most fundamental part. The

¹¹ Lindner, p. 7.

¹² Lindner, p. 7.

economic construct of a cultural identity is an integral part of any cultural commodity studied in a capitalist society. The *Yellow Book*, with its price clearly marked in bold on its cover repeatedly reminds any critic of its commercial nature which need not necessarily come in contrast with its high cultural ideals. My analysis suggests that both the commercial and high cultural aspects of the *Yellow Book* were significant considerations in the production and circulation of the periodical.

An interest in all parts of the commodity cycle (production – circulation – consumption) requires an analysis simultaneously of the parts that publishers, writers and readers played. As information with regards to the periodical's readership cannot be obtained, determining the role that readers play is perhaps the most problematic part when it comes to providing a concise analysis of the *Yellow Book*'s commodity cycle. William Charvat contends in *Literary Economics and Literary History*, that '[t]he critic and historian both need instruments: publishers' records; the correspondence of authors and editors (much of it still unpublished); facts about the circulation of magazines and sales of books; and – most difficult of all to find – reliable evidence of reader response'.¹³ On that point Michael Anesko wonders, 'But which readers? And from what sources? The prolific "reception" and "reputation" studies of recent years have focused almost invariably upon published reviews of an author's work'.¹⁴ For, as Charvat points out, in the book trade 'it is not criticism that matters but publicity'.¹⁵ In this respect this study provides an analysis of vital material that informs a fuller understanding of the triad of writer, publisher, and audience. It takes into account the format and layout of the periodical, advertisements relating to the *Yellow Book*, correspondence between writers, editors and the publisher, as well as critical reviews. Thus, the study is concerned not only with the writing of D'Arcy and Hickson in the *Yellow Book*, but looks to frame this in a cultural context of the literary marketplace during the fin de siècle.

There is very little critical attention at present that takes into account, in a way this study does, the importance of a complete commodity cycle when discussing

¹³ William Charvat, 'Literary Economics and Literary History' in *The Profession of Authorship in America 1800-1870: The Papers of William Charvat*, ed. by Matthew J. Bruccoli (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1968), p. 285.

¹⁴ Michael Anesko, *"Friction with the Market": Henry James and the Profession of Authorship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 8.

¹⁵ Charvat, p. 292.

contributing writers of periodicals during this period. As Richards observes, ‘the project of commodity aesthetics has been caught between the roaring worlds of production and consumption. Some critics have chosen to regard commodities from the standpoint of the producer, others from the standpoint of the distributor and potential consumer’.¹⁶ Richards notes that Rachel Bowlby’s *Just Looking*, and Norman Feltes’s *Modes of Production of Victorian Novels*, showcase the ‘false antithesis between production and consumption that has [...] limited the analytical power of commodity aesthetics’, as the former approaches commodities as objects to be consumed and the latter engages with the production side of objects alone.¹⁷ For Richards, ‘it makes more sense to speak of a “commodity culture” that consists purely and simply of discourse about the production, distribution, and consumption of commodities’.¹⁸ My chapter comes to answer this by filling in the gap created by the monolithic approaches of Bowlby and Feltes and thus combines the production, circulation and consumption sides and sees them as parts of an organic whole. This chapter focuses on publisher strategies, writers’ views, the audience’s expectations and reactions, and treats these all in relation to the cultural commodity that was the *Yellow Book*. In an attempt to find connections between production, distribution and consumption, the study of D’Arcy’s and Hickson’s letters to their publisher allows us an insight into their views on remuneration, marketing and advertising. In these letters, there is a focus on monetary issues and strategies for selling which illustrates their conscious involvement in the workings of the literary marketplace. The focus on monetary issues and strategies for selling suggests a discrepancy with the high aesthetic and exclusivist attitude that the *Yellow Book* purportedly employed as its prime focus.

Towards the end of the century, Linda Peterson locates a significant change in the mindset of the professional woman writer from ‘socially gendered’ concerns to

¹⁶ Richards, p. 15.

¹⁷ Richards, n. 26, p. 267. Rachel Bowlby, *Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing and Zola* (New York, London: Methuen, 1985); Norman Feltes, *Modes of Production of Victorian Novels* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1986). A marked distinction is Regenia Gagnier’s approach in ‘Women in British Aestheticism and the Decadence’, where she looks at the New Woman from both sides of this perspective: as producers, reproducers, and creators on the one hand and as consumers or creatures of taste and pleasure on the other. See Regenia Gagnier, ‘Women in British Aestheticism and the Decadence’ in *The New Woman in Fiction and Fact: Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms*, ed. by Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2001).

¹⁸ Richards, n. 26, p. 268.

‘economic and aesthetic’ ones.¹⁹ Elsewhere, Peterson contends that late-nineteenth-century concerns over highbrow and lowbrow writing replaced early-nineteenth-century concerns over socially gendered concerns. What one might infer from Peterson’s contention here, is that socially gendered concerns are no longer as resonant in the fin de siècle. However, a concise appraisal of women’s writing from this period seems to suggest otherwise (this is especially true in the example of the New Woman writer). This study treats socially gendered concerns and aesthetic and commercial concerns as equally fruitful avenues for discussion in considering the place of women writers during the fin de siècle. Moreover, it argues that the wider aesthetic and commercial concerns of the period find emblematic symbolism within the pages of the *Yellow Book*.

While professional women writers existed prior to the fin de siècle, it was during this period that professional women writers began to find their way into the literary field in large numbers. Economic and aesthetic conditions helped shape the professional women writers of the 1890s, and the impact of these are reflected and documented in writing from the period. These conditions are crucial in understanding how modernist ideology came to be formulated later and was in response to the expansion of the capitalist economy of the early twentieth century. This expansion of the capitalist economy had an effect on key social aspects of the period, chief among which were art and literature. In this way, the literary marketplace of the 1890s can be seen as a territory which combines a cultural and economic study of the society.

Peterson catalogues a number of women writers of the nineteenth century who demonstrated ‘that women could not only achieve distinction in traditionally feminine genres (poetry, fiction) but also succeed in others (journalism, criticism, the essay)’.²⁰ However, surprisingly, she notes that ‘although the number of professional women who entered the literary field increased, those who achieved recognition as women of letters diminished’.²¹ Drawing from analyses by scholars as diverse as Pykett, Showalter, Schaffer and Tuchman, she concludes that ‘the 1890s witnessed a growing separation of popular from high art, mass from elite culture, the “subfield of

¹⁹ Linda Peterson, *Becoming a Woman of Letters* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 11.

²⁰ Peterson, p. 207.

²¹ Peterson, p. 207.

large-scale production” from the “subfield of restricted production” – and with it a separation of popular fame and financial reward from *the succès d’estime* that made the 1890s almost modernist’.²² According to Peterson, Mary Cholmondeley almost succeeded in acquiring a lasting reputation as a woman of letters but ultimately failed. In such a way, her story may be seen as similar to that of D’Arcy’s. However, in D’Arcy, we do not see such a disjunction as the one noted of Cholmondeley between ‘aspiration and achievement’. Penny Boumelha notes that this disjunction reflects the compromises that New Women were often forced to make, ‘stranded between the self-sacrificing plots of womanhood and a concept of the artist that identifies commercial success with inauthentic and market-oriented mass culture’.²³ D’Arcy, experiencing the literary marketplace from within, in her capacity as a sub-editor, has no such illusions. Cholmondeley ‘protest[s] against her devaluation in the market after the collapse of the triple-decker novel and reinvents herself as an “advanced” writer in an emerging modern(ist) field of elite art’.²⁴ In contrast, D’Arcy understands the fleeting opportunity of the literary trend and decides, less than idealistically, to take as much as she can from it. Furthermore, Hickson, despite coming from an elite social background, has little reservations about distancing herself from this narrow elite circle by publicly advertising and marketing her books and encouraging their display in common sites of social mingling, such as railway bookshops. Although Hickson is not dependant on the financial repercussions of her literary output, in a way in which D’Arcy is, she acknowledges her success largely in terms of sales. Here, therefore, Hickson may be said to take particular pride in the professional aspects of her writing by measuring her work in financial terms.

D’Arcy’s and Hickson’s attitudes towards the commodification of literature, though, were not always as clear-cut or direct as it appears in their letters to their publisher. Very often, they can be found condemning in their creative work the same thing they passionately support in letters, namely the commodification of literature. In a similar way, when considering the work of Victorian novelists, Andrew Miller suggests that ‘adopting a moral stance against the commodification of the world, novelists [and, by extension, writers in general] simultaneously understood that

²² Peterson, p. 209.

²³ Penny Boumelha, ‘The Woman of Genius and the Woman of Grub Street: Figures of the Female Writer in British *Fin-de-siècle* Fiction’, *English Literature in Transition*, 40 (1997), 164-180 (p. 177).

²⁴ Peterson, p. 209.

literary work itself was increasingly commodified; they were, as a result, required to negotiate between their moral condemnation and their implication in what they opposed'.²⁵ The establishment of new technological advancements allowed for a grander, more spectacular projection of the work of writers during this period. Commodification of their work was thereby further enhanced by the opportunities offered by these advancements in the marketing and selling of these works.

Books, like any other object for sale, were carefully placed in well-lit display windows and Miller suggests that in Victorian England 'these windows radically transfigured the experience of walking through commercial sections of London, fashioning the streets into gas-lit spaces of utopian splendour'.²⁶ In the same way everyday objects were put into display (not just in meeting existing needs but also creating new desires for passers-by), objects of intellect and culture were also reduced to a commodity status. Bowlby further explains:

Glass and electricity [...] created a spectacular effect, a sense of theatrical excess coexisting with the simple availability of individual items for purchase. Commodities were put on show in an attractive guise, becoming unreal in that they were images set apart from everyday things, and real in that they were there to be bought and taken home to enhance the ordinary environment.²⁷

This was particularly true for the *Yellow Book* which purported to be a beautiful item and a treasured possession, a cultural trophy, if you will, to be placed among the greats in someone's personal library. In this section, I will be discussing the *Yellow Book* with reference to two instances of window display: (i) that of advertising and positive reactions from the audience and (ii) that of negative reactions and opposition. In both instances, the lines between production and consumption as well as reality and fantasy are blurred. Miller discusses the windows of the fictional town

²⁵ Andrew Miller, *Novels Behind Glass: Commodity Culture and Victorian Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 7.

²⁶ Miller, p. 1.

²⁷ Bowlby, p. 2.

in George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, arguing that '[t]he display windows [...] served as emblems of an economic dynamic which was also and simultaneously *libidinal* (producing desire and disenchantment), *epistemological* (concerning the representation of falsehood and truth), and *social* (marking individual isolation and the possibilities of communal relations)'.²⁸ The libidinal, epistemological and social dynamic of the window display are all issues that I will discuss here with reference to the *Yellow Book*.

With reference to the second half of the century, Bowlby notes that from that period onwards, it is not so much the object in itself – what function it serves – which matters, as its novelty or attractiveness, how it stands out from other objects for sale.²⁹ The *Yellow Book*, with its bright yellow cover and the provocative Beardsley design certainly addressed the two issues of originality and attractiveness. In addition, its uncut pages, which I will discuss later in this chapter, only added to its status of exclusivity. Although it could be found everywhere in London and distinguished from a distance, a closer inspection was not allowed and had to be reserved for those 'selected few' who may decide to break it open after paying the price of five shillings and adding it to their collection.³⁰ James Lewis May who worked at the Bodley Head stresses the omnipresence of the periodical as well as the importance of placement both in an aesthetic way and in a marketable one.³¹

On the morning of April 15, London suddenly turned yellow as the new periodical with its bright daffodil cover and staring black Beardsley design materialized on newsstands and book shops. You could get it at Mudie's or Bumpus' or Quaritch's. Mr Spencer cautiously insinuated the volumes into his fly-specked window between a book of Baxter plates and *Pickwick* in parts. Charing Cross Road gleamed with yellow. Frederick Evans had the

²⁸ Miller, p. 5, my emphasis.

²⁹ Bowlby, p. 2.

³⁰ The absolute division between *Yellow Book*'s aestheticism and mass culture has been debated by Margaret D. Stetz and Mark Samuel Lasner in *England in the 1890s: Literary Publishing at the Bodley Head* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990). For example, as Stetz and Lasner clarify, 'although it is commonly assumed today that the *Yellow Book*, as a "High Art" journal, was only aimed at and sold to a socially or culturally elite class, it was in fact distributed widely through such ordinary channels as bookstalls in railway stations and publicized by means of posters plastered all over London and the provinces' (p. 56).

³¹ James Lewis May, *John Lane and the Nineties* (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1936), p.71.

copies in his window on Queen Street open at the Beardsley drawings and pointed them out to customers with happy pride. Even the stands of the respectable and high-minded W. H. Smith and Son were spotted with yellow. [...] The biggest and brightest display was naturally on Vigo Street. Mr. May remembered it well. The lad who spent his days in the back office on a high stool was promoted to service in the front of the shop. Frederic Chapman gave him his first lesson in window dressing, and they filled the little bow window full of copies of the *Yellow Book*, creating such a mighty glow of yellow at the far end of Vigo Street that one might have been forgiven for a moment that some awful portent had happened, and that the sun had risen in the West.³²

However, the window display of the Bodley Head was not always a site of admiration by the public. The Oscar Wilde scandal affected the *Yellow Book* as people had mistakenly taken the book he was seen carrying when he was arrested for the *Yellow Book* (Wilde was actually carrying a French novel in yellow cover). Angry spectators ‘swarmed into Vigo Street, gathering outside the Bodley Head, home of the *Yellow Book* and of *Dorian Gray*, and manifested their disapproval so thoroughly that the neat bow window was in need of a glazier when they departed. Sticks and stones, shouts and curses left Chapman in no doubt as to the public temper’.³³

Here, the window display has a very different function to its more obvious libidinal one. It takes on a different epistemological and social dynamic. The people involved in the protest were not ‘just looking’ at the window display. On the contrary, their act of smashing the window symbolises a break of the distinction of the two worlds: the inside and outside, the ivory tower and the democratic, the aesthetic and the brutal. It also marks the reign of the commodity as attacking the item (periodical) and the shop (which represents the publishing firm) was intended as an attack on an ideology they opposed. In other words, the commodity here stands

³² Katherine Lyon Mix, *A Study in Yellow; The Yellow Book and its Contributors*, pp. 80-1.

³³ Mix, p. 144. Mix relies here on May’s account of the events. During the time at which this report was made, May was in employment at the Bodley Head offices on Vigo Street. I have been unable to locate reports of the incident in the newspapers of the time which, if we are to believe May’s account of the events, could mean that the incident was left unreported.

for a decadent ideology that the mob attacks. The disturbance of the fragile barriers between the real and false, the individual and communal is manifested in the act of the window break. This disturbance symbolises the powers that brought the *Yellow Book* slowly and steadily to its demise.

Before its inevitable end, though, the *Yellow Book* started as a radical, new idea set forth by John Lane (the publisher), Aubrey Beardsley (the artistic director), and Henry Harland (the literary editor). It was published by the Bodley Head which was initially run both by Lane and Elkin Mathews and then Lane alone. Stetz and Mark Samuel Lasner recognise that the formation of the Bodley Head owed much to John Lane and his understanding of ‘both halves of the reading public’, as they put it. They add,

[Lane] recognized the needs of a whole new generation of lower-middle-class readers, created by the Education Act of 1870 that opened government-sponsored education to all, who wanted access to the highest expressions of aristocratic ‘beauty’ at a cheap price; and he also recognized the needs of the ‘advanced’ segments of the middle and upper-middle classes, who prided themselves on their difference from the average ‘Philistines,’ and who wanted literary artefacts that would confirm them in their own sense of superior taste and cultivation.³⁴

Stetz and Lasner underline the close relationship between class, money and objects that signify social status, in this particular case, one’s chosen reading material. Buying a book, carrying it around, keeping it in your library to show to your guests, these are all actions that provide ample evidence for someone’s tastes, education and perhaps more importantly their social and economic status. The commodified culture of the fin de siècle promoted such connections. Lane, then, responded to a growing social need for status identification in an age dominated by change. Lane therefore ascribed social and cultural value to the *Yellow Book*, a commodity, an item of mass production, which by means of its multiple mechanical

³⁴ Stetz and Lasner, *England in the 1890s: Literary Publishing at the Bodley Head*, p. viii.

reproductions was thus at odds with the intended exclusivity. The *Yellow Book*, as the prototype of a cultivated and cultivating commodity would come as an ideal answer to ‘both halves of the reading public’. More generally, the Bodley Head set off to be a publishing firm that represented the best of talent and addressed the elite group of readers. Stetz and Lasner point out that ‘calling its catalogue of merchandise “A List of Books in Belles Lettres,” [the Bodley Head] self-consciously defined for bookbuyers of the period what constituted “elegant” appearance and sophisticated content’, allowing them, thus, to confirm and present their own status through the acquisition of its products, in this case, books.³⁵

Social arrivisme by means of commodity consumption was therefore encouraged by the *Yellow Book* as long as it was the *proper* commodity for the *proper* kind of people. In addition, a certain type of aesthetic arrivisme is resonant in its production, too. In its beginning, as Stetz and Lasner suggest, ‘the firm attracted to its Vigo Street offices a highly diverse group of allies – not the elite, but the would-be elite: writers and illustrators mainly from the lower-middle or solidly middle classes, who were themselves rebels, climbers, and poseurs, eager to establish themselves as a cultural vanguard to be reckoned with’.³⁶ Being themselves a new cultural force, they wanted to reflect this onto their art, which was itself addressing a new audience. Although they had different agendas, they all shared one passion: to create something different from what existed up to then. ‘New’ was the keyword for the creation of the firm and it was especially true for the *Yellow Book*. May confirms the importance of ‘new’: ‘It was the deliberate and avowed intention of the founders of *The Yellow Book* to do something new and daring. The word new was destined to assume its Latin significance and to convey the implication of something revolutionary’.³⁷ However, the radical ideas of Lane, courting ‘controversy, publicity and mass-market sales’ were not always met with enthusiasm and the break with his partner, Mathews, was inevitable. As Stetz and Lasner identify, ‘by 1894, what had begun as an antiquarian bookshop with a sideline in the production of pretty little volumes and limited editions had grown into a monster’.³⁸ The difference of opinions between the two partners is characteristic of the

³⁵ Stetz and Lasner, p. viii.

³⁶ Stetz and Lasner, p. vii.

³⁷ May, p. 74.

³⁸ Stetz and Lasner, pp. viii.

publishing attitudes they employed: ‘Mathews, whose main interests continued to be poetry and essays for the “refined,” could not follow Lane into the “decadent” world of Naturalist fiction, feminist polemics, and Beardsleyan eroticism toward which the Bodley Head was steering’.³⁹ In other words, Lane found a way to marry these two seemingly disparate sales approaches: selling literature (including the *Yellow Book*) on the basis of its exclusivity, while at the same time marketing and distributing this literature to a much wider audience, namely those who were considered or wanted to be considered as part of the elite. The ways he employed to achieve this are manifold and involve every aspect of publishing, from attracting the right writers, to the production and distribution of his products.

It is therefore apparent from the above that books were by now seen and valued as commodities, signifiers of social and economic status. With the *Yellow Book*, Lane was quick to find a way to take advantage of the changing times. The *Yellow Book*’s stress on the ‘new’ reflected and gratified an emerging sociocultural tendency that fed on the idea of the book specifically as a valued commodity. In terms of form, the choice of a book format for the *Yellow Book* is not coincidental or merely in response to the era’s desire for novelty. It is rather an aesthetic choice that links the periodical to the tradition of the ‘book beautiful’ that goes against the ephemeral nature of periodicals. The intention of the editors of the *Yellow Book* was that this periodical should be kept in the bookcase, among other books, because it belonged there both for its appearance and its content. In its capacity as a social signifier and a commodity, the *Yellow Book* links the aesthetic and commercial.

The arrival of the *Yellow Book*, as Lane had calculated, did not come quietly but rather with great anticipation and publicity due to the advertisements that predated it. The ‘Announcement’ that was issued in March aimed to set the scene for what was to come and prepare the audience by means of a vague yet highly aestheticist manifesto. The editors introduced the periodical thus:

The aim... of the *Yellow Book* is to depart as far as may be from the bad old traditions of periodical literature, and to provide an Illustrated Magazine

³⁹ Stetz and Lasner, pp. viii-ix.

which shall be beautiful as a piece of bookmaking, modern and distinguished in its letter-press and its pictures, and withal popular in the better sense of the word. [...] It will be a book – a book to be read, and placed upon one’s shelves, and read again; a book in form, a book in substance; a book beautiful to see and convenient to handle; a book with style, a book with finish; a book that every book-lover will love at first sight; a book that will make book-lovers of many who are now indifferent to books.⁴⁰

May recognises the role that Lane plays in imbuing books with a fetishized social and cultural purpose:

This revival in the art of bookmaking, for which The Bodley Head was so largely responsible, could not, and did not fail to bring about a marked change in the book trade. The public, as distinguished from the small and select company of book collectors, began to hoard books merely for the purpose of external decoration. Lane did not so much pander to this desire as create it. The Bodley Head and its books became a vogue. Not to know what the Bodley Head had just brought out or was about to bring out was to be altogether out of the swim. It was to argue oneself a Scythian, a Barbarian. Once get well into the main current of *le snobisme britannique* and you will be borne along triumphantly towards the shores of success. [...] [*L*]e *snobisme* is merely the desire to be in the fashion, that is to say, the fashion set by the cultured few, the *cognoscenti*.⁴¹

Thus, from the start, the *Yellow Book* actively embraced a commodified status with strong social connotations for the few who could appreciate the art of the ‘book beautiful’. Also, it could convince and educate those who were ‘now

⁴⁰ Dennis Denisoff and Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, Prospectus (“Announcement”), *Yellow Book*, 1 (1894), in *The Yellow Nineties Online* <http://www.1890s.ca/HTML.aspx?s=YBV1_prospectus.html> [accessed 10 August 2012].

⁴¹ May, pp. 238-9. It is significant to note that by using words foreign to the largely English-speaking readership, this extract seeks to establish a certain divide between the cultured few who could translate the message for themselves, and the less educated readers.

indifferent to books' but who obviously wished to be included in the 'cultured few' circle. The *Yellow Book* was never intended to be an ephemeral possession, something to read on the train and then thrown away. On the contrary, one of its main aims was to be a collector's item, a piece that would be admired both for its appearance as well as its content. It claimed to be for the cultured few, although the business practices of its publisher and editors suggest that the *Yellow Book* was always targeted at a much wider audience. From its inception, the *Yellow Book* was imagined as something unique: collectible, beautiful and daring. It was not a periodical by subscription only, one for the true 'cognoscenti'. Rather, it was a periodical that drew upon this image but had a much wider commercial purpose.

Perhaps more than ever before, as a result of the education law changes, the cultural elite (or those who aspired, in a social arrivistic way, to be considered as such) sought to differentiate themselves from the unoriginal, mundane mass. Shifting social markers in regards to education, made it even more pressing for the elite (or self-perceived elite) to separate themselves further from the educated masses. Therefore, this elite sought to reinforce their identity through the acquisition of commodities they deemed exclusive. Lane was keen to allow for a loose understanding of the 'cultured few'. It could at any point carry social connotations, but more often than not, it meant those who were craving to break from old traditions and who had a modern approach to life. This, in such a turbulent fin de siècle, could be applied to any cause: political, artistic, gendered, and so forth. This attitude was exhibited by Beardsley's designs, one of which I analyse below (see figure 1, p. 95 for the Beardsley's design in question).

The original cover by Beardsley showed a smart woman in a black dress, with hat and gloves to match, eagerly inspecting a box full of copies of the periodical outside a bookshop. Looking on in the background was a pierrot bookseller, supposedly Lane's partner Elkin Mathews, who viewed the *Yellow Book* with apprehension and clearly disapproved of the lady's apparent desire to buy a copy.⁴² *The Times* critic described the cover as 'intended to attract by its very repulsiveness and lubricity' adding that 'on the whole, the new Art and the New Literature appear to us to compare in this singular volume far from favourably with the old and we

⁴² *The Artists of the Yellow Book and the Circle of Oscar Wilde* (London: Clarendon Gallery, 1983), pp. 16-17.

doubt if the representatives of the latter will much relish the companionship, to say nothing of the cover, in which they find themselves'.⁴³ The critic shows his distrust towards the 'new' which is portrayed, supported and embraced by none other than the New and Advanced Woman. Lane intended to address from early on two neglected categories that were quickly gathering power in the late-nineteenth-century social scene: educated women and middle classes. Fraser et al. attribute the creation of 'the image of the ambiguous professional woman as a keynote of *Yellow Book* style' to Beardsley: 'Beardsley's images of actresses, the 'femme fatale' and other women of the night, were sexualised figures of public and economic exchange that drew attention to the boundaries of both gender and art'.⁴⁴ In a similar manner, the choice of having a woman buyer/reader on the first cover was crucial as it shows that women writers and readers were central to the periodical's image. The background of a shop in the picture sets the new financial reality of a woman buyer who inspects the books, the objects for sale, despite the disapproving look she gets from the male owner of the shop.

From its inception then, the *Yellow Book* positioned itself in the heart of the debate surrounding the position of the professional woman in the marketplace. Although Beardsley's art capitalised on the woman, his removal from the periodical has brought the professional woman into a more prominent position. As Fraser et al. have concluded, an increase in the number of women contributors in the periodical is noticed after Beardsley's departure from it.⁴⁵ They conclude that with contributions of such writers as Ada Levenson, Charlotte Mew, and Vernon Lee in later volumes, this was 'further evidence, perhaps, of the magazine's interest in promoting itself to the "new" woman reader and suggesting further linkages between commerce and the plasticity of gendered identity and desire'.⁴⁶ Women writers offered a different perspective that originated from and reflected on their changing financial and social roles. They contested the idea of a strongly masculine marketplace and sought to produce and market their goods by responding to the rise of the capitalist literary marketplace.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 18.

⁴⁴ Fraser et al., *Gender and the Victorian Periodical*, p. 186.

⁴⁵ Fraser et al., pp. 187-8.

⁴⁶ Fraser et al., p. 188.

Two important questions remain, however. The first is: was the *Yellow Book* created to address the needs of the already existing readers, or did it create these needs and then furnish them? The second is: does the materiality of the *Yellow Book* inform the perception of its contents? Pierre Macherey helps us in addressing both of these questions:

Readers are made by what makes the book – though it is a question of two different processes – for otherwise, the book, written from some inscrutable impulse, would be the work of its readers, reduced to the function of an illustration. (This must be taken in *the plainest sense*: the book does not produce its readers by some mysterious power; the conditions that determine the production of the book also determine the forms of its communication. These two modifications are simultaneous and reciprocal. This question would certainly be worth a specific theoretical study, the guiding principle for which is to be found in Marx's statement 'Not only the object of consumption but also the mode of consumption is produced, not only in an objective way but also subjectively').⁴⁷

Applying this argument in the case of the *Yellow Book*, the periodical came to serve the new reading audience which resulted from the financial, social and educational changes taking place in the late nineteenth century. A rapidly expanding capitalist economy, accompanied by an also rapidly growing lower middle class that longed to be acknowledged and appreciated, gave birth to the need for a 'new' periodical that would help sate these desires. In line with the findings of this thesis, Winnie Chan suggests that in 'redefining "the short story" against its prevalent mass-cultural identification, the *Yellow Book* [...] reveals a mass cultural ambition to sell "culture" to the middle classes'.⁴⁸ To appropriate Chan's terms, the *Yellow Book* aestheticised the commercial and tried to sell this idea onto an emerging demographic. As Macherey suggests, 'the work is available beyond the closed circle of its initial

⁴⁷ Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, trans. by Geoffrey Wall (London, Boston and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 70.

⁴⁸ Winnie Chan, *The Economy of the Short Story in British Periodicals of the 1890s* (New York; London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 54-55.

intended audience. It is not circumscribed by a spontaneous reading'.⁴⁹ Following on from Macherey's argument, the *Yellow Book*, resisting a spontaneous consumption and aiming for a wide audience resulted in its posterity as a historical and collectible item. The relative popularity of this periodical even today owes much to its aestheticised commodification as a collector's item. The reasons behind its collectability legacy today have as much to do with the appearance of it, its history and the illustrations by Beardsley as the literary content therein.

There is very little in cultural history that deals specifically with the relationship between the form of the short story and its materiality. Within the *Yellow Book*, the short form acquired its protomodernist status, situated between the fin-de-siècle technological and journalistic advancements, and the shifting social and gender politics of the turn of the century. Furthermore, the specific form taken by short stories in the *Yellow Book* was one of a 'long short story'. This was in accordance with the *Yellow Book*'s agenda of not setting an upper word limit for contributors. Writers were paid according to word count although, later, Lane made specific regulations that set a maximum compensation irrelevant of the word count. This situates the *Yellow Book*'s short fiction in the interstices of aesthetic and commercial economies. Chan underlines the importance of the short story's length and its relation to word count which made the text seem more and more like an abstract commodity to be cut, to be used, to be purchased:

Rather like interlining fabric, the short story presented a way to have fiction cut into and sold by lengths. Distinguished primarily by its length, the short story defined itself commercially in terms of a word count, which came to occupy a predictable place in most Editorial Notes to aspiring contributors, a fixture that eloquently illustrates the economic pressures on literary production.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Macherey, p. 71.

⁵⁰ Chan, p. xvi.

By comparing it to fabric, Chan conjures up images of the mechanical industry. By association, this is an image of mechanical reproduction, one place removed from the idealised image of the text. Also, we may take this in light of the ways in which mechanical reproduction has intimations of the soulless mass (an image I elaborated on in the previous chapter). More than any other form, the short story, having its history and formations figured in parallel with that of the periodical press, means its aesthetic is by definition embedded in commercial considerations. This interrelation of commercial and cultural makes the study of the material history of the short story so important.

Considering the material history of the *Yellow Book*, one should note how well this periodical played on the idea of restricted/open access to art and literature. While widely available all over London, advertised in other media but also through posters on the streets, the *Yellow Book* at the same time was constructed in such a way that browsing through the pages was impossible. As Chan argues, ‘sold unopened and uncut when the pages of most books were mechanically cut, the *Yellow Book* flaunted its restriction, resisting consumption even in its physical stare’.⁵¹ In the periodical, the stress on both Art and Literature, created a wholesome synaesthetic effect on the reader/viewer/consumer. Appealing to the senses, especially through its use of art, the periodical is inviting for the prospective buyer. Jonathan Freedman connects aestheticism’s emphasis on art with advertisements and argues that ‘aestheticism’s valorizing of sense experience enabled it to serve as a foundation for those advertising men and marketing experts who helped to build, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the culture of consumption we so proudly and so anxiously inhabit today’.⁵² This view is seconded by Chan’s perception of the periodical as ‘a *magasin* of literary commodities’.⁵³ The periodical’s contents - everything from the stories, poems, essays to illustrations - are commodities. The *Yellow Book* in particular, is an example of aestheticism’s stratified cultural capital in the fin de siècle. The identification of a magazine as a *magasin* of cultural commodities may seem to clash with its purportedly high aesthetic concerns, but is actually in keeping with Lane’s commercial strategies for

⁵¹ Chan, p. 54.

⁵² Jonathan Freedman, *Professions of Taste: Henry James, British Aestheticism, and Commodity Culture* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 82.

⁵³ Chan, p. xix.

the periodical. However, despite its provocative and enticing appeal, the contents discouraged a disinterested consumption. In terms of their length, featured ‘long short stories’ are set in contrast with novels that comprise of chapters (which may welcome breaks), or more traditional short stories (as presented in other periodicals) that can be read within a shorter period of time. Also, in terms of their content – the ambiguous plots, the fragmented language, and the complex and multiple points of view – the stories did not encourage quick consumption. Yet this was not the only apparent controversy. As Chan concludes, despite the fact that the *Yellow Book* was marketed in opposition to commerciality, it ‘depended on this most marketable form of fiction to fill its pages, to attract readers, and to distinguish its literary contents from those of other magazines’.⁵⁴

The cover of the periodical was not the only part that resisted the usual expectations of other periodicals in the market. The *Yellow Book* employed the use of catchwords at the end of each page, a catchword being a word placed at the foot or header of each page to be bound along with other pages in a book. Historically the catchword was designed to help the bookbinder have the pages set up in the correct order prior to binding, as well as helping the reader in making connections between pages. The periodical’s employment of catchwords also linked it to a tradition of bookbinding that stemmed from medieval manuscripts as well as fifteenth- and sixteenth-century texts that used catchwords. Linda Dowling has noted that ‘[i]f their (the catchwords’) ultimate purpose is to ensure a coherent succession of pages, their immediate effect is to interrupt, however slightly, that coherence’.⁵⁵ In the process of reading a story, this further encourages a fleeting impression, a momentary feeling kept, even for a mere second, at the end of each page. The catchword also served to interrupt a hurried consumption. Although the *Yellow Book* acknowledged and even embraced its commodified status, it did not encourage quick, uninterrupted and thoughtless consumption. Thus, the *Yellow Book* may be said to place itself successfully between mass and elite culture.

The letters of D’Arcy and Hickson help demonstrate their keen awareness of their writing’s commercial interests. In them, they express a self that is quite

⁵⁴ Chan, p. 85.

⁵⁵ Linda Dowling, ‘Letterpress and Picture in the Literary Periodicals of the 1890s’, *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 16 (1986), 117-131 (p. 125).

different from the authorial or the domestic persona found in interviews that were usually projected by women writers of the period (namely one that is primarily concerned with the creative process and the expectations of a female writer). My analysis of these letters seeks to refigure women in the production of commodity.

Regenia Gagnier argues that in contrast to male Decadents who would often promote a higher aesthetic model of consumption, taste, and pleasure, women of the aesthetic movement, ‘especially in the more popular, or applied, forms of aestheticism, such as decorative arts and suburban literatures, were more conscious of their roles as reproducers of daily life and as producers subject to audiences’.⁵⁶ This is particularly true for the writers I discuss in this thesis. An applied form of aestheticism is certainly one that characterises their work well. Hickson, had established herself as an author of sentimental, simple everyday countryside stories, the inspiration from which came from her residence in the suburbs (Surrey). D’Arcy, as evident in her letters, shows an obsession with the reception of her work not in terms of its artistic but rather its market, monetary value. In addition, both acknowledge their role as ‘reproducers of daily life’, as an analysis of their work will show, but may also be evident when glancing quickly the titles of their works (*Shadows of Life* and *Modern Instances*). Gagnier further argues that such women’s work ‘in country cottages, London suburbs, or the empire itself popularised aestheticism for broader audiences while simultaneously expressing the desires of subordinated groups for ideals beyond production and reproduction’.⁵⁷ She uses the example of Marie Corelli as a writer who ‘negotiated the conflict between the artistic value of autonomous literature and the cash value of literary commodities by a complex narrative “trade” between aestheticism and popular fiction’.⁵⁸ The two extremes are not entirely applicable in D’Arcy’s and Hickson’s case, as they cannot be claimed to have produced (strictly speaking) popular fiction. As the *Yellow Book* editors explained, popular here has to be applied loosely: popular ‘in the better sense of the word’, meaning subject to audience as reflected in sales and reviews.⁵⁹ The narrative trade, however, is one that is particularly resonant when considering D’Arcy’s and Hickson’s work. These women stood in the liminal space between the

⁵⁶ Regenia Gagnier, ‘Women in British Aestheticism and the Decadence’, p. 239.

⁵⁷ Gagnier p. 239.

⁵⁸ Gagnier p. 239.

⁵⁹ Prospectus (“Announcement”), *Yellow Book*.

aestheticism that the *Yellow Book* projected and their personal interest in attracting as wide an audience as possible. Fully acknowledging the commodification of their work, they strove to apply a form of aestheticism that need not necessarily stand firmly against popular, mass culture.

A closer reading of both D'Arcy's and Hickson's letters helps to illustrate their preoccupations with the workings of the literary marketplace. D'Arcy shows a prominent interest in money and views the success of the *Yellow Book* largely in terms of sales. In her earlier letters to Lane that coincide with the first issues of the periodical, she enquires about the sales of the periodical rather than his views on her work. The emphasis, then, is not directly on her own authorial contributions but the business and financial well-being of the periodical. In this way, D'Arcy positions her interest in the business, marketing and advertising side of things above that of her authorial value. She requests information with regards to sales of the periodical and draws from this a conclusion on its success or failure, a position that further underlines her interest in the commerciality of the periodical. From the letters, one may draw the reasonable conclusion that reviews do not interest D'Arcy as much as sales do, generally speaking, unless the reviews generate a curiosity that affects sales positively.

With reference to the first volume of the periodical, D'Arcy shows an initial interest in its sales that does not diminish over subsequent months: 'Thank you so very much for the copy of the *Yellow Book*, and also for the letter you so kindly forwarded me. I do hope the sale of the "Y.B." continues to go famously?'⁶⁰ In a postscript dated May 16 [1894], D'Arcy adds: 'I am so interested in the fortunes of

⁶⁰ Ella D'Arcy, *Some Letters to John Lane*, ed. by Alan Anderson (Edinburgh: Tragara Press, 1990) 25 April 1894, p. 11. D'Arcy's correspondence to Lane is held at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin and forms part of their 'John Lane Company Records' collection (Box 12, Folder 1). Due to the long journey needed and the sheer volume of the letters, I have been unable to physically examine the letters myself or have them photocopied and sent over. However, Anderson's edited volume, although short, offers an insightful selection of her correspondence to Lane. Apart from this, the only letter that has been published is the one in which D'Arcy writes to Lane to inform him of the situation at the office after the Oscar Wilde scandal while Lane is away in the US: Karl Beckson, 'Ella D'Arcy, Aubrey Beardsley and the Crisis at *The Yellow Book*: A New Letter', *Notes and Queries*, 26 (1979), 331–33. No commentary accompanies the letter and there is no other book-length publication that has edited or studied her correspondence to Lane in full.

the *Yellow Book*', and again on October 15 1894 just before signing off: 'With ardent wishes for a phenomenally good Y.B. sale'.⁶¹

In other instances, she tries to attract Lane's humorous side by talking lightly about the ever-present issue in her letters, that is remuneration for her work, showing in many instances signs of jealousy or rivalry for better-paid employees of the *Yellow Book*:

Wednesday Morning.

[? Winter 1894]

[...] And this reminds me to thank you for the cheque; it was all that I expected and will just about get me to Antibes. But what am I to do when I'm there? Do, like a dear Sir Thomas⁶² advance me another £15 on my immortal forthcoming works? Or better still, imagine I'm Aubrey Beardsley and make it £20, for I know you hand him out £20 notes, just exactly as you hand me biscuits.⁶³

The following year, she writes him a letter that is similar in its humorous tone, its focus on remuneration and its rivalry with Beardsley in a financial respect. She signs this letter with 'Yours ever affect:tly [sic] (but hungry) Ella D'Arcy':

Friday [? January 1895] chez Monsieur le Conte d'Alcantara Juan les Pins

My dear Publisher,

As I am no longer able to pay my way, the Count has reduced my rations, to bread and water, and next week he threatens to knock off the bread. Water is a poor diet on which to write; and the taste is all the more brackish, from the inward conviction I have, that Sir Thomas is all this while

⁶¹ D'Arcy, 16 May 1894, p. 12; D'Arcy, 15 October 1894, p.13.

⁶² Sir Thomas Bodley, from whom the publishing firm took its name.

⁶³ D'Arcy, [Winter] 1894, pp. 13-4.

supplying A.B.⁶⁴ with turtle, truffles, and Pommery; not to mention cold crackling pork and lager beer!⁶⁵

Although later in her life D'Arcy downplayed, for reasons unknown, her role as sub-editor of the *Yellow Book*, her letters are much more accepting of this fact. This is particularly clear in the following letter:

Now he [Harland] won't write a letter at all to me; but has informed me on a peremptory post-card that I 'may consider myself relieved of the duties of Sub-Editor, and he will seek for a less untrustworthy person'!

Ah, I can see the Cromwell Road blocked with the crowd of needy females all struggling for that high salaried post!⁶⁶

Despite the light and humorous tone she often takes when talking about money, it is obvious her preoccupation with it resulted from her urgent need for it as she was struggling to survive. In a letter that was very different in tone and signed as 'Private', she explains to him that her situation is grave and is made even worse by her inability to do creative work when her mind is so obviously occupied by practical issues. Her need for money is not to live a life that is in accordance with an indulgent aesthetic ideology, or her desire to acquire things, but merely to meet basic needs. Her certainty over the success of her book is tightly related to her economic worries. She tries to sell her intellectual wares devoid of any authorial vanity but rather seen as labour to be exchanged for money, like any other commodity.

Dear Mr. Lane,

⁶⁴ Aubrey Beardsley.

⁶⁵ D'Arcy, January 1895, pp. 14-5.

⁶⁶ D'Arcy, 23 April 1896, p. 26.

My typist has not yet sent the rest of the book, but I should also like to hear from you before troubling you with it. For if you don't see your way to making me the advance of £50, I must try elsewhere. I should like you to have it, especially if it proves as I believe it will a success, but I've absolutely GOT to have money. I'm at the most difficult point of a life which has been nothing but difficulties for years passed [sic], and, as I wrote to you, I'm bound to make payments of £45 before May 1st, or things will be even worse for me than they have ever been yet.

[...]

And the difficulties, the anxieties, and the worries in which I swim, are quite enough to prevent me from ever doing any original & good work, which always must demand a certain peace & detachment of mind.⁶⁷

In closing her letter, D'Arcy clearly identifies the quality of her work and its originality (a key concept of the period) to the prerequisite of remuneration. She, thus, addresses the popular rift between a high, self-sacrificial authorial vanity and a low, market-oriented, mass culture-driven unoriginal art by turning the argument around. To re-appropriate her words, 'water is a poor diet on which to write'. For D'Arcy, it is only possible to produce 'original and good work' once she has certified her professional status.

Pykett argues that women's writing was coded as mass culture in relation to male expressions of individuated artistic genius.⁶⁸ Building on this, Gagnier has wondered whether 'the manifestly productivist aesthetic of Ruskin and Morris was always implicated in consumer culture, their aestheticism an "elite form of consumerism" [...] but its commodification displaced onto women'.⁶⁹ Taking into consideration Arnold's acknowledgement that 'his age was one of criticism, or consumption, rather than creation, or production ('The Function of Criticism at the Present Time' [1865])', to be answered by Wilde in 'The Critic as Artist' (1891) that criticism/ consumption was indeed a higher form than creation or production,

⁶⁷ D'Arcy, 5 April 1897, pp. 28-9.

⁶⁸ Lyn Pykett, *Engendering Fictions: The English Novel in the Early Twentieth Century*.

⁶⁹ Gagnier, p. 241.

Gagnier argues that the commodification denounced by Morris and Arnold, ‘from their very different but equally elevated platforms (it was “machinery” in Arnold and “exploitation” in Morris), was typically displaced onto the products of women or homosexuals, resulting in the ultimate trivialization of their creative labour’.⁷⁰

Rather than internalising the argument that positions her work in an inferior place to that of her male counterparts, for her, the argument of production versus consumption as articulated by Morris, Arnold and Wilde is invalid. In her eyes, this division does not exist. D’Arcy not only embraces the commodified status of literature but rather suggests that originality and commercial success may actually work in tandem. The division in this attitude as expressed by male writers (Arnold, Morris and Wilde) and D’Arcy as a female writer is not incidental. On some level, it reflects the ideologies of a high aestheticism versus popular culture played out in gendered terms.

The following letter from D’Arcy to Lane is presented in its entirety as I wish to discuss both its content and its form. The form of this letter is rather unusual given that it is further divided into two parts. It is addressed to two ‘different’ John Lanes (the ‘publisher’ and the ‘friend’) as is clearly defined by D’Arcy, but also written by two ‘different’ Ella D’Arcys (the shrewd businesswoman who is hard at bargaining and the gentle friend). This division of self is a decision that is worth analysing.

April 13th 1897

Nelson Villa

Hythe, Kent.

Letter to the Publisher.

Dear John Lane,

I have received a part of the proofs, and the story strikes me as really an excellent piece of work, wonderfully real and vivid. I shall not however begin to correct them, until our agreement is settled.

⁷⁰ Gagnier, pp. 240-1.

To begin with: - to say you will give me "*the balance of £15*", I suppose you intend for a joke? That debt of £10 from me to you, is wiped off by the story I have just given you for the April Yellow Book, and on which you owe *me* £5 on publication. These were the terms we arranged here on the Sunday, and the *only* terms on which I gave the story to your Editor at all. I wrote him these terms, after seeing you, when I sent the MS on the Monday. But to offer me £25 for my second book, a story of 30,000 words which has never appeared before, is an offer I could not think of accepting. (You gave nearly as much for the Idyll of Millenery a silly, poorly written tale of about 8,000 words in the Y.B.). All along, I have told you I require £50 for this MS; little enough anyhow; and to this I stand. If you cannot see your way to giving this, then I shall offer the story elsewhere, and if I cannot get the price elsewhere, then I do not publish at all.

But should you accept, and if you run it cleverly, I believe you could make it a success. I gave it to the young Irish priest here, to read. He was intensely interested in it, and speaks of it with great enthusiasm. He says it ought to be an immense success in Ireland.

And this makes me see, that the wise course would be, frankly to advertise it as a book about Roman Catholics. 'A book about Roman Catholics by a Roman Catholic', if you liked, and not my name at all. Then Catholics would naturally read it, Protestants would read it, Dissenters would read it, and so forth.

On this account, I shall change the title back to

Story of a Parish Priest

and – but I shall have a great deal more to tell you on the subject, if you accept my terms, which otherwise I need not trouble you with.

You will remember, in considering this letter that I have none of the vanity popularly attributed to authors, that I don't care a hang whether I'm ever published or not (I do care for money, having none) and that I shan't be the least disappointed by your refusal. Or annoyed. We will remain friends.

Ever yours,

Ella D'Arcy

Letter to the Friend.

Dear John Lane,

I'm so glad you liked your day here, and that you'll come again; next time we'll have a better time still, because you won't have to catch that silly six-o'clock train; and let us hope the weather will be warmer. The east wind still blows apace, at present.

On Thursday, I'm expecting Becket and her brother. They will stay till Tuesday. I hope to mistress the art of bicycling in the interim. I'm also trying to entice various other people to come down, such as Miss Bateson, C.S., and Mrs. Scott, so you see I am doing my best not to die of loneliness between this and your next visit!

Thanks for the flowers,

And believe me,

Yours ever,

Ella D'Arcy.

Patience Sparhawk is a great book, for does it not run to 500 pages? That's the best I can say for it.⁷¹

This division of the letter in two sections is an interesting choice by D'Arcy which can be explained in a number of ways in relation to the professional woman writer and the commodity. To take the sections as they are, in accordance with D'Arcy's usual tone when writing to Lane, based on their friendly relationship, would mean to see this division of the letter into two parts as a humorous attempt on her behalf. It was well known that in matters of money, Lane responded better when

⁷¹ D'Arcy, 13 April 1897, pp. 29-31.

humour and friendship were involved and D'Arcy would certainly have known that. As May informs us:

In regard to his reputed hard-bargaining, it should be remembered that there were two approaches to Lane's room. If, having been dismissed through the shop by the door that opens into Vigo Street, you had taken it into your head to seek re-admittance through the private entrance in Albany, and if you had asked him, not as a publisher, but as a friend, to help you with a loan, it is ten to one he would have done his best to come to your assistance.⁷²

In a similar incident of 'financial misunderstanding' between the publisher and Laurence Housman, Lane had responded positively to a letter taking on a similar approach as that of D'Arcy's above. Mix explains that after numerous unsuccessful attempts by Housman to collect £5 Lane owed him, he decided to write to him as a friend asking for a loan of £5. 'Housman assured him that he would repay the sum as soon as his publisher, a most honourable man, should make a payment promised the previous week.'⁷³ Lane was so amused by this that he raised the amount sent to Housman to £50.⁷⁴

However, there is another side to this: D'Arcy's letter above may be taken more seriously. I have approached it with Luce Irigaray's feminist criticism in mind, which takes into account Marxist theories with reference to the commodity. Irigaray argues that:

In order to become equivalent, a commodity changes bodies. A super-natural, metaphysical origin is substituted for its material origin. Thus its body becomes a transparent body, pure phenomenality of value. But this transparency constitutes a supplement to the material opacity of the

⁷² May, pp. 196-7.

⁷³ Mix, p. 40.

⁷⁴ Laurence Housman, *The Unexpected Years* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs Merrill Co., 1936), pp. 103-4, as quoted in Mix, p. 40.

commodity. Once again there is a schism between the two. Two sides, two poles, nature and society are divided, like the perceptible and the intelligible, matter and form, the empirical and the transcendental... The commodity, like the sign, suffers from metaphysical dichotomies. Its value, its truth, lies in the social element. But this social element is added on to its nature, to its matter, and the social subordinates it as a lesser value, indeed as nonvalue.⁷⁵

In her letter, the schism between her two selves reflects D'Arcy's position in the Bodley Head, a writer, a manufacturer of goods and commodities on the one hand and a friend on the other. The business-like tone of the first section seems to suggest 'masculine' characteristics in line with a particular social understanding as upheld in the fin de siècle. The second section of the letter takes on a more friendly tone and may be said to be feminine (or, at least, non-masculine) in comparative terms. Dividing the letter in this way indicates D'Arcy's awareness of her need to play two distinct roles simultaneously – that of the female friend and that of the female writer. By doing so, D'Arcy exposes the fallacy inherent in the dichotomy placed on both roles, which when set within a gendered environment, are understood as mutually exclusive terms. In this letter, D'Arcy inhabits two disparate roles and markets herself in a way which is best suited to ensure a successful outcome. In Irigaray's terms, it is perhaps possible to view this 'division' in D'Arcy's letter as a woman in terms of a wider commodification of her gender. Thus, her self seen as a commodity becomes malleable, flexible. It can change shapes, it can easily blend the real/fantasy divisions, just like the display windows did.

Irigaray articulates elsewhere this notion of the woman as a commodity:

Participation in society requires that the body submit itself to a specularization, a speculation, that transforms it into a value-bearing object, a standardized sign, an exchangeable signifier, a "likeness" with reference to

⁷⁵ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is not One*, trans. by Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 179. Italics in the original.

an authoritative model. A commodity – a woman – is divided into two irreconcilable “bodies”: her “natural” body and her socially valued, exchangeable body, which is a particularly mimetic expression of masculine values. [...] The commodity is thus a dual entity as soon as its value comes to possess a phenomenal form of its own, distinct from its natural form: that of exchange value. And it never possesses this form if it is considered in isolation. A commodity has this phenomenal form added on to its nature only in relation to another commodity.⁷⁶

Indeed, in the showing but also withholding information in the first part of her letter, D’Arcy appears like the goods in the brightly-lit window, enticing the prospective buyer with promises and withholding just enough to invite them to proceed with the purchase (a strategy very much in accordance with the *Yellow Book*’s, simultaneously attracting and resisting consumption). As a woman, who as Irigaray suggested, may be viewed as a commodity, it may be said that D’Arcy identifies her values (and therefore social worth) in the value (and monetary value more specifically) of her work. Rather than argue, as Irigaray, does for a ‘natural’ self removed from a commodified identity, I would argue that it is difficult to read D’Arcy’s letter here and to see D’Arcy as anything other than a complex self of interrelated identities that denies easy accommodation within a single conscripted identity. This concept is in keeping with another aspect of Irigaray’s theory when she contends that the prototypal woman ‘*is neither one nor two*. Rigorously speaking, she cannot be identified either as one person, or as two’.⁷⁷ D’Arcy’s humorous tendency, as well as her fragmented, elliptical language, in some ways resist analysis. Like the prototypal woman in Irigaray’s theory, D’Arcy is ‘indefinitely other in herself [...] not to mention her language in which “she” sets off in all directions leaving “him” unable to discern the coherence of any meaning. [...] She steps ever so slightly aside from herself with [...] a sentence left unfinished’.⁷⁸ In this case, the ‘him’ in conversation may not just be Lane, unable to comprehend the coherence of her meaning and the schism of her self, or even the male reader in

⁷⁶ Irigaray, pp. 179-80.

⁷⁷ Irigaray, p. 26.

⁷⁸ Irigaray, pp. 28-9.

general. Instead, it is every reader of a capitalist society that is used to 'count everything, to number everything by units, to inventory everything as individualities'.⁷⁹

In a similar way to D'Arcy, Hickson also demonstrated her acute awareness of marketing and publicity strategies. Hickson's letters to Lane show a persistent focus on reviews and advertising rather than income, but one which nevertheless is associated with marketing and business rather than the content of her writing. It should be noted that her background differs from D'Arcy's as Hickson came from a privileged, upper middle class background (her father was a famous and admired judge) and therefore lacks D'Arcy's urgency for money. In addition, Hickson's life in the suburbs is very different to the one that other writers led in literary London circles. Although she occasionally attended parties with other literary figures of the era in London, her base was Esher, Surrey. Her perceptions of art are much more theoretical and abstract, as D'Arcy observes of her in one of her letters, and her discussions of such issues lack the vivacious character of the rest of the *Yellow Book* contributors. However, her being away from the epicentre of literary life offers the critical reader a fresh outlook on what she values as good marketing. She is at the same time part of literary London but also outside it, viewing it from a distance. Most importantly, Hickson based away from the centre of London (both literally and in its literary sense) has come to value two points. Firstly, as she is away from the gatherings in which she could be introduced to new writers, her point of contact for recommendations for new work is thus gathered mainly via newspapers and periodicals rather than directly. In Hickson, we have a writer therefore whose knowledge of the London literary scene is largely garnered through what she can read from the press of the time. In her letters to Lane, we see Hickson exhibiting the anxiety of a new writer in her obsession with reviews of her work. However, there is also a sense that drawing from press reviews was a major source of Hickson's understanding of the reception of her work, rather than directly from her literary peers in London. Secondly, Hickson places particular significance on any means that could circulate her work onto a wider audience, namely Mudie's and W.H. Smith. These two institutions had revolutionised publishing and the perception of readership by encouraging a wider dissemination of the written work and addressing the needs

⁷⁹ Irigaray, p. 26.

of a growing reading public (the result of the 1870 Education Act). With specific reference to W.H Smith, Hickson closely connects the popularity of the train and underground to a growing readership of her work and, thus, a potential revenue to exploit in generating more sales.

Elsewhere, Hickson shows her aptitude for utilising friendly networks and recommendations in order to aid in the distribution of literary work. In an early letter to Lane, she enquires as to the publication date of her volume *Shadows of Life* and adds in a postscript, ‘We are very much interested in Mrs. [sic] D’Arcy’s new Vol – and find Mr. Harland’s beautiful. I am asking for them at Mudie’s and the library here [...] am buying copies and recommending them to my friends’.⁸⁰

Later, we see more frequently in her letters an aptitude for more ingenious ways of marketing and circulating her work. In a letter addressed to Frederic Chapman (who was standing in for Lane when he was ill), Hickson advises him where to send her volume for reviewing. The organisation behind this is exceptionally detailed. Hickson compiled a list (see figures 2 and 3, pp. 96-7), based not only on press in which she would like to be mentioned, but also as a result of previous reviews of her ‘Teddy’ stories. She writes: ‘Please send to *The Chronicle*, *Daily Telegraph*, as well as the papers upon my list – [...] I have sent the list of these I chiefly recommend. Thank you so much for all the trouble you are taking. Idler [?] are a fan of the “Teddy” [...] yet there are lots and lots more juice – one of the best of all being “The Twins” [sic].’ She then proceeds in the same letter to list a few newspapers like the *Daily Chronicle*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Outlook* and *London Review* and writes, ‘I enclose another list – complete – to save you trouble of the Teddy reviews; *The Outlook* and *London Review* are important’.⁸¹ In this way Hickson clearly recognises the power of the press in forming audience’s tastes and tries to take advantage of this by basing the marketing of her current work on the success of her previous stories. This is not an isolated action. Only a few days later she writes again wanting to make sure that attention is drawn to the reviews: ‘I sent Mr. Lane a list of all the papers who have so warmly and kindly noticed “Teddy”. If it is mislaid

⁸⁰ Hickson to Lane, undated [1898]. Hickson’s correspondence to Lane is, like D’Arcy’s, held at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin and forms part of their ‘John Lane Company Records’ collection (Box 24, Folder 4). As it is considerably smaller, totalling 36 pages, I have managed to have these scanned and sent over. Hickson’s correspondence to Lane has not appeared in any study or publication, either in parts or full.

⁸¹ Hickson to Chapman, 10 May 1898.

I will write another – reviews are important, are they not?’⁸² In fact, in most of her letters, Hickson mentions reviews of her work that she comes across.

Hickson’s letters are characterised by an urgency to publish that is connected not to authorial vanity but sales: ‘So many of my friends are asking for *Shadows of Life* and I so much hope that perhaps it may be out soon. The long delay stops interest in it [...] in a [?] spins the sale’.⁸³ Hickson indeed takes marketing and publicity matters in her own hands. She orders books and asks for the copies she is entitled to in order to give to friends (the micro network mentioned above) as well as to share with booksellers: ‘I am ordering a dozen or so copies, to give to friends [...] two booksellers – a useful thing to do so the book thus becomes better known, and no doubt you will send me 5 more in due course. Mr. Lane promised me 6 copies’.⁸⁴ This ingenious form of advertising her work shows more than just initiative and business acumen on her part. It shows, to some degree, that women writers of the period could be more than just mere observers of the shifting literary marketplace of the fin de siècle. They could also be active participants, and through their actions and an understanding of the commerciality of the written word, help shape the literary marketplace.

Hickson observes the process of the advertisement of her works closely. She writes, ‘There are such glorious advts: of “Teddy” – in all the leading papers: should that not be fortunate for *Shadows* also!’⁸⁵ Among the material available in the John Lane archive are clippings of those Teddy adverts (see figures 4 and 5, pp. 98-99). These are not dated, but based on deductions from the above extract of the letter, one may assume that they were sent along with the above letter. This was done as a way of not only illustrating previous successes, but aiding in the advertisement and marketing of future work in Lane’s Bodley Head.

In the letters dating from June 10, 1898 to August 7 of the same year, Hickson repeatedly discusses her attempts in vain to locate her volume, *Shadows of Life*, at Mudie’s. Her work is not to be found on the list, she claims, and hastens to add that this is probably resulting in the loss of potential buyers. On August 7 she

⁸² Hickson to Chapman, 13 May 1898.

⁸³ Hickson to Chapman, 13 May 1898.

⁸⁴ Hickson to Chapman, 17 May 1898.

⁸⁵ Hickson to Chapman, 20 May 1898.

excitedly announces: ‘The book is in Mudie’s!’⁸⁶ In addition, Hickson, living outside London used the railway very often in order to get to London. Thus, she and the friends she mentions (‘So many of my friends travel on this line; and the St. Northern – so that books of mine are asked for at Waterloo and King’s Cross.’⁸⁷) are part of the new generation of readers that have come to be the centre of attention for many late nineteenth-century studies: the train passengers with their need for literature ‘on the go’. In this capacity, Hickson differs from most of the *Yellow Book* contributors who were based in London and would not use the railway as much.⁸⁸ In fact, Hickson in her letters places great attention to the symbol of the railway bookstore, W. H. Smith, thus demonstrating an understanding and appreciation of the new reading public. In this way she reflects Lane’s acknowledgement of a wider reading public. While the *Yellow Book* did not strictly fit into this image of literature which could be read on the train and then discarded, it was extensively advertised in railways. Furthermore, when the otherwise conservative W. H. Smith decided to have the periodical on sale in its store, this was regarded as an excellent marketing move.⁸⁹

As a measure of success, Hickson emphasises the need for the omnipresence of her volume in key locations such as W.H Smith’s stalls: ‘One or two of my friends have been asking for *Shadows of Life* at Smith’s stalls, but cannot get it. I am sorry but suppose that could not be managed. Please could you tell me if it is at the stores? They sold a lot of *Concerning Teddy* there I know. And I could tell people they can buy it there’.⁹⁰ Hickson does not only stress the importance of her book being sold at Smith’s for people to find easily. In addition, instead of asking for information with regards to sales, she furnishes her editor with this. This action is not to be underestimated as it shows a dynamic attitude on her behalf. With this action, Hickson seeks to become a master of her commodities, following their journey from production to circulation and, in an indirect way, consumption.

⁸⁶ Hickson to Chapman, 7 August 1898.

⁸⁷ Hickson to Chapman, 20 September 1898.

⁸⁸ Hickson’s contemporaries living in London were more likely to be involved in relatively shorter journey times, given that they were travelling across London while Hickson would be involved in a much longer commute across the South of England. It may be fair to deduce that during longer waiting and journey times, the need for accompaniment literature would be more paramount.

⁸⁹ The relationship of Lane to this bookstore, however, was not always harmonious as Lane was afraid he would be faced with a ban of sale of the *Yellow Book* following the bookstore’s refusal to handle Bodley Head writer’s George Moore’s *Esther Waters*.

⁹⁰ Hickson to Chapman, 20 September 1898.

Hickson shows a remarkably insightful understanding for the literary marketplace and the limitations of her work in it: ‘I have had several delightful letters about the book so I do hope it will sell, at the least, moderately well. I hear that *Concerning Teddy* is on lots of Smith’s stalls but perhaps *Shadows* is not the kind of book for that?’⁹¹ In suggesting that the sentimental Teddy stories are best posited in line with W.H Smith, while the explicit and daring *Shadows of Life* may struggle for sales within the same bookstore, Hickson demonstrates a cogent understanding of the bookstore’s clientele. Throughout her correspondence, Hickson acknowledges the growing power of the railway bookstore and of the mass readership, but does so without any of the cynicism we might have expected from a representative of the cultural elite.

To conclude, this chapter has come across a variety of dichotomies that all seem to be related to the financial state of the society and the relation of the female authorial self to commodity. The dichotomies of truth and fantasy in the display window, of high and low culture in the marketplace as well as that of the public/authorial/working and personal/domestic selves reflect on a powerful interrelation of finance and society that affected people then as it does now. The reflection of this reality on a commodity like the *Yellow Book* that simultaneously serves, resists and documents it is a tool that we can use not only to further our understanding of the literary marketplace of a specific period but also our general social understanding of a capitalist society.

⁹¹ Hickson to Chapman, 10 June 1898.

Announcement

The Yellow Book

An Illustrated Quarterly

Volume 1 April, 1894



London: Elkin Mathews & John Lane

Price Five Shillings Net

Figure 1 – The Yellow Book - Announcement

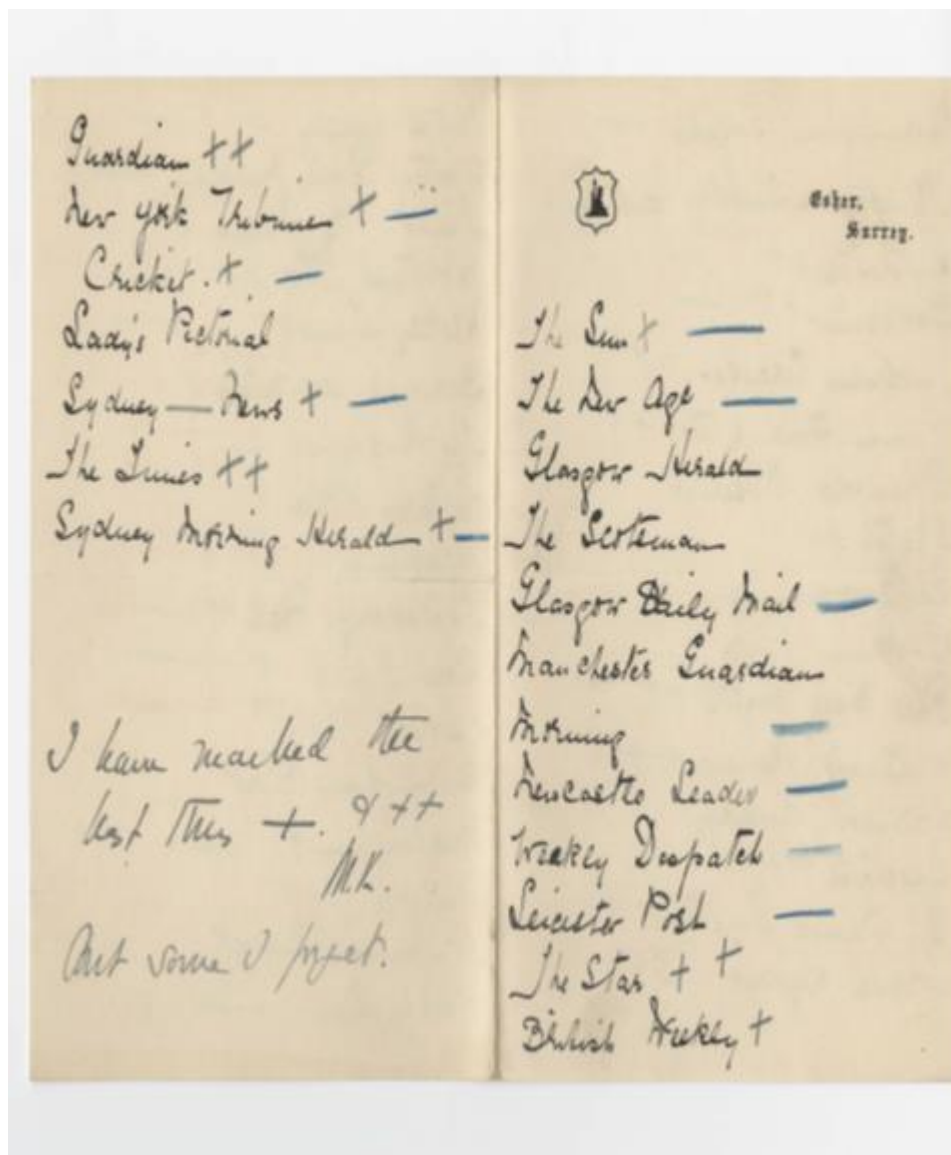


Figure 2 – Mrs. Murray Hickson's correspondence – Review List 1

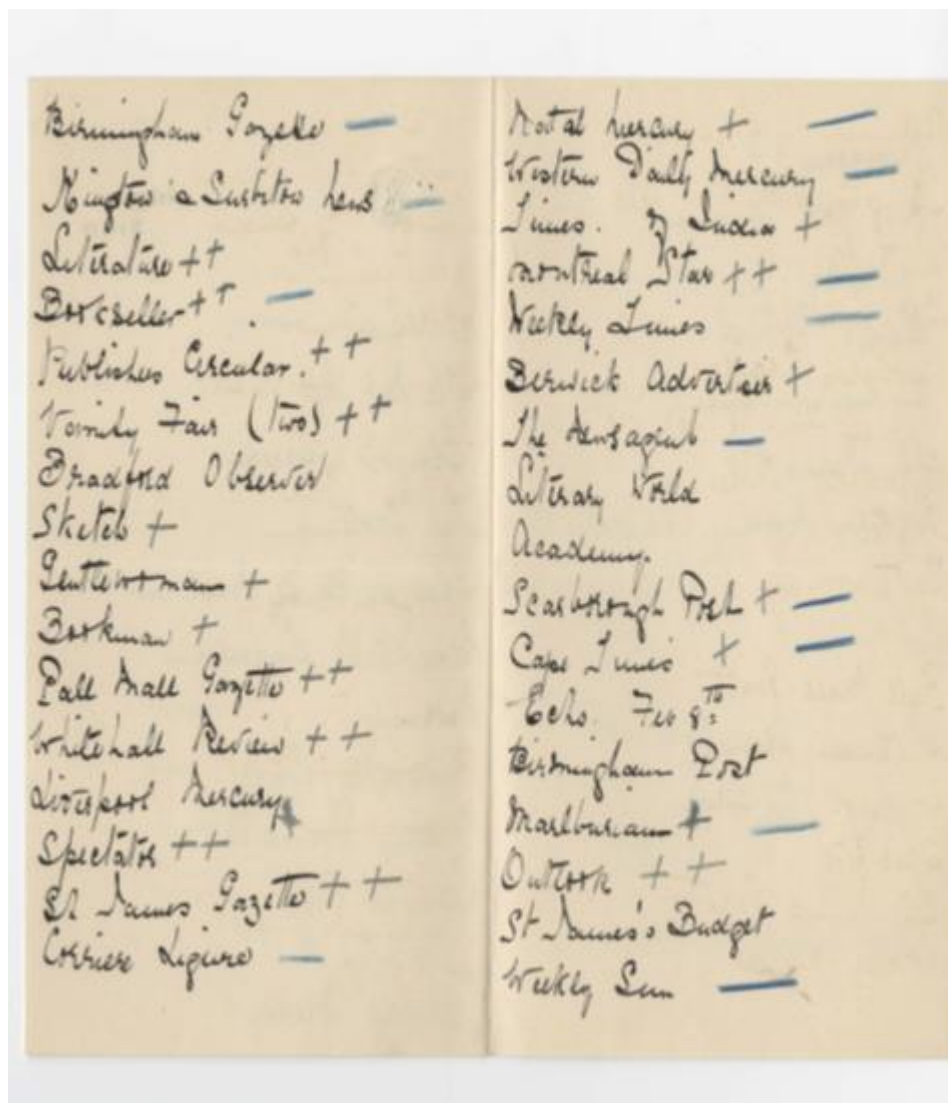


Figure 3 – Mrs. Murray Hickson's correspondence – Review List 2

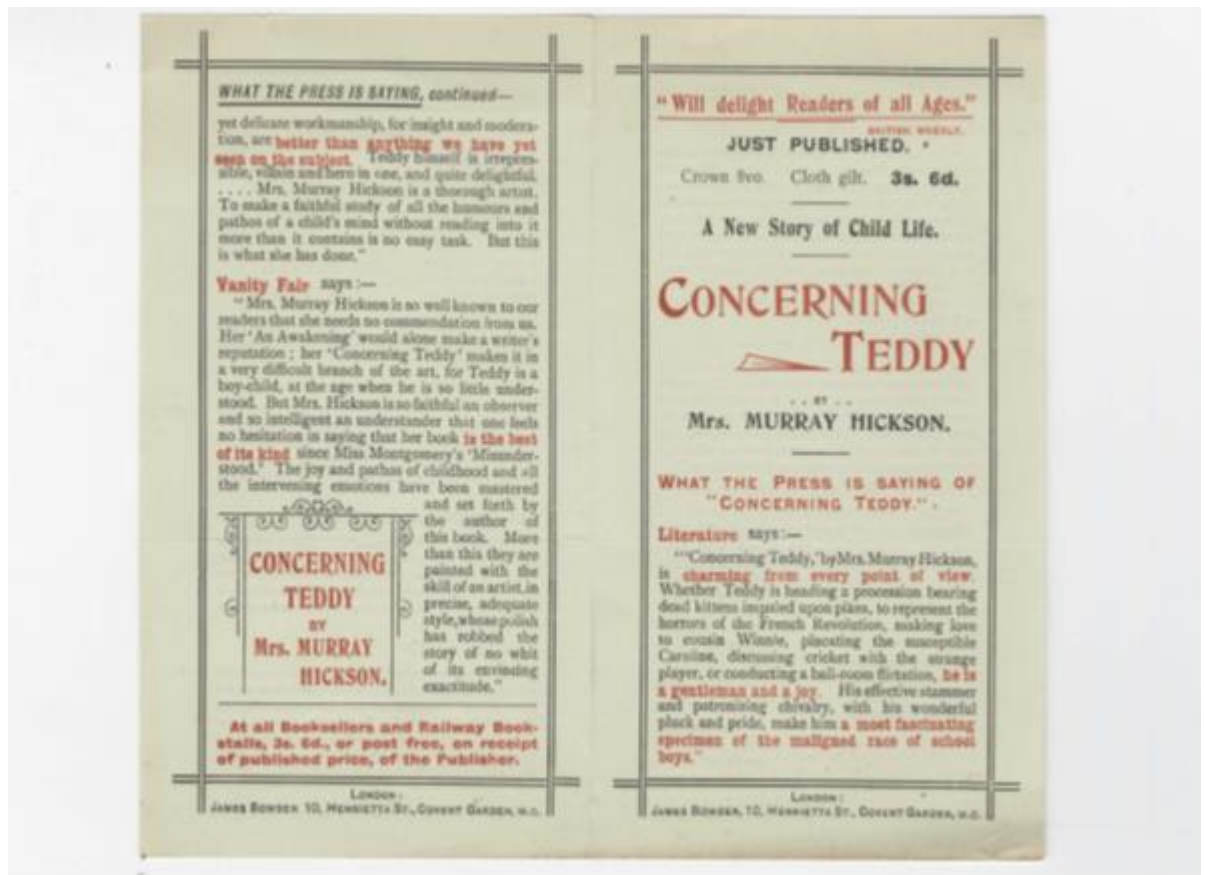


Figure 4 – Mrs. Murray Hickson's correspondence – Teddy adverts
1

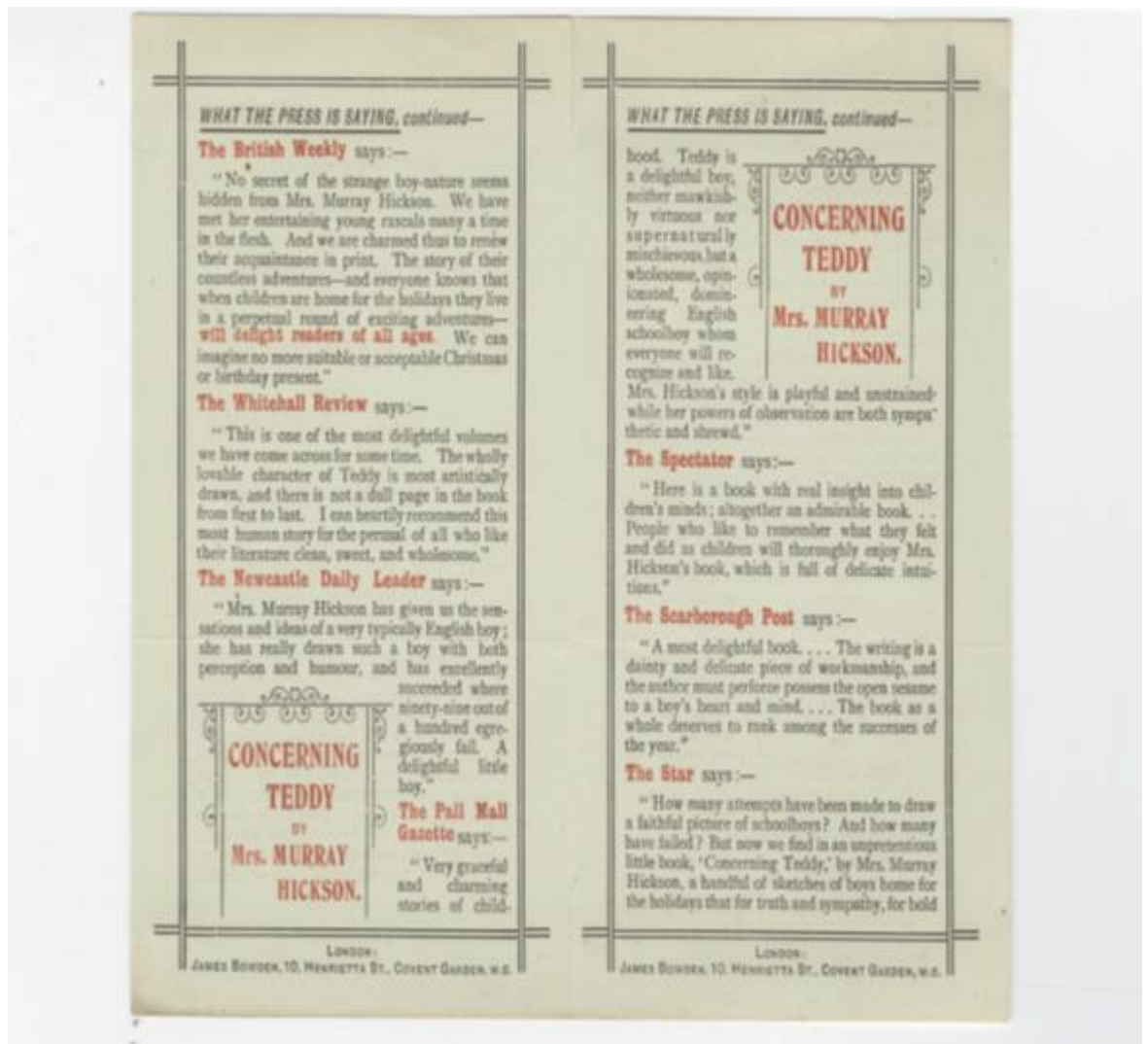


Figure 5 – Mrs. Murray Hickson's correspondence – Teddy adverts
2

Chapter III

A Liminal Setting: The Role of Setting and Language in Ella D'Arcy's Protomodernist Short Fiction

*'Every stimulus must reach a certain intensity before any appreciable sensation results. This point is known as the threshold or liminal intensity.'*¹ – James Sully – *Outlines of Psychology*

*'It's interesting – the ways in which one has to balance life—because you have to know when to let go and when to pull back.... There's always some liminal (as opposed to subliminal) space in between which is harder to inhabit because it never feels as safe as moving from one extreme to another.'*² – bell hooks – *Outlaw Culture*

*'The point is not to stay marginal, but to participate in whatever network or marginal zones is spawned from other disciplinary centers and that, together, constitute a multiple displacement of those authorities.'*³ – Judith Butler – *Gender Trouble*

In this chapter I argue that setting in D'Arcy's stories is the primary factor by which she creates a dynamic and original story, overthrows expectations, creates a space for articulating new ideas as well as new literary styles and signposts shifts in identity through movement from one place to another. Focusing on the idea of liminality, I look at the influence of realism and naturalism on D'Arcy and discuss how, as her stories progress from one place to another, her innovative choice of style heralds the advent of protomodernist writing. Even though this style does not offer any solutions or answers (or even attempts to), it clearly defines a new space and focuses on the importance of mobility and change. I place my analysis in the context of a critical discourse that focuses on the setting in the fin de siècle and the

¹ James Sully, *Outlines of Psychology* (London: Longmans Green and Co., 1884), p. 114.

² bell hooks, *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 248.

³ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. xxxii.

movement from one place to another and I argue for its direct links to a sense of identity. Influenced by the work of such scholars as Ana Parejo Vadillo and Claire Drewery, I extend and develop their work on the figuring of liminal modernity and mobility in fin-de-siècle short fiction. I argue there is an integral interconnection between the style and the form of the short story and consider what both signify for D'Arcy as a writer and a female writer in particular.

Browsing through the contents of Harold Orel's study of the Victorian short story, the absence of any female authors in the contents list is striking.⁴ Doing so with the contents of any *Yellow Book* volume, on the other hand, one will be struck by the appearance of many female authors who, more or less frequently, contributed. Although neither can be used for definitive conclusions, this example does something to prove the argument that a clear-cut division which maps quality onto masculinity is a twentieth-century construct: a direct consequence of the gender politics of the modernist movement that followed the fin de siècle. In addition to the stylistic priorities of modernism, however, more recent scholarly attention, such as that of Ann Ardis and Lyn Pykett, has focused on the political rather than the stylistic. This in turn has led to an emphasis on the work of writers such as Olive Schreiner and Mona Caird to the obscuring of the rather different sort of political engagement in the writing of D'Arcy and Hickson.

Even though much critical attention in the last two decades has redressed this aspect of twentieth-century canon formation in some respects, the effect is not the same in terms of style. It is a common phenomenon that critics and readers alike will turn to male canonical writers when they are looking for innovation in style rather than a strictly historicist cultural and political interest in the era. For this reason, this chapter will discuss D'Arcy as more than just another undervalued New Woman writer, but rather as a female writer of original and strong short stories in all aspects of subject matter, form, style and argument. Although the context will be considered and analysed, a close reading of the stories and a study of the use of setting and language in them is much more productive in terms of creating a space for the study of such marginal writers as D'Arcy. My definition of a context in this is therefore not so much of a sociohistorical nature but rather a philosophical one in which Virginia

⁴ Harold Orel, *The Victorian Short Story: Development and Triumph of a Literary Genre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

Woolf's ideas on the short form and Roland Barthes' theories of writing and language take a primary place.

My analysis in this chapter also relies on the arguments of Vadillo and Drewery who discuss urban mobility as experienced by turn-of-the-century women poets and liminality in modernist short story women writers respectively.⁵ Although Vadillo's study addresses a different genre, that of poetry, a great number of theorists and writers (Virginia Woolf among them) have elaborated on the idea that the short story as a form is much closer to poetry than it is to novels.⁶ Vadillo's illuminating thesis of a female poet as a passenger of modernity can only be enhanced by the reflexive extension of her idea onto short story women writers who lived (in) the city of London and traced the effect of moving around London on their writing. In addition, in the case of Drewery, her analysis of liminality is an extremely useful application of an idea that had mainly been explored by anthropologists in the field of literature.⁷ Whereas she focuses on the liminality of time, my focus is on the concept of the liminal space. Combining these two studies allows one to reach conclusions about the ways in which D'Arcy discusses the liminality of space, the act of moving from a place of being to another (to paraphrase Angela Smith) and the effect of that in terms of style and language.⁸ I suggest, therefore, that the different setting in D'Arcy's stories invariably marks an identity shift on the part of the

⁵ Ana Parejo Vadillo, *Women Poets and Urban Aestheticism: Passengers of Modernity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Claire Drewery, *Modernist Short Fiction by Women: The Liminal in Katherine Mansfield, Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair and Virginia Woolf* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

⁶ For the relevant discussion see Christine Reynier, *Virginia Woolf's Ethics of the Short Story* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

⁷ The idea of liminality was studied by anthropologists Victor Turner and Arnold van Gennep in their analyses of the transitory stage of rites of passage in a number of cultures. It has since been extensively applied on postcolonial literature and thought with Homi Bhabha's cultural interpretations of liminality and Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of the liminal 'chronotope' being central to it. See Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publication, 1982); 'Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage' in *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967); 'Liminality and Communitas' in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (London: Routledge, 1969); 'Passages, Margins, and Poverty: Religious Symbols of Communitas' in *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1975); Arnold van Gennep, *Rites de Passage*, trans. by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (London: Routledge, 2004). For a discussion of the liminal in postcolonial culture see Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 2004); Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Form of Time and Chronotope in the Novel' in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981); *Bakhtin's Theory of the Literary Chronotope: Reflections, Applications, Perspectives*, ed. by Nele Bemong et al. (Ghent: Academia Press, 2010).

⁸ Angela Smith, *Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf: A Public of Two* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), p. 7.

characters which is reflected on the language. As a result, these changes inform and influence the protomodernist stylistics of the text, in which narrative, language and the characters' psychological complexity reflect on one another.

According to scholars like Peter Nicholls and Drewery, 'connections have frequently been drawn between modernism and displacement, alienation and exile'.⁹ Liminality in terms of what the *aftermath* of it is on the character, as in feelings of exile and alienation, might be more closely connected to modernism but I conclude that as a *process* the idea of liminality is closely tied to the turn of the century. A time period that baffled people then as much as scholars now, being in between periods that we are at ease with naming as Victorian and Modernist, the *fin de siècle* as a time period is a limen in itself. Transition then, as a motif influences most of the era's writers whether they discuss social changes, sexual desire, or femininity.

In her study of short stories, Clare Hanson suggests that 'the consequence of the decision to pursue the "immediate" was the necessary abolition of all that mediated, that made the text [...] a story of the past'.¹⁰ However, this is clearly not the case in D'Arcy's protomodernist writing. Moving away from the long descriptions of Victorian writing, her writing has at times an impressionistic quality. It focuses instead on the moments of 'becoming' and explains what brought her characters to their current point. Although these 'explanations' are but mere impressions, they still manage to create a solid line of argument. It is all characterised by mobility and a sense of a fluid, everchanging self, reflected in the everchanging environment. This analysis, I suggest, is not interesting simply in terms of bridging the gap between Victorian and Modernist writing. It is rather a movement in itself and reflects the reality of the *fin de siècle*, one that exists in constant motion, change, conflict (but not break) with 'what was'. The focus, though, is not the 'what was' or even the 'what is now' but rather within the change, in the *limen*.

Limen derives from Latin, meaning boundary or threshold. In Drewery's analysis, this is one of time but its chief value in the context of this thesis is in

⁹ Drewery, p. 27.

¹⁰ Clare Hanson, *Short Stories and Short Fictions, 1880-1980* (London: Macmillan, 1985), p. 69.

relation to an apprehension of the function of space.¹¹ It is also, of course, very much a phenomenon of the time period under scrutiny. The fin de siècle, itself at the threshold of another century, was as Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst and so many other recent scholars of the period suggest, an era preoccupied with change and the arrival of the ‘new’ and this is reflected in D’Arcy’s writing.¹² If we were to think of limen as a hurricane and distinguish the things as they were before and as they appeared to be after, my analysis of D’Arcy’s stories is focused *inside* the hurricane, the exact moment of change, the state of things as change *is happening*. It is no coincidence that I chose such a dynamic image to illustrate my point. As I will argue later, I suggest that D’Arcy’s inscriptions of liminality replicate this dynamic force.

It is not only in the plot that liminality is key in creating a dynamic story but also in effect. Drewery views liminality as conveying ‘irreconcilable conflicts of identity, brief glimpses of threshold states, and potential social structures and identities’.¹³ The purpose of liminality in a story is not to resolve any conflicts but rather to accentuate them and to stress the moment, as Victor Turner describes it, as ‘an instant of pure potentiality when everything [...] trembles in the balance’.¹⁴ Drewery stresses the dangers that lay within liminality for the self but also views it as ‘liberating, enabling the transgression of social boundaries, a confrontation with otherness, and a challenge to the limits of subjectivity’.¹⁵

Turner’s analysis further suggests that psychological and literal thresholds are places of fear and ambivalence, evoking such borderline states as silence, incoherence, madness, and the threat of death all of which are invariably endings to D’Arcy’s stories.¹⁶ In ‘The Elegie’, the first story of her first volume of short stories, *Monochromes* (1895), the lure of the big cities of Paris and Berlin is too strong to dismiss for Emil Schoenemann, the main male protagonist and talented composer.¹⁷ The story takes place in a Continental setting with a strong cosmopolitan

¹¹ However, neither can be considered in complete isolation from the other.

¹² *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History c.1880-1900*, ed. by Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹³ Drewery, p. 1.

¹⁴ Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publication, 1982), p. 44.

¹⁵ Drewery, p. 2.

¹⁶ As quoted in Drewery, p. 2.

¹⁷ Ella D’Arcy, *Monochromes* (London: John Lane, 1895). For ‘The Elegie’ all subsequent references will be to this edition.

atmosphere. It starts from a small German town, Klettendorf, moves to Paris and Berlin, and concludes in Klettendorf again. The difference between Klettendorf, an idyllic, romantic countryside background and Paris, the city that will come to change him and his feelings, is a stark one. The prose takes a heightened romantic and sentimental tone influenced directly by the setting. Furthermore, the youthfulness of the characters, Emil and Marie, also reflect back on to the stylistic choices in line with the choice of surroundings. However, Marie quickly senses the allure of the city, situated far from her and Klettendorf: “I think it is you who will first forget me,” she told him, for she too had heard of the sirens of Paris’ [TE, 31].

Her father urges Emil to leave and after finding fame and fortune in Europe and provided he still loves her after seven years he is to come back and marry her. When Emil asks for a formal betrothal, Marie’s father refuses, thinking that ‘betrothals may be useful between persons who believe more in the sanctity of a promise than in the sanctity of love’ [TE, 28]. The betrothal as well as the sanctity of promise work here on a dual level, both towards people (Marie) as well as settings. Emil is to experience the world before returning to the small town. Emil accepts but, we are warned, perhaps not for the right reasons, that is to say reasons that pertain to the sentimentality of loving feelings towards either Marie or Klettendorf: ‘An immense desire to prove the Graf wrong laid hold of Emil, who said to himself that even in the impossible case of his ever loving Marie less than at that moment, he would marry her merely to show Graf Dittenheim how much he had been mistaken’ [TE, 30]. The moment of decision between the two settings, in essence between two identities, two states of being, is crucial. The motives behind the decision are not very clear. Rather, the characters are portrayed as if they partake in a sort of play where they stretch possibilities without entirely feeling the seriousness of the situation as it almost does not feel quite real but part of a performance instead. D’Arcy returns to the issue of self as performance in response to the environment in her stories ‘A Marriage’ and ‘A Pleasure-Pilgrim’, an analysis of which will explore the theme further later in the chapter. In ‘A Marriage’, too, Paris and the French influence play an underlying role in portraying identity as performance.

As time goes by, the experience of Paris has altered Emil’s impressions about the people and habits of his small German hometown. Paris, with the certain promise for success and experience proves much stronger than the romanticism of

Klettendorf's rural setting and the idealism of femininity that lies there in the embodiment of Marie:

Custom had softened his early detestation of the city and its ways into tolerance, which in its turn grew imperceptibly into affection. As in the beginning he had wondered how he could ever endure the new life and strange people, so at length he asked himself how he could ever again exchange the intellectual brilliancy of Paris for the somnolence of a German town. [TE, 33]

As Marie's father expects, the experience of the city coupled with what he suspected was Emil's inherent dishonesty makes him forget Marie: 'Towards the end of the given period, though, Emil purposely worked himself into the delusion that he still loved Marie von Dittenheim with passion, in order that the sensations of the final interview might be the more intense' [TE, 56]. He is preparing for a role as an actor exposing here the fakery of feelings, which is further underlined by the theatricality of the setting. The consequences, though, D'Arcy warns, are all too real. Emil returns after seven years, only to find that his beloved (?) Marie has died that very morning.

Furthermore, in 'An Engagement', the main female character, Agnes, experiences a prolonged liminal state upon finding out the news that her love interest has betrayed her when he realises that he has mistakenly taken her name for someone else's of a higher social rank – significantly a case of mistaken identity.¹⁸ Tormented by the reality, she roams around the town under direct heat trying to take in the new situation, to comprehend it and adapt. For her, too, though, the results are catastrophic. Unable to get past that liminal moment, she is trapped in it forever: 'Should she ever get home? ... She dragged on with leaden feet and prayed persistently for darkness' [AE, 406]. Returning home, she falls ill – the result of her liminal roaming state in torturing physical circumstances – and afflicted by the sunlight (the symbol of pure light that comes to cast the shadows away, shine

¹⁸ Ella D'Arcy, 'An Engagement', *Yellow Book*, 8 (1896).

honesty and restore morality) she loses command of speech and dies: ‘But when at last she lay upon her own bed in such darkness as closed shutters and drawn curtains can give, all she could say was “Oh, the sun, the sun!” and lift her head indeterminately towards her head’ [AE, 406].¹⁹ The ending here is highly reminiscent of that in Ibsen’s play *Ghosts*, a commentary on love, family and morality in the late nineteenth century (‘Mother give me the sun’ and repeating ‘The sun. The sun.’) Although the title is translated as ‘Ghosts’ in English, the Danish ‘Gengangere’ would literally translate as ‘again walkers’. The play concludes with Oswald addressing the sun, meaning the truth. In a reflective way, Agnes seeks the truth through walking but the combination of her wandering and the extreme sunlight eventually kills her.

She thus links the ability of comprehension and reason to the sunlight and the catastrophic truth it brought out. To compound this further, in her inability to comprehend, she then loses the ability to speak, and so is completely unable to share her pain. In effect she dies a horrible death, one in complete and utter isolation: ‘And when, a few hours before the death, she lost the power of speech, still her hand wandered up every now and again automatically towards her head’ [AE, 404]. In her liminal state, Agnes is not only devoid of reason but companionship as well. The omnibus she was encouraged to take, but did not, would not just protect her from the heat and the sunlight (along with the symbolisms they carry that I discussed above). It would also provide her with a sense of community in the form of fellow passengers. Placing herself outside every social network, Agnes is destined for death.

There is a clear difference between marginality and liminality that needs to be stressed early on. The former ‘exists at the edges of social structure’, whereas the latter ‘exists *within* social structure itself, but in its interstices; the cracks falling between pre-existing social norms, classifications, and conventions’.²⁰ As a result, D’Arcy attempts to strike from within, to engage in the most popular, traditional style of the short story, a mode of male-dominated French realism, in order to explore the new possibilities within it. Within the cracks of the literary movement, (notice the term ‘movement’ which by definition signifies and incorporates change)

¹⁹ See Henrik Ibsen, *Ghosts* in *Four Major Plays*, trans. by James McFarlane and Jens Arup, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008). *Ghosts* was first staged in London in 1891 for a private performance.

²⁰ Drewery, p. 3.

she tries to find an alternative space. Moving around rural, suburban and urban spaces marks a shift on the style of the story as reflected in the language of the characters and the literary movement that D'Arcy chooses. There are clear gender and class connotations to these changes. Typically, the shift is from a male-dominated narrative with sentimental or realistic tones to a female-dominated protomodernism which ends the story in a state of inconclusiveness. Furthermore, the change is that of rural to urban and one that can and has been interpreted by scholars (as I discuss later) as one from innocence to pain. However, such a view takes into account mainly the male characters who seem to suffer from such changes. I would instead characterise their attitude as one progressing from wilful ignorance to unwelcome experience. The same cannot be said about the female protagonists of D'Arcy's short fiction who appear as more flexible and adjust better and faster to the changes. This dual analysis of a Darwinian view of the urban setting in terms of environmental determinism is key in understanding the actions of male versus female characters in D'Arcy's stories. Female characters seem to adapt better in the changing environments but D'Arcy points out that this is accomplished due to their choices and actions which are in turn shaped in response to the setting. There is no predetermined fate in her exploration of space. The Darwinian concept of the setting is treated as a symbol and relates to the characters' agency rather than an inherent deterministic quality. The ones who adapt better are the ones who are in tune with a fluid idea of identity that is malleable and adjustable to the shifting setting.

In an approach similar to that of Vadillo, who analyses both the writers as passengers of modernity themselves as well as the influence of that experience on their work, liminality is not only considered as experienced by the characters but also as reflected in the style and form of D'Arcy's stories. This allows for an exploration of them as vehicles for voicing ideas contrary to the social and moral status quo. D'Arcy starts off by using clear realism and almost lulls the reader into a safe sensation. This is reflected in the use of a quaint rural or suburban picture in the opening scenes. She then overthrows expectations with the eruption of gothic undertones and concludes with a protomodernist open ending (as in by the use of a broken household amidst the urban noise such as in 'Irremediable' and 'A Marriage'). This combination of styles can be analysed on the level of reader reception by applying Barthes' theory of the text's purpose. Barthes discusses

literature in terms of ‘a dialectics of desire’ between the text and the reader, whereby a text is judged on what it has to give to ‘me’, the reader (‘me’ used in the active, mobile Nietzschean sense).²¹ Drawing on this, he distinguishes between texts of pleasure and texts of bliss.

Text of pleasure: the text that contents, fills, grants euphoria; the text that comes from culture and does not break with it, is linked to a *comfortable* practice of reading. Text of bliss: the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts [...], unsettles the reader’s historical, cultural, psychological assumptions [...] brings to a crisis his relation with language.²²

D’Arcy exemplifies aspects of both sides of this theory within each story starting from pleasure and moving on to bliss. As the tension builds, so are the expectations shattered: both the readers’ (who might be expecting a story of pleasure) and the male characters’ (who might be expecting a life of pleasure). I suggest this has a symbolic meaning. As Mary Eagleton suggests, ‘to query the truth, coherence and resolution of realism is to undermine the symbolic order. Non-realist forms permit the woman writer to express the contradictions, fantasies or desires that the demands of realism silence’.²³ It is not only the seamless movement between literary movements that disturbs the reader but also the inconclusiveness of the story. Patricia Stubbs argues that the ‘open-ended qualities of [D’Arcy’s] short stories underline their subversive character, to raise new subject matter’.²⁴ But D’Arcy does not just raise a new subject matter, she creates a new style, not one that defies or forms a clear break from previous tradition, but one that builds on it and creates a liminal space in which conflicting forces are clashing.

In her study of the novel, Stubbs dedicated a small chapter to the emergence of the short story as major literary form in the 1880s and 1890s. She accepts the

²¹ Roland Barthes, *The Pleasures of the Text* trans. by Richard Miller (London: Cape, 1976), p. 4.

²² Barthes, p. 14.

²³ Mary Eagleton, ‘Gender and Genre’ in *Re-Reading the Short Story*, ed. by Clare Hanson (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), p. 58.

²⁴ Patricia Stubbs, *Women and Fiction: Feminism and the Novel, 1880-1920* (Sussex: Harvester University Press, 1979), pp. 104-5.

Yellow Book as the periodical with which ‘practically all the leading short story writers of the ‘nineties’ were associated’ and singles out D’Arcy as the writer who ‘explored perhaps most honestly’ women and sexual relations.²⁵ She finds D’Arcy ‘detached and analytical’, ‘never sentimental about women; she never allows herself to be anything but a critical realist’. She goes on to argue, ‘this is due partly to her style, which is sparse, cryptic, ironic, and partly to the shrewd and rigorous way she registers every mental ploy of her selfish characters’.²⁶ In this context, Stubbs connects realism to a cynicism that reveals and exposes the truth and suggests that D’Arcy ‘has no illusions about her own sex [...] she exposes the selfishness, egotism and duplicity of many women’.²⁷ Similarly, a number of critics have argued that D’Arcy creates a negative image of women, blaming them for changing, for fooling the men, for not staying true, thus exposing her beliefs with regards to the ‘true’ nature of women through her unfavourable portrayal of them. But this, I argue, is not a failure of gender solidarity on D’Arcy’s part but rather her philosophical pursuit of style: an attempt to make the reader wonder about the status of Truth in the transitional space of the limen. Who has really changed? Who affects a personality? Is changing perhaps truer to oneself than being fixed to an image of oneself rooted in a moment in the past? These questions in turn create a bigger question. If indeed change is a more honest attitude to oneself, is in other words truer, then is D’Arcy’s style a break from realism or rather a reinforcement of it, the portrayal of what is true and real in life *in* the moments of change?

The fact that these questions are explored in the form of the short story is an issue that needs examining further. Hanson notes that short stories tend ‘toward the expression of that which is marginal or ex-centric to society’ but in D’Arcy’s case we have stories about the marginal *within* the society, the subversive force that society can carry within itself, within the dubious, marginal people that are nevertheless part of it.²⁸ In some aspects, this may also reflect the marginal position of the short story as well as that of the woman writer. Furthermore, the newness of its form would seem to echo the general tendency of the era for ‘new’ as reflected in the *Yellow Book*’s agenda. In addition, the newness of the short story meant it carried

²⁵ Stubbs, p. 104; p. 106.

²⁶ Stubbs, p. 106.

²⁷ Stubbs, p. 106.

²⁸ Clare Hanson, ‘Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923)’ in *The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by Bonnie Kime Scott (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 300.

fewer connotations of a pre-existing gendered attitude. This is in stark contrast to the approach adopted by the more traditional male-dominated realist form of the novel. The freedom allowed for in this form was not just liberating for women writers of the period, it also served as a useful medium with which to voice anxieties about the social and cultural status quo.

Drewery links the liminal observed in social and cultural structures with the form of the short story as it ‘articulates the position of displaced, isolated individuals, often women, who occupy an ambiguous place in the interstices between socially structured and literary categories’.²⁹ For Drewery, ‘liminality in the modernist short story is elusive and resistant to definition. It conveys ‘irreconcilable conflicts of identity, brief glimpses of threshold states, and potential social structures and identities’.³⁰ It is in those moments of transition, when characters are yet to find full resolution, that the most interesting and subversive part of the story takes place. Ambiguity is key to liminality and short fiction provided great flexibility in subject matter and form as it introduces abstraction and gives proportion to emotional intensity. Christine Reynier argues that thematic and formal honesty go together.³¹ This is further underlined in the short story of the fin de siècle by its inconclusive ending. Conflicts are not resolved, questions are raised but not answered, and social problems are castigated but not solved. The idea of the liminal is key here. Liminal moments do not provide answers. Rather, as I showed above, they are unsettling experiences that in themselves are particularly convoluted. What they do, is expose ‘an instant of pure potentiality’.³² Conclusiveness, then, in terms of answering all questions appears as a form of manipulation.

Contrary to that, inconclusiveness leads to a new form of ‘truth to life’. It is, as Woolf argues ‘the sense that there is no answer, that if honestly examined life presents question after question which must be left to sound on and on after the story is over’.³³ Drewery views the modernist short story as describing the liminal stage that brings about an identity crisis yet leaving it unresolved: ‘The transitional phase remains incomplete, the story is suspended before the *limen* phase is concluded, and

²⁹ Drewery, p. 11.

³⁰ Drewery, p. 1.

³¹ Reynier, p. 29.

³² Turner, p. 44.

³³ Virginia Woolf, ‘Modern Fiction’ in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf. Volume 4: 1925 to 1928*, ed. by Andrew McNeillie (London: The Hogarth Press, 1984), p. 163.

the protagonist and the reader are left suspended in the space of the waiting room'.³⁴ Drewery here underlines the effect of the liminal on both the protagonist and the reader in a similar way to how I have argued D'Arcy overturns social and literary expectations both for the characters and the readers. The story, for the protagonist and the reader, is a narrative that needs to be 'followed', presupposing a sense of movement. Characters and readers alike need to go through stages, not to gain a better understanding (the sense of elucidation is not achieved by her characters), but to experience the 'journey', the movement, itself. Drewery seems to hint at this potentiality also in her reading: 'The liminal states depicted in these stories seldom include a resolution, nor are they concerned with the reaggregation stage of the rite of passage. The journey is the story; the story is the journey'.³⁵

This effect of establishing a combined aesthetic and ethical space in the form of the short story in which the writer overturns expectations has been attributed by Reynier to Woolf:

Woolf rejuvenates the term 'short story' by redefining it as an impersonal art of proportion and emotion, with an 'honest', inconclusive and a-moral method. Seen in terms of openness to the other and as requiring a similar openness from the reader, the short story appears as a space where the reader's responsibility is acknowledged and where the other, as the breaking down of the familiar, is welcome. Such a space is a space for freedom both for the writer and the reader, a space where form, emotion, and 'honesty' are finally indistinguishable, that is, both an aesthetic and ethical space.³⁶

The 'breaking down of the familiar' here dovetails well with my contention that D'Arcy's stylistic manipulation of the story creates an alienation effect on both protagonists and readers. Furthermore, Reynier's quote above is essential in my analysis in terms of its terminology. Reynier argues that 'the short story appears as a space' in which form and content are interconnected with the effect of 'breaking

³⁴ Drewery, p. 31.

³⁵ Drewery, p. 31.

³⁶ Reynier, p. 34.

down the familiar'. The choice of words might be subconscious but not coincidental. By acknowledging a link between form (that of the short fiction) and a liminal space (ethical and aesthetic), Reynier marks a connection that had been presented long before Woolf by D'Arcy. The combination of form and style is, as I showed, a direct effect of her being a short story woman writer at the turn of the century. Furthermore, 'honesty' as offered by the writer, is directly linked to my argument with regards to D'Arcy's understanding of truth as a fluid state through movement and change in space, time, and character. Its connection to the form is further underlined by the inconclusiveness of the short story, as I suggested above, as well as the style of D'Arcy's writing that is situated in the interstices of literary movements.

Woolf's essay, *A Room of One's Own*, establishes from the beginning its liminal identity, balancing among possible explorations of the issue of women and fiction. Although Woolf acknowledges the inevitably inconclusive nature of the argument, she nevertheless embarks on its analysis:

But, you may say, we asked you to speak about women and fiction – what has that got to do with a room of one's own? [...] The title women and fiction might mean, and you may have meant it to mean, women and what they are like, or it might mean women and the fiction that they write; or it might mean women and the fiction that is written about them, or it might mean that somehow all three are inextricably mixed together and you want me to consider them in that light. But when I began to consider the subject in this last way, which seemed the most interesting, I soon saw that it had one fatal drawback. I should never be able to come to a conclusion.³⁷

Woolf's essay is important in the sense that it was one of the first to acknowledge the connection between financial stability and the authorial profession for women. On a different level, it is significant to my argument because Woolf, in writing her essay,

³⁷ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's own; Three Guineas*, ed. by Hermione Lee (London: Vintage, 1996), p. 3.

places herself in the urban milieu. Although she takes inspiration from the academic environment of Cambridge, it is in the city of London where Woolf chooses to come back in order to reflect on her thoughts, to visit the library in order to substantiate her arguments and to simply watch people walking by as a form of informed inspiration for the social reality. So Woolf thinks and writes, while she sits in the café and looks outwards, through a glass, into London and ‘the people in the street’.³⁸ For Woolf, the urban space is essential: ‘[I thought] of the urbanity, the geniality, the dignity which are the offspring of luxury and privacy and space’.³⁹ Looking through the glass of a café, Woolf is effectively drawing inspiration for her famous analogy of women acting as looking glasses for men: ‘Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size’.⁴⁰ Instead, Woolf advises women to stop this for if they were to do so, they would find that ‘the figure in the looking-glass shrinks; his fitness for life is diminished’.⁴¹

Instead, she encourages women to reflect on their everyday reality as good novels reflect the values of life, ‘as it is’. Yet, Woolf observes that in life as in fiction the masculine values prevail. But she argues that ‘these infinitely obscure lives [of women] remain to be recorded’ echoing Egerton’s idea of women’s *terra incognita*.⁴² Let men preoccupy themselves with ‘the great movements which, brought together, constitute the historian’s view of the past’, she advises. As Woolf grew as an artist, she experimented with ways to record and ‘bring... to life’ another kind of experience altogether, one hitherto buried in the interstices of those great movements. One way to do so was, indeed, to focus on the concrete minutiae of women’s everyday existences – everything that men’s literature, by its very nature,

³⁸ Woolf, p. 34.

³⁹ Woolf, p. 22.

⁴⁰ Woolf, p. 33.

⁴¹ Woolf, p. 34.

⁴² Woolf, p. 124. Egerton, like Woolf, encourages women to explore their *terra incognita*: ‘In literature, everything had been better done by man than woman could hope to emulate. There was only one small plot left for her to tell: the *terra incognita* of herself, as she knew herself to be, not as man liked to imagine her – in a word to give herself away, as man had given himself away in his writings’. George Egerton, ‘A Keynote to Keynotes’ in *Ten Contemporaries: Notes Toward their Definitive Bibliography*, ed. by John Gawsworth ([S.I.]: Benn, 1932), p. 58. The interpretation of this phrase is open to debate as is manifested by the different analyses by scholars. With regards to my argument, though, Egerton here suggests that women should not follow on male writers’ footsteps but rather show the parts of their worlds – in all its mundane reality and power – the way men had explored theirs and instead of mirroring male writers’ style create their own by reflecting on their ‘unknown territory’.

overlooked, an omission that led to yet larger gaps and inaccuracies. ‘Above all’, Woolf encourages, ‘you must illumine your own soul with its profundities and its shallows [...] and say [...] what is your relation to the everchanging and turning world of gloves and shoes and stuffs swaying up and down among the faint scents that come through chemists’ bottles down arcades of dress material over a floor of pseudo-marble’.⁴³ In a parallel way, D’Arcy places her writing in the limen of different literary movements while focusing on the everyday reality of her female characters, from Nettie’s shopping trip in London, her walks in the park and her attendance of dances in ‘A Marriage’, to Agnes’ trip to the chemist in ‘An Engagement’, centring the most intensive liminal moments around their everyday activities.

Viewing D’Arcy’s work through and against other literary movements is essential, not only to analyse the literal space that she seeks to create, but also to bring her into a constructive dialogue with other writers of her time. A reading in this way helps the critical revaluation of her as a writer. Although mainly influenced by French literature, not taking into account the influence of American realism on her work would be a significant oversight. The influence of William Dean Howells, for example, on her writing is most palpable in D’Arcy’s second volume, *Modern Instances* (1898) and is best reflected in Howell’s novel, *A Modern Instance* (1882).⁴⁴ Beyond the similarity in the title, the two volumes share large thematic and stylistic connections. Howells’s novel describes the demise of a marriage and the social consequences of divorce, a topic considered new for the time. In the novel, Bartley and Marcia, the main characters, leave rural Maine to move to urban Boston following their marriage. The move from the countryside to the big city is one that is reflected on D’Arcy’s stories, too. In both cases, the move causes or reflects the deterioration of the relationship. In a dynamic way, D’Arcy goes back and rewrites Howells’ story in a multiplicity of views. *A Modern Instance* becomes *Modern Instances* and one novel becomes a number of short stories. A modern instance is broken down very much like a looking glass and becomes a myriad of modern instances, the pieces of which portray a myriad of possibilities. D’Arcy’s use of liminality and protomodernism allow for a wider space in which social identities

⁴³ Woolf, p. 84.

⁴⁴ William Dean Howells, *A Modern Instance* (first published 1882, Mineola; New York: Dover Publications, 2008).

based on shifting roles (married-divorced, rural-urban) can be examined more thoroughly and realistically.⁴⁵

Other common themes between the novel and D'Arcy's stories are the detailed attention to realistic characters, clash of classes, social arrivisme, the impact of capital on social relationships and the threat/promise of a looming divorce. The writers' skilled attention to language and setting, and the interrelation between the two, reveal naturalistic tendencies, as I will discuss later. The characters are moulded by their surroundings. Their actions, their thoughts are a direct consequence of their environment. Both authors use the move from an almost idyllic countryside to an enveloping city in order to change or reveal the characters or bring out hidden aspects of them, something that always eventually leads to the destruction of the relationship. Their endings, though, are in essence very different. Whereas Howells concludes the novel with the divorce of Bartley and Marcia, D'Arcy leaves the situation looming. The resolution of the divorce is never actualised, instead the characters are kept in a continuous waiting moment, a limen of hopelessness.

D'Arcy was a Francophile who read French fluently and had often been reported reading French texts directly from the original. She worked as a translator of texts from the original French into English. A great number of her stories were set in French territories, places she would go research herself, indicating more than just a passing familiarity with these regions. Furthermore, in 'The Villa Lucienne', D'Arcy quotes Verlaine's poem 'Le Faune' from the original in French.⁴⁶ Given all of this, it is reasonable to assume that D'Arcy may have encountered French literary movements without the need for reading these works in translation. While I do not contend that D'Arcy's work is purely influenced by French literary movements, it is definitely a palpable force in her work which I look to explore further in this chapter.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Again, here I argue for a reality that is closer to a shifting, everchanging sense of self.

⁴⁶ D'Arcy, 'The Villa Lucienne' under the general title 'Two Stories' in *Yellow Book*, 10 (1896), p. 279, later included in *Modern Instances*.

⁴⁷ The earlier publications of D'Arcy under the pseudonym, 'Gilbert H. Page', showed clear French influence in her writing, particularly in regard to decadence. This suggests that French literary influences on realism and decadence have stronger connections to her work than British and American counterparts.

When considering nineteenth-century realism, Bernard Weinberg's analysis provides us with some general characteristics that came to be associated with this movement:

truthful representation of the real world, a newly expanded range of subjects deemed appropriate for novelistic treatment (including subjects previously deemed inappropriately ugly or trivial), a focus on contemporary life and manners, attention to the details of the material world, an analytical approach to the characters portrayed, and a relatively impersonal attitude on the part of the author.⁴⁸

Despite the short form, D'Arcy successfully incorporates the aforementioned realist qualities in her own style that absorbs realist tones and reinterprets them in a protomodernist way. Her characters vary but they are always specifically portrayed in relation to a background comprised by the interrelation of time, the socio-geographical setting of the story and their psychology. In D'Arcy we encounter a mixture of styles similar to the one Patrick McGuinness suggests was carried by 'French Romantics in their polemic against classical aesthetics' which in turn was translated into a 'mixture of seriousness and everyday reality', also seen in all of her stories that work with realism by refiguring it.⁴⁹ D'Arcy's characters battle major issues (gender, class etc.) not in the abstract, but within their – problematic – everyday realities.

As Erich Auerbach notes, the essential characteristic of modern realism is the assumption that man cannot be represented 'otherwise than as embedded in a total reality, political, social, and economic, which is concrete and constantly evolving', a

⁴⁸ Bernard Weinberg, *French Realism: The Critical Reaction 1830-1870* ([S.I.]: Oxford University Press, 1937), pp. 193-5 as quoted in Michael Lucey, 'Realism' in *The Cambridge History of French Literature*, ed. by William Burkinkle, Nicholas Hammond and Emma Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 462-3.

⁴⁹ Patrick McGuinness, 'Symbolism' in *The Cambridge History of French Literature*, ed. by William Burkinkle, Nicholas Hammond and Emma Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 481.

point that characterises D’Arcy’s use of a shifting mode of totality.⁵⁰ Indeed, what is most interesting in terms of realist influences on D’Arcy is the strong sense of totality that is addressed in her stories. The notion of totality, drawn from Hegel’s philosophy of history, is also crucial in the writings of Gyorgy Lukacs, another influential critic of French realism.⁵¹ I argue that this totality comes in the form of the representation of the liminal. In the liminal moment, D’Arcy describes and unites all the conflicting forces. The process is hardly an instance of peaceful serenity and the result is not assimilation, but evolution and change. Even though she works with the short form, D’Arcy manages to place her characters in a complete environment (geographical and psychological) through the use of language and setting. In this sense, her approach is similar to Honoré de Balzac’s. Balzac, argues Auerbach, not only ‘places the human beings whose destiny he is seriously relating, in their precisely defined historical and social setting, but also conceives this connection as a necessary one’.⁵² For D’Arcy, too, the importance of placing the characters in the totality of their lived experiences is based on articulating and emphasising these in-between states and minor instances that in the exploration of big questions and great themes (about which Woolf, for example, argued men were always writing about) remain largely unexplored. In this way, D’Arcy manages to create an intense psychological complexity of the characters long before psychoanalytical approaches had influenced literary modernism.

D’Arcy’s description of the material world functions mainly with an analytic purpose, carrying explanatory force in relation to both the characters and the action. The abstract unity implied between character, action, setting and historical moment is crucial to the realist novel’s approach to the intelligibility of the world.⁵³ D’Arcy perceives this connection as vital in all of her stories and conceptualises the abstract in the liminal. In almost all of her stories, the first sentence provides us with information about the character and the setting on which they are placed. This not

⁵⁰ Michael Lucey, ‘Realism’ in *The Cambridge History of French Literature*, ed. by William Burkink, Nicholas Hammond and Emma Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 463.

⁵¹ Gyorgy Lukacs, *Studies in European Realism: A Sociological Survey of the Writings of Balzac, Stendhal, Zola, Tolstoy, Gorky and others*, trans. by Edith Bone (London: Merlin Press, 1972).

⁵² Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* trans. by William R. Trask (Princeton, NJ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 473.

⁵³ Lucey, p. 464.

only unifies the two from the beginning, but also reflects the importance of this unification on the story as a whole.

I will enter into the specifics of this connection between character and setting later in this chapter with reference to ‘A Marriage’, but for now I only need establish the importance of this connection as I will use it again in my discussion of naturalism. Nicholas White observes that ‘Zola attempted to establish clear water between realism and naturalism, defining the latter as a scientifically rigorous systematisation of the observational realism practised, actually in radically different ways, by Balzac [...] and Flaubert’.⁵⁴ But in D’Arcy’s work, the two movements, realism and naturalism, do not contradict each other but rather work together.

White notes that often naturalism is characterised by a privileging of description at the expense of plot.⁵⁵ Indeed in D’Arcy’s stories there is a lot of detail but it does not work against the plot, per se. D’Arcy attempts to use description to insinuate things about the characters’ past and psychology that she either does not want to introduce directly (in the form of an omniscient narrator) or there is just no space for it due to the shortness of the form. In her stories set in the Channel Islands, such as ‘White Magic’ and ‘Poor Cousin Louis’, long descriptions of the natural environment always serve either as sociological background information for the characters or as complimentary to the style of the story (e.g. gothic or mock-sentimental).⁵⁶ Additionally, setting is an informant of a sociolinguistic nature. The characters’ language is of significance, whether that is transcribed as different accents (with social and geographical connotations) or as command of language reflecting the psychological situation of the character (ellipses, pauses, broken and incoherent speech or even silence). More specifically, in ‘Poor Cousin Louis’, the female character Mrs. Poidevin, an outsider to the Islands, comes to visit her cousin dressed in her Sunday best. Her dress, her talk, her whole identity, it seems, clash with the setting around her: ‘Such attire, unbeautiful in itself and incongruous with its surroundings, jarred harshly with the picturesque note of the scene’ [PCL, 36]. Before she reaches the house she is met outside by the gardener, Tourtel. The clash

⁵⁴ Nicholas White, ‘Naturalism’ in *The Cambridge History of French Literature*, ed. by William Burkinkle, Nicholas Hammond and Emma Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 524.

⁵⁵ White, p. 524

⁵⁶ D’Arcy, ‘White Magic’, *Yellow Book*, 13 (1894); ‘Poor Cousin Louis’, *Yellow Book*, 2 (1894).

between the two characters' social and geographical background becomes manifest as soon as they start talking: "I shan't inconvenience Mrs. Tourtel, I hope? Of course I shouldn't think of staying for tea if she is busy; I'll just sit an hour with Cousin Louis, and catch the six o'clock omnibus home from Vauvert" to which Tourtel replies: "Eh, but you won't be no inconvenience to de ole woman ma'am [...] only de apple-goche, dat she was goin' to bake agen your visit, won't be ready, dat's all." [PCL, 38] Furthermore, in 'White Magic' the very first paragraph of the story serves to situate language in the Channel Islands:

I spent one evening last summer with my friend Mauger, *pharmacien* in the little town of Jacques-le-Port. He pronounces his name Major, by-the-bye, it being a quaint custom of the Islands to write proper names one way and speak them another, thus serving to bolster up that old, old story of the German savant's account of the difficulties of the English language – "where you spell a man's name Verulam," says he reproachfully, "and pronounce it Bacon." [WM, 59]

D'Arcy here employs a humorous tone in order to situate her story and thus draws a strong connection between linguistic, cultural and geographical elements. Furthermore, on a linguistic level, she follows on French writers who favoured the combination of first person speech and third person narration in order to produce a complete image of a character, situated in their reality. White has singled out the example of Zola and Flaubert who employ the technique of free indirect discourse, referred to as *style indirect libre*, a combination of narrative styles in order to accomplish a better representation of the character.⁵⁷

In a parallel way to Zola's cross-class defamiliarisation, D'Arcy, in her Channel Islands stories, employs the language of a people geographically close to the centre (England) but simultaneously far from its cultural boundaries, situated instead in the limen between England and France. In this way, she echoes the naturalist attempt to speak via and not just of the people portrayed in the story. As a

⁵⁷ White, p. 527.

result, the controversial mix of classes (high/low, old/new money) comes out in the use of language and setting, the environment against which the characters are portrayed. White suggests that ‘Zola’s cross-class gesture of free indirect speech repunctuates the sentences to which class identity habitually condemns us’.⁵⁸ In this way, the reader sees characters not through the clichéd stereotypes but afresh. The writer is then allowed to give us wholesome characters along with their ‘shifts’. Characters are portrayed as ever-changing, malleable figures who challenge set norms. By creating this discourse set against a liminal transitory setting, they are, thus, made to appear realistically in the story. In other words, as in the case of the setting, here, too, the combination of narrative voices echoes and reinforces, rather than interrupts or complicates, the plot. For instance, as I will argue later, in D’Arcy’s story, ‘A Marriage’, as with the move to the city, the absence of language (as in proper coherent speech) for the male protagonist (Catterson) leads to a loss of direction and sense of identity. The combination of naturalist approaches with reference to the character set in the environment and the protomodernist breakdown of language challenges readers’ preconceptions and brings the intersecting forces of identity and setting on the foreground.

To a lesser degree, when compared to realism and naturalism, some of D’Arcy’s stories are also indicative of an early symbolism. Insofar as symbolism is regarded as a movement that drew all arts together collaboratively and was profoundly cosmopolitan and international in its outlook (as McGuinness has suggested) one can easily detect its importance in D’Arcy’s writing.⁵⁹ D’Arcy uses a cosmopolitan atmosphere as symbol to create a multitude of complex settings and environments for her characters. Place and setting in D’Arcy function not just in naturalist determinism but in a symbolist fashion. I have looked at the significance of the setting as symbol to examine D’Arcy’s preference for individual agency rather than naturalist determinism. Additionally, in her use of a grand cosmopolitan setting in ‘The Pleasure-Pilgrim’, D’Arcy articulates the symbolism of setting as performance, in a similar way to ‘The Elegie’.

⁵⁸ White, p. 527.

⁵⁹ McGuinness, p. 481.

In a number of her stories, the cosmopolitan feel is strong but ‘The Pleasure-Pilgrim’ is D’Arcy’s most cosmopolitan story.⁶⁰ Set in Schloss Altenau, the story centres around the lodging house that is the holiday destination for people from different countries, mainly ‘English and American Pleasure-Pilgrims’ [TP-P, 35]. Campbell, the male protagonist, has travelled around England and Germany and is headed there for a quiet season. His plans for quietude change though when Lulie, an American girl, comes to stay at the lodging house. Their introduction takes place in transit as they share a coach on their way to the lodging house from the railway station. Their communication echoes that quality throughout. Although in the beginning Campbell finds himself attracted to her, as soon as information about her morality is introduced to him, he shuns her. Campbell’s friend, Mayne, explains: “What is her class? Who knows anything about her? ” [TP-P, 42]. Lulie is found guilty of such things as travelling ‘not for profit but for pleasure’ and of taking dancing lessons. She is a threatening ‘adventuress. Yes, an adventuress, but an end-of-the-century one’ [TP-P, 43]. Lulie’s threatening ways are embedded in her gender performance. Mayne warns Campbell:

Perhaps this girl has constituted herself the Nemesis for her sex and goes, and goes about seeing how many masculine hearts she can break by way of revenge. Or can it be that she is simply the newest development of the New Woman – she who in England preaches and bores you, and in America practices and pleases? [TP-P, 46]

Lulie’s ‘constituted’ modern attitude is interpreted not as action but acting: as soon as she is seen as an actress, all her words and actions seem to Campbell devoid of meaning and sentiment, a mere performance: ‘Campbell admired the well-simulated passion in her voice’ [TP-P, 51]. Their failure to understand one another leads to the story’s tragic ending. The theatricality of the lodging house, a former castle in the midst of an isolated forest underlines Lulie’s final words. Lulie tries to convince Campbell that she loves him to death but when he remains unconvinced, Lulie in a

⁶⁰ D’Arcy, ‘The Pleasure-Pilgrim’, *Yellow Book*, 5 (1895).

theatrical manner, takes a gun and shoots herself. For this scene, D'Arcy has placed the characters in 'an immense room' that resembles a theatre with 'wooden pillars supporting the ceiling' and sills 'cushioned in faded velvet' [TP-P, 61]. In the afterword of the story, Mayne and Campbell discuss Lulie's death as if they had been to a theatre and were discussing a play, concluding that the motive behind Lulie's action was embedded in her theatricality: "The role she had played so long and so well now demanded a sensational finale in the centre of the stage [...] She was the most consummate little actress I ever saw" [TP-P, 67]. Rather than acknowledge their own actions involved in her death, Mayne and Campbell instead blame Lulie's supposed acting.

The cosmopolitan setting is key in D'Arcy's handling of identity as performance. D'Arcy often uses a setting external to the reader's known territory to examine characters and attitudes afresh. Lulie's perception of her identity as a New Woman is a transitory idea that depends on where she travels. The different characteristics ascribed to her identity depending on whether she is in Europe or America underline the shifting quality of identity and its correlation to setting. This marks a protomodernist attitude of viewing identity in terms of fragmentation and performance.

The idea of using that which is outside the readers' reality to underline themes of the performativity of self is especially resonant in D'Arcy's stories with a strong sense of the supernatural element (such as in 'White Magic', 'The Villa Lucienne' and 'The Death Mask'). D'Arcy encapsulates the symbolist definition of dealing with the occult, the uncommon, that which is outside our experience. Her stories foreshadow Tancrede de Visan's definition regarding Symbolist poetry. Visan views the symbolist poem 'as a means of disrupting our ordinary or automatic consciousness and liberating something analogous to [...] the *moi profond*'.⁶¹ It is most illuminating then, to read these stories along those where realism is stronger, as being put outside the realistic realm only heightens our sensitivity as critical readers when coming back to a story which raises important social and gender issues that question the morality of the era and the status quo.

⁶¹ McGuinness, p. 483.

The use of setting as a shifting symbol marks D'Arcy's rejection of the absolute determinism implicit in Naturalism. Like George Moore's *Esther Waters* (1894), in D'Arcy's stories the environment reflects rather than determines the fate of the characters.⁶² Karl Beckson argues that in *Esther Waters* the female protagonist's 'determination is such that, despite hardship and disappointment, she triumphs in the end, whereas many around her sink into moral and economic squalor'.⁶³ Similarly, for Nettie in 'A Marriage', when others fail, her choices, which are a successful product of her adaption to her environment, do not only save her but help her emerge as the ultimate winner (despite negative human and moral consequences). In naturalistic novels, the central character is defeated by life. This is not necessarily the case in D'Arcy's stories. In her stories, the characters who are defeated, lose by the poor choices they make. They are not perceived as victims a priori. Moving away from the extreme attitudes of meliorists and moralists in naturalism, D'Arcy sets her own definition of non-didactic morality and attempts to open the discussion in an honest way to readers in order to facilitate their own conclusions. In this way, D'Arcy, like Hickson, denounces any didacticism inherent in moral preaching. In morality, too, D'Arcy occupies a liminal space.

Despite the differences in D'Arcy's writing, the French influence is undeniably strong and with it comes the shock that French 'immoral' literature carried to England, where literary reticence was the ideal, a feeling that ran deep in the literary conscience for a long time. Beckson argues that by the mid-nineties, *Zolaism* was no longer a term of abuse, for French Naturalism ceased to be a significant influence on the English novel or perceived as a threat to Victorian sensibilities.⁶⁴ My research on the *Yellow Book*, though, suggests otherwise. When the *Yellow Book* was harshly criticised due to its alliance to French morals, it was exactly Zola as well as Balzac, Flaubert and Maupassant whose immoral texts were considered a threat to the British society. As long as literature challenged, attacked, exposed or ridiculed social assumptions with regards to morality, it would be seen as controversial and attacked in turn. Examples of literary censorship and trials are aplenty in the fin de siècle. Furthermore, in specific reference to the *Yellow Book*, the

⁶² George Moore, *Esther Waters* (London: Walter Scott, 1894).

⁶³ Karl Beckson, *London in the 1890s: A Cultural History* (New York; London: Norton, 1992), p. 307.

⁶⁴ Beckson, p. 314.

very title of the periodical alludes to the forbidden French books that were bound in yellow, not to mention the connection of the periodical to the yellow book Wilde was reportedly carrying at the time of his arrest. D'Arcy herself had trouble finding publishers for her daring work and even in the early twentieth century, her translations of Rimbaud's poetry could not be published as they were deemed to be too provocative.

Beckson observes a certain shift at the fin de siècle from a Naturalistic preference for slum settings to one in the suburbs with characters drawn from a broad spectrum of the middle classes. He argues that the extension of railway lines and the growing use of motor cars resulted in a considerable development in West and North London, and as a result of this change Edwardian novelists 'began the exploration of the new suburban resident, safe from the depravity and violence of life in East and South London'.⁶⁵

D'Arcy can be found somewhere in the middle of these two attitudes, negotiating a liminal space, focusing on the suburb as a setting but also covering a wide spectrum of classes and considering these special relations between the subject (male or female) and the environment. D'Arcy does not only reflect on the multiple settings but also the impact of moving from one to the other on the character. In this way, she anticipates Raymond Williams' argument that 'the country and the city are changing historical realities, both in themselves and in their interrelations'.⁶⁶ Williams argues that the country and the city represent only two kinds of settlement but our real social experience includes much more than that, as D'Arcy's liminal handling of setting and mobility: it encapsulates several layers of 'intermediate and new kinds of social and physical organisation'.⁶⁷

D'Arcy uses the conflict between urban and suburban settings to portray the characters' psychology and morality as manifested in their relationship to each setting and their use of language. In this thesis I focus only on the analysis of 'A Marriage' but a similar approach may be extended to include other stories by the same author. 'A Marriage' was included in the eleventh *Yellow Book* volume and was later included in the *Modern Instances* (1898) collection.

⁶⁵ Beckson, p. 314.

⁶⁶ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Hogarth Press, 1985), p. 289.

⁶⁷ Williams, p. 289.

Unusually for a short story, 'A Marriage' comprises of three clearly numbered sections, each one symbolising a change of setting as well as changes in the main characters' identities and roles. This formal fragmentation reflects a protomodernist linguistic breakdown and the indefinable boundaries of the modern momentary self. In section I, Nettie and Catterson live in a small house in suburban Teddington. They are not married but have a baby girl together. In section II, taking place three years later, the setting is Sonning, where the couple take their holidays. In the meantime, Nettie and Catterson have got married and have another baby, this time a boy. In this section, Catterson's friend, West, informs us that the couple moved from Teddington to Kingston and then from Kingston to Surbiton Hill, continuously moving to ever bigger houses, circling London but not entering it yet. In section III, the couple has entered the urban space of London, having moved to South Kensington. Most of the background information throughout the story comes from the viewpoint of West, though he is not the narrator. West, too is under narrative scrutiny yet the couple is portrayed in the story only when West is in their company.

The story begins with the two male friends, Catterson and West having just finished their luncheon at a City restaurant and enjoying a conversation over coffee and cigarettes. What appears as a relaxing time is interrupted without warning by Catterson's abrupt confession: "You see, if it were only for the child's sake, I feel I ought to marry her, and the next may be a boy" [AM, 310]. Catterson expects his friend's approval rather than advice to the contrary but West is doubtful: 'it was a fixed idea of his, that if you married a girl "of that sort", she was sure to discover, sooner or later, colossal vices' [AM, 310]. D'Arcy uses a combination of first and third person narrative to create a totality of characterisation, allowing the reader an insight on characters' thoughts and actions, which she often exposes as contradictory. West disagrees with his friend's idea of getting married but does not let him know the extent of his disapproval. Although it is not clear here whether a girl of 'that sort' carries for West connotations in terms of morality or class, or even both, West needs little more information to make up his mind. West tells Catterson in French: "Ne faisais jamais de votre *maîtresse*, votre femme" [AM, 310].⁶⁸ West does not approve of social changes. For him, set roles are preferable and he is

⁶⁸ Never turn your mistress into your wife.

resistant to the mobility that results from the disruption of such roles. West finds himself unable to establish a true definition of his own phrase, though, as later on he realises he is mesmerised by something indefinable in Nettie. 'That sort' which is in itself a generic statement finds even less meaning when interrogated further. Whereas in the beginning it was uttered as a negative statement, it is later used to try the impossible: define the indefinable.

Yet, he feels inclined to agree to go see Nettie after Catterson asks him as an old classmate. D'Arcy uses their common past to accentuate their social differences. Although they went to the same school, West sets himself far above Catterson in social ranking whom he considers part of a growing, newly emerged middle class: 'It was because he found his path set now within the respectable circles of British middle-class society that his anomalous position was becoming a burden' [AM, 311]. Even though West seems to be highly observant of social classes, his thoughts give us an insight on Catterson's true social lineage rather than the one Catterson presents affecting French habits and thinking himself as socially superior to Nettie. Furthermore, West here directly links morality to class and underlines the idea that to belong to a superior class one has to adhere to its moral code.

On the way to Teddington, Catterson is lively and sings music-hall love songs of the time. However, as they reach their destination, Catterson suddenly changes: 'as the train approached Teddington, he fell into silence again. A new anxiety began to dominate him' [AM, 313]. The liminality of the train, reflects the liminality of Catterson's situation. He is caught in-between his friend's and social circle's approval and his own personal ethics: between destination and arrival in spatial as well as social terms, between the male companionship of the London restaurant and his bachelor identity, and his role as father and partner in Teddington. The result of this liminal state is silence. It is a silence that is only momentary here but by the end of the story the results of the overpowering transitory moments have direct implications on his own fragmented sense of self and language. West meets Nettie and even though he acknowledges a certain charm and a growing enticing appeal about her, he is still sure marriage would be a mistake, but he tells his friend nothing.

Section II, itself in-between one and three, set on the suburbs but on the threshold of entering London, marks the liminal in the couple's relationship. Much smaller than either one or three, it serves as an intermediary informant of greater changes that are yet to be seen in section III. In this, D'Arcy hints at the changes already in force: Nettie has evolved into a beautiful woman who bosses Catterson around and mistreats Cyril, their baby boy, while doting on the daughter, Gladys.

Section III opens with a flâneur West who remembers it is Cyril's birthday and strolling around London hopes 'to find inspiration in the windows of the shops' [AM, 331] he passes. Going to the house he is greeted with a far from celebratory environment. West comes to find Catterson a changed man: 'He found him huddled up over the drawing-room fire spreading out his thin hands to the blaze. Half lost in the depths of the armchair, sitting with rounded shoulders and sunken head, he seemed rather some little shrunken sexagenarian than a man still under thirty' [AM, 333]. The image is a striking contrast to the mobile Catterson of section I. The role reversal of the genders is prominent here. In section I, Nettie was waiting for Catterson at home while he was in London enjoying his time with his male friend. In section III, an ill Catterson is confined to the house in a room that always feels too cold to him. Meanwhile, Nettie is out shopping with her female friend, Mrs Reade. On noticing Catterson is not looking well, West comments that "what you want is a change" [AM, 334] and recommends Brighton. But Catterson has completely resigned himself to the stillness and physical enclosure of the house. He has given up on any notion of hope or change, spatial or otherwise: "'Oh, Brighton!' Catterson repeated hopelessly, 'I'm past that'" [AM, 334]. The story closes with Nettie coming back home with Mrs. Reade 'laden with small draper's parcels' [AM, 335] and despite Catterson's complaint that he is ill, she neglects him, focussing instead on the conversation she has with her friend about fabrics.

Setting is key for this story, both in the way it reflects it formally, in terms of its sections, as well as in terms of content, the effect it has on plot and characterisation. The multiple levels of different urban and suburban settings in the story and the liminal mobility between them demand a closer attention especially with regards to identity and language. For Vadillo, 'the term "urban aestheticism" alludes primarily to the aesthetic responses brought about by the act of perception of the city as both a cultural phenomenon and a work of art. It also describes the

aesthetic and cultural terms with which the fin de siècle approached the ethos of urban life.’⁶⁹ This notion reflects the understanding of the setting in D’Arcy’s short fiction as more than just a mere background. In this chapter, I extend this term to also cover the suburban environment. As I argued earlier, the setting itself in D’Arcy tells a story, in the example of the very first sentences of each story. Following the story’s timeline, I will firstly focus on the suburban setting to show how Catterson’s and Nettie’s move to the city alters their verbal and social selves and I will also show how these two come to interact.

Due to its shifting nature it is rather difficult to define what constituted ‘the suburbs’. It was mostly defined by what it was not (neither city nor country). As Lara Baker Whelan notes, ‘one criterion for a working definition of “suburb” would be that there is new building activity that, to the observer, appears to be transforming the space from what it was to what it is yet to be’ identifying thus the suburbs with ‘typically physically transitional spaces’.⁷⁰ This is very fitting for the characters in ‘A Marriage’ as their relationship is in the transitional phase of a family, but by not being legally married they lack religious and social acknowledgement and acceptance. Whelan’s study looks at (mostly London) suburbs in fiction as a space of cultural contention and discusses middle-class Victorian anxieties with reference to suburban space and its connotations. She notes that until 1880, writing about the suburbs maintains a tone of the middle class controlling the suburbs. But things were changing rapidly. Whelan argues that ‘the use of the suburban ideal as an effective or realistic way of marking class boundaries was such an obvious failure that the very grounds by which one measured class shifted from location to culture after 1880’ as by the mid-1880s the cultural elite was moving back into the urban centres where it established literary and intellectual circles.⁷¹ It is imperative to view the aesthetic in terms of the background in which it developed: markedly a negotiating space between urban and suburban spaces and the mobility between them.

These shifts, laden with social and cultural connotations, were observed by a number of authors at the time. In her article about suburbs in fin-de-siècle writing, Gail Cunningham explores the way that Gissing, Morris, Wells, and D’Arcy related

⁶⁹ Vadillo, p. 4.

⁷⁰ Lara Baker Whelan, *Class, Culture and Suburban Anxieties in the Victorian Era* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 7.

⁷¹ Whelan, p. 13.

to the explosion of late nineteenth-century suburban space growth. She points out that the new spatial boundaries (as well as the blurriness of them) led them to stylistically explore approaches beyond realism.⁷² Cunningham notes that since ‘male breadwinners commuted to work by omnibus, tram, or train (removing the need to keep horses and thus male servants), separation of gender roles was further exaggerated and suburban spaces were widely seen as predominantly woman-dominated.’⁷³ This is further emphasized in D’Arcy’s story especially due to the contrast in the extreme change of power relations when Nettie and Catterson move to the city. In these early stages of their life together, when Catterson is away the household is populated by women of all ages (the baby, Nettie and the old landlady). However, verbal communication is limited. The baby cannot yet talk and Nettie does not say much in Catterson’s presence. Walking towards his home beside West, Catterson explains: “She doesn’t talk much”, “she’s very shy” [AM, 313]. He also feels it necessary to add that “of course she’s not what’s called a lady. Her people don’t count at all. She herself wants to drop them. But you would never discover she wasn’t one. She has a perfect accent, a perfect pronunciation” [AM, 313]. Cunningham notes the cultural importance of the fin-de-siècle suburb which attempts to provide a link between country and city, yet it cannot hide the fact that as a ‘newcomer’, it has ‘no historical lineage, no reference points by which to locate its significance but a visible and undeniable speed of growth that clamored for recognition’.⁷⁴ It is no surprise then that Nettie does not feel at ease sharing the same background which from early on she tries to shake off. Even though she can linguistically reinvent herself, with ‘a perfect accent, a perfect pronunciation’, her environment reveals the truth of her own social background. To Nettie, the suburb is but a temporary stop on her way to the upwardly mobile-enabling city, London.

The newness and blurriness of the suburbs, the lack of inheritance as well as their social, historical and cultural liminality are here mirrored in Nettie’s speech, (an undecipherable accent, yet sounds like a lady). West comes to witness her verbal reticence himself: “So soon as the first fillip of greeting was spent, she became noticeable for her silences” [AM, 317]. When she does talk, West is surprised to hear

⁷² Gail Cunningham, ‘Houses in between: Navigating Suburbia in Late Victorian Writing’, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 32.2 (2004), 421-43 (p. 422).

⁷³ Cunningham, p. 422.

⁷⁴ Cunningham, p. 423.

that her talk and her whole demeanour resemble the baby's: "May I come too Jack?" Exactly as a child asks permission of parent or master' [AM, 319]. Catterson overpowers others in conversation, and for the time being, in this suburban household, Catterson is the master so far as verbal power relations are concerned.

Gradually, as the story progresses, Nettie fights her way out of the periphery and into the centre. Her motives are dual. Nettie wants to dissociate herself with the people of the suburb because it is 'culturally categorized as home to the commonplace and mundane'.⁷⁵ She proudly recounts the story of how after they had got married and moved out of their first home in the suburbs, she runs into the old landlady in the market and completely ignores her. Nettie also wants to wash herself off the immoral past that seems locked in the suburban setting. The world of secrets is conveniently enclosed in this shifting space that forms part of the periphery. Due to her unmarried mother status and her lower class origins, Nettie feels a moral and cultural pariah and she seeks to rectify this by the move to the city, a setting that she views as a site of possible upward class mobility and a setting, in the wideness of which, she can reinvent herself socially.

Cunningham views the story, and the suburbs in general, on a sexual level. For her, 'D'Arcy exploits the potential of front garden space to more sinister ends, as suburban sexual allure proves literally fatal to the male'.⁷⁶ The men's journey from Waterloo to the suburbs as well as their gradual approach to the house carries a gothic tone:

West saw the usual, creeper-covered, French-windowed, sham-romantic, and wholly dilapidated little villa. It stood separated from the road by a piece of front garden, in which the uncut grass waved fairy spear-heads, and the unpruned bushes matted out so wide and thick as to screen the sitting-room completely from passers-by. [AM, 314]

⁷⁵ Cunningham, p. 423.

⁷⁶ Cunningham, p. 428.

For Cunningham, 'the entrance of the male into suburban domestic space' is 'a sinister rite de passage'.⁷⁷ The threshold state of the front garden (situated between the public street and the private domestic setting) marks an area that provides ample warnings as to what awaits inside for the men. The strong gothic undertones in the description set the scene for an alluring yet dangerous situation lurking within. It is as unsafe as exciting and the message here is that Catterson cannot resist its charms. Cunningham argues that 'behind the front door there is no sleeping beauty waiting to be aroused; rather, the enclosed female lurks in her domain, small, dark-robed, and with a predatory sexuality set to entrap the innocent male'.⁷⁸

Cunningham's analysis has its merits, but our differences in approaching the story mean that we reach very different conclusions with regards to the characters and agency. What I perceive as the result of choices, influenced by the setting and echoed in language, Cunningham, as well as Sarah Maier, view as a careful orchestration of the enticing yet manipulative female in an attempt to entrap the easily seduced and deceived male.⁷⁹ Both Cunningham and Maier refuse the men any agency. They are the innocent victims of socially aspiring, sexually overcharged, uneducated, low-class women. Their role in this is that of an animal entrapped, indeed in a confined, untidy and far from ideal domestic setting. Cunningham locates the in-between state of suburban houses as a central force of imagination for fin-de-siècle writers such as D'Arcy who 're-write the dull south-western suburbs as threatening, gothicized her-lands'.⁸⁰

Maier argues that in D'Arcy's stories 'marriage is often used as bad beginning rather than as conventional happy ending' and that D'Arcy recognises and is keen to point out in a number of her stories the trade market quality of marriage, but that need not be interpreted as women being portrayed as uneducated victims of a patriarchal status quo either.⁸¹ D'Arcy raises a class issue, and it is that rather than a gendered division that should be the focus of our attention. Maier views 'A Marriage' as a story where women are portrayed as victimisers. My reading of the story differs from Maier's as I argue that the hazy nature of Nettie makes definitive

⁷⁷ Cunningham, p. 429.

⁷⁸ Cunningham, p. 429.

⁷⁹ Sarah E. Maier, 'Subverting the Ideal: The New Woman and the Battle of the Sexes in the Short Fiction of Ella D'Arcy', *Victorian Review*, 20.1 (1994), 35-48.

⁸⁰ Cunningham, pp. 432-3.

⁸¹ Maier, p. 41.

conclusions difficult to reach. She is not a stereotypical manipulative woman who obviously works with a premeditated plan. Catterson seems to think that this is her marriage metamorphosis but in fact Nettie just acts the role that suits her environment. In the beginning she mirrors her husband's talk, gestures and habits but slowly she begins to accustom herself in accordance with her surroundings, social and spatial. On a first reading, in some stories both men and women seem to be happier with people of their own gender than their partners (e.g. 'At Twickenham', 'A Marriage') but again this has more to do with similarities in class and lifestyle than a shared gender. A case in point is Nettie who will pretend to not recognise her old landlady once she is of a superior social status but is more than happy to share all her time with her London high society friend.

In my approach, therefore, to D'Arcy's treatment of the female protagonists, I focus on the conflict for power that is rooted in the different genders of the main protagonists as an outcome of their class differences, rather than gender implications. This approach differs from Maier's who argues that D'Arcy 'emphasizes the need for change in a patriarchal system which explicitly restricts the freedom of the real woman'.⁸² D'Arcy underlines the tension I have identified in her handling of language and the change of setting. This is most prominent in 'Irremediable', a story of two people who belong in two different classes and find love in the countryside (one living there, the other taking holidays). Their return to the city brings their deep differences to the surface and marks the demise of their marriage. When D'Arcy wants to incorporate a new psychological aspect in her characters she places them in a completely different setting to the one before. Furthermore, the movement from hopefulness to bleakness, from introduction to marriage (which equals fights) is usually depicted as a move from the countryside or the suburbs to the city. In a way, the ideal (symbolised in a romanticised setting) gives its place to the real (the harsh everyday reality of the city). The suburb marks a liminal territory between the romanticised rural and the reality of the city. The suburb is a place where illusions and reality are liquefied and, often in characters' perception, merged. This lends itself to stress on the indefinable boundaries of the modern self and its fragmentation.

⁸² Maier, p. 47.

Williams argues that ‘the social basis of this imbrication of life and fiction was the phenomenon of arrivisme: the young man from nowhere who takes the world by storm’ and he locates arrivisme in the urban environment as a ‘magnet for these buccaneering individuals, [...] a space of new and highly fluid social and economic transactions, in turn based on the material transformation of the city’.⁸³ But in D’Arcy’s story, ‘the young man from nowhere’ is none other than Nettie: not a flâneuse, wandering aimlessly but rather moving with purpose, a socially arrivistic one. Her increasing mobility in the urban environment of London is set in stark contrast to her passivity in the domestic setting of the suburbs that introduced the story. Furthermore, her mobility in terms of cycling in the park, or her attendance of parties and dance halls, reflect on her attempts for social mobility by means of mingling and thereby characterises her as a social threat in the eyes of her husband. Her body is no longer for his private enjoyment only but rather a site of social potentiality. In the city, as he loses control of his identity and his power over Nettie, she seems to gain more and more power. In the environment that is hostile for Catterson, Nettie thrives. Nettie is empowered by the opportunities of the city. But this seems to have the exact opposite effect on Catterson, weakening him so much that he becomes an invalid who skips work and barely leaves the house.

From the perspective of the moral obligations of her time, Nettie’s social arrivisme and her free wandering are condemnable. With the division of work and home and the introduction of the commuter, male breadwinners were often seen as migrants, yet this acquired different values when attributed to women. A wandering female body offers the promise of an object’s availability for consumption in a way a wandering male body does not. This potentiality is highlighted by Williams when he states that ‘[t]o the extent that they entered the private and public circuits of the city, women did so principally as domestic servants or prostitutes. [...] In the collective imaginary, the prostitute circulated as both object of sale and instrument of havoc’.⁸⁴ Williams traces the progress of the prostitute in French fiction from ‘the harlot with a golden heart’ in Balzac to the one who learns how ‘to exploit the female fantasies of an expanding consumer culture’ in Zola.⁸⁵ This progress is reflected in Nettie’s

⁸³ Williams, p. 498.

⁸⁴ Williams, p. 501.

⁸⁵ Williams, p. 501.

change of character from the sinning yet sweet and obedient mistress of section I to the selfish, consumerist arriviste of section III.

While Nettie employs a shifting idea of self and morality that adapts to the environment, Catterson's dual and more rigid sense of self results in the ultimate destruction of the self. Catterson employs two roles as mirrored in and against two locations: the father in the suburbs and the eligible bachelor in London. West identifies the struggle in this duality between the city and suburb divisions of Catterson's life. Catterson locates his shifting morality in the city/suburb division, and contends that liminality is not allowed here if one is to be accepted socially: 'It was because he found his path set now within the respectable circles of British middle-class society, that his anomalous position was becoming a burden; that the double personality of married man and father in his riverside lodgings, of eligible bachelor in the drawing-rooms of Bayswater and Maida Vale, grew daily more intolerable to sustain.' [AM, 36]

Barthes has elaborated on dual meanings and their interrelations on a linguistic level:

[I]n general, the context forces us to choose one of the two meanings and to forget the other. Each time he encounters one of these double words, R.B., on the contrary, insists on keeping both meanings, as if one were winking at the other and as if the word's meaning were in that wink, so that *one and the same word*, in *one and the same sentence*, means at *one and the same time* two different things, and so that one delights, semantically, in the one by the other. This is why such words are often said to be 'preciously ambiguous': not in their lexical essence (for any word in the lexicon has several meanings), but because, by a kind of *luck*, a kind of favour not of language but of discourse, I can *actualize* their amphibology, can say 'intelligence' and appear to be referring chiefly to the intellectual meaning, but letting the meaning of 'complicity' be *understood*.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Barthes, *Roland Barthes*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Papermac, 1995), p. 72.

In a metalinguistic way, Catterson initially builds a semantic connection between his two conflicting identities: that of a family man and that of a bachelor. At first, Catterson is comfortable in the duality of his roles, taking solace in his ability to play both parts. It is only when this comfort is broken, in order to do the right thing in accordance with the morality of the middle class and marry Nettie, that Catterson finds conflict in the duality of his roles. This is reflected also in his connection to the city as each setting denotes a different role. The connection between urban and suburban setting and modern identity is underlined here. Vadillo argues that ‘modernity was not just to be found in the city (as Baudelaire believed), or in the suburb, but in the dialectic city-suburb. Mass-transport facilities [...] functioned as a “bridge” between these two spaces’.⁸⁷ The railway line and the train station joined these two worlds. The railway station stands in the middle of these two spaces, a limen of perception and identity between a lethargic, serene yet truly ambiguous space and the chaotic vastness of the metropolis. Vadillo then adds that ‘if modernity is to be understood in the dialectic city-suburb, this dialectic can only be achieved through the railway line’.⁸⁸ The train that connects Catterson’s urban and suburban life stands as a limen between two very different spaces, both aesthetically and ethically.

In section I, Both Nettie and Catterson employ dual characters ‘of that sort’ and double personalities fixed on the setting, a reflection and a product of their environment. Following Barthes’ argument then, they can be best understood if they are taken to mean simultaneously two things. Shifting, moving characters and settings demand a certain fluidity in language. At the point when they are made by social standards to employ rigid and absolute positions, language fails them and communication between them is shattered. When pressured by Nettie to leave the suburbs and, with them, his illusions, and instead join the London society where Nettie had a chance to ‘throng fashionable shops, cycle in the Park and subscribe to Kensington Town Hall dances’ [AM, 332], Catterson tells West that ‘there was no price too high to pay for the purchase of domestic peace’ [AM, 332]. In the process, however, Catterson exchanges speech and action for silence and passivity,

⁸⁷ Vadillo, pp. 172-3.

⁸⁸ Vadillo, p. 175.

sacrificing in essence his sense of self, a very high price to pay indeed. The man West sees in section III is in all respects a shadow of his former self.

In an era when the religious and spiritual aboveground still holds strong (although not in a strict theological sense but a broader aesthetic one) and the underground (realistic or metaphorical) has become a part of London's urban setting, D'Arcy refuses to acknowledge either, making her characters confront only what is at the same level with them. For D'Arcy, both the under- and the above- worlds can be summed up in what exists between them. D'Arcy's urban space is as limited as liberating. There is no way out, no way up and no way down and those who cannot survive in it and in accordance to its ever-changing rules, despite their moral gains, are doomed to eventual disappointment/ failure/ death.

The break in marriage, at its very beginning, too, is pinpointed by Catterson in a walk out with his now lawfully wedded wife, where the first 'scene' between them takes place: 'As we walked back along the King's Road, she stopped me before a shop and said "You can just come in here and buy me some furs. Now I'm your wife you needn't suppose I'm going through another winter in my wretched, little, old coat of last year"' [AM, 338]. This incident has a dual effect, in terms of space and language. From then on, in the couple's spatial memory, the city is indelibly categorised as a site of consumption and in the centre of this commodified view stands their love which now, following the bourgeois class imperative needs to be proven by means of consumption. Catterson is lost for words. The struggle for power through verbal exchange is now won by Nettie.

Barthes in his *Lover's Discourse* argues that:

When two subjects argue according to a set exchange of remarks and with a view to having the 'last word,' these two subjects are *already* married: for them the scene is an exercise of a right, the practice of a language of which they are co-owners; *each one in his turn*, says the scene, which means: *never you without me*, and reciprocally. This is the meaning of what is euphemistically called *dialogue*: not to listen to each other, but to submit in common to an egalitarian principle of the distribution of language goods.

[...] With the first scene, language begins its long career as an agitated, useless thing.⁸⁹

This co-ownership of language that Barthes describes as a prerequisite for a scene damages Catterson's sense of self irrevocably. In a single incident he loses two aspects he had until then complete power over by means of Nettie's exclusion from them: his placement in an urban setting, and the upper hand in conversation. Catterson is now made to share both language and space. Lacking individuality in these, he loses the most integral part of his identity. He is therefore pushed into a non-verbal, nondescript corner of the house, the solitude of two levels, spatial and linguistic, which not even his close friend can break.

In the instance of a scene, the first of many we are told between them, language is treated as a commodity, exchanged between two people who on a financial basis are now considered equal. Their marriage has made this economic equality take form. Their union is sanctioned as well as stigmatised in the first instance of a discussion that puts them on an equal footing most manifest by Nettie's desire to acquire a luxurious commodity: clothing.

Priscilla Parkhurst-Ferguson suggests that 'more than any other urban type, the *flâneur* suggests the contradictions of the modern city, caught between the insistent mobility of the present and the visible weight of the past'.⁹⁰ Flânerie is treated as an ideal social state that allows the flâneur to move about the city without losing one's individuality.⁹¹ If the flâneur is 'indelibly Parisian', argues Parkhurst-Ferguson, 'it is because of the special claims that Paris makes on our attention and

⁸⁹ Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Cape, 1979), p. 204.

⁹⁰ Priscilla Parkhurst-Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution: Writing in the Nineteenth Century City* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1994), p. 80.

⁹¹ Standard works on the flâneur and flânerie include: *The Flâneur*, ed. by Keith Tester (Routledge, 1994); Janet Wolff, 'The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 2.3 (1985), 37-46; *The Invisible Flâneuse?: Gender, Public Space and Visual Culture in Nineteenth Century Paris*, ed. by Aruna D'Souza and Tom McDonough (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge: Mass.: MIT, 1989); 'The Flâneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering', *New German Critique*, 39 (1986), 99-140; Dana Brand, *The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth Century American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

the way that the flâneur resolves those claims'.⁹² D'Arcy makes a point of describing Catterson's daily routine as greatly influenced by the time he spent in Paris and in his desire to maintain this, he teaches Nettie these traditions also. In the beginning of the story Catterson is described as having incorporated French habits in his daily routine due to the time he spent in Paris, such as drinking coffee after lunch or wearing clothes of the French fashion. Later on, when West visits the house to meet Nettie for the first time, we read that Nettie is making coffee the way Catterson likes it and has taught her how. Catterson appears to be sharing experience by means of his French habits, but there is an ominous sense in this being transferred on to sharing his flânerie because by definition that is a solitary pastime.

Parkhurst-Ferguson argues that in the instance of Flaubert, flânerie was represented as a type of dispossession: 'The displacement of the flâneur within the city translated [Flaubert's] own sense of dislocation within bourgeois society. Flânerie ceased to signify freedom and autonomy; it implied instead estrangement and alienation'.⁹³ In a similar way for Catterson, after the scene in front of the window display, flânerie is forever damaged, and has now taken the qualities Flaubert describes, for he now sees the city through Nettie's eyes and that particular scene that forever changed their relationship and shattered his idealised life. Parkhurst-Ferguson argues that 'no woman can disconnect herself from the city and its seductive spectacle. For she must either desire the objects spread before her or herself be the object of desire, associated with and agent of the infinite seductive capacity of the city'.⁹⁴ The reflection of Nettie's identity in flânerie has forever shattered the connection of Catterson to the city: 'The shopper's [...] intense engagement in the urban scene, the integration into the commodity exchange, and the consequent inability to maintain the proper distance from the urban scene preclude the neutrality and objectivity cultivated so assiduously by the flâneur'.⁹⁵ Her intensely commodified walk around the city deprives Catterson of what is assumed to be a neutral and objective pastime.

To be a flâneur, you have to be in control of your individuality, of your own strong sense of self and of the setting around you. Catterson possesses none of these

⁹² Parkhurst-Ferguson, p. 80.

⁹³ Parkhurst-Ferguson, p. 81.

⁹⁴ Parkhurst-Ferguson, p. 84.

⁹⁵ Parkhurst-Ferguson, p. 84.

essential attributes. As Nettie goes out, he becomes more and more domestic. Although becoming more solitary (a basic characteristic of *flânerie*), Catterson no longer finds consolation in *flânerie*. Afflicted by illnesses both real and imaginary, he now finds the exit from the house to the city a daunting possibility and he is discouraged from walking and experiencing the city. This reflects Flaubert's perception of the city as a cacophonous conglomeration, an attack to the senses, a mode of further fragmentation of the modern self. The threat of loss of control is mirrored in Catterson's progressive fear of the city. The mobility in terms of speed and potentiality of the city - as an environment he only visited and therefore had a sense of control over when he was still situated in the suburbs - becomes threatening as soon as he makes London his only environment. For Catterson, the city represents eventual disillusion and defeat.

The dissonance and cacophony of the city has destroyed the lyricism of Nettie's and Catterson's love. In addition, their adherence to social norms – namely, their wedding, the purchase of a home, and the interest in social status – has managed to completely shatter every bit of their mutual respect. Camaraderie is no longer an ideal they share but a forgotten fragment of their 'sinful' past. These implications of a vile city are not only projected on to Catterson but also their relationship or perhaps the idealised conception of it that was (happily for Catterson, yet shamefully for Nettie) confounded in the suburbia. Now, for Catterson, Nettie is but 'the constant living reminder of his dead illusions' [AM, 341].

Barthes' theory of the 'scene' as discussed above has only one possible resolution. He argues that 'only death can interrupt the Sentence, the Scene' and it seems that this is the only possible resolution for the story, even if figuratively in terms of isolation, fragmentation, loss of hope and ability of coherent thought and speech.⁹⁶ When West visits Catterson in section III, he finds him a changed man: sitting 'silent, looking wistfully away into space', his voice 'shaking'. Lamenting the loss of his old self 'always restless, always talking', Catterson become a bit more talkative when they move to another room away from Nettie and her friend but West notices that 'he spoke in a disconnected manner' [AM, 337-342].

⁹⁶ Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*, p. 208.

Surrendering to a passive state is for Catterson a noble gesture, a small price to pay for peace. He sees himself as morally superior for doing the right thing after sinning and marrying Nettie despite his current state. The dual fragmentation of self and language, however, and the resulted resignation jeopardise Catterson's heroic quality. 'What is a hero? Barthes wonders. The one who has the last word. Can we think of a hero who does not speak before dying? To renounce the last word (to refuse to have a scene) derives, then, from an anti-heroic morality: that of Abraham: to the end of the sacrifice demanded of him, he does not speak.'⁹⁷ Despite the imminent death that is suggested for Catterson, it is not his but Nettie's voice that is heard at the end of the story.

Religious connotations, such as that of Abraham's sacrifice, are not extraordinary in the fin de siècle. D'Arcy, however, is not interested in the religious aspect of the theme of sacrifice but rather the moral and aesthetic in a way that reflects the idea of the Religion of Art. As Beckson has argued, 'by the late nineteenth century, the theme of the Religion of Art was widespread, the Victorians inspired by John Ruskin and Matthew Arnold'.⁹⁸ Ruskin and Arnold argue for a vital combination of religion and aesthetics. Likewise, D'Arcy places an emphasis on the moral rather than theological associations of art and aesthetics. At the end of the story, when West finds Catterson succumbed to passivity and resignation, the conversation between the two men revolves around Catterson's son, whose prospects seem bleak at the hands of his mother. This is especially true as she continuously abuses him (both physically and verbally) but also because the men believe her (im)morality will be projected onto the boy. As in 'The Pleasure-Pilgrim', Nettie's self as performance is viewed in a negative way by the male characters due to its threat to patriarchy, but perhaps more pointedly in its arrivistic threat to the status quo.

The link between language and identity illustrated by Abraham's sacrifice finds further exposition in Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*.⁹⁹ The narrator is Jonas Silentio, John the silent, and his own message in the preface is significant for

⁹⁷ Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*, p. 209.

⁹⁸ Karl Beckson, *The Religion of Art: A Modernist Theme in British Literature, 1885-1925* (New York: AMS Press, 2006), p. 1.

⁹⁹ Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, ed. by Stephen Evans and Sylvia Walsh; trans. by Sylvia Walsh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

understanding Catterson's motives. The connection to Abraham does not end with their mutual sacrifices of themselves and their sons (albeit in differing ways). Like Jonas Silentio, Catterson is unable to fully comprehend his actions despite his confidence in them. In addition, their sacrifice results in a verbal mutilation. Their inability to comprehend their actions (they act as non-verbal messengers) cannot be translated into a language form. Their morality can only be explained by the readers, not themselves.

Catterson sacrifices himself, reflected in his removal from a preferred setting (rural to urban) and the fragmentation of his language. In their place, social isolation and silence. For Catterson, as 'he had sinned', the sacrifice was undeniable and 'marriage [was] the only reparation' [AM, 312]. Contrary to Kierkegaard, Catterson does indeed invoke the idea of sin. It is the basis upon which his decision to marry is formed and therefore sin is continuously related to it. Kierkegaard argues that 'as soon as sin is introduced, ethics runs aground precisely upon repentance, for repentance is the highest ethical expression but precisely as such the deepest ethical self-contradiction'.¹⁰⁰

Catterson does not adjust well in situations of shifting quality. The denial of his self destroys him and in the end the in-between states baffle him as opposed to Nettie who thrives in them. This has both gender and class connotations in relation to the shifting politics of the fin de siècle. But Catterson seeks to rectify them until the moment he realises that he cannot go against them. Although Catterson seems to feel content in his idealised notion of life in the suburbs with his mistress, he still wants to set things right. He has trespassed in matters of morality and therefore seeks to do something, namely to marry his mistress. This is perhaps the last moment where we witness clearly his agency. If this is about the survival of the fittest, the struggle for power has undoubtedly been won by Nettie and the struggle is bound to be carried on by their children. The future of the boy who was sacrificed by his father (by means of the latter's complete resignation and his abandonment of the child to his mother who hates him) looks rather bleak. Across generations, then, female characters in the story manage to rise above social difficulty and adapt quickly and

¹⁰⁰ Kierkegaard, p. 86.

successfully. Male characters, on the other hand, unable or unwilling to adapt to changes of settings and circumstances suffer in the analogy.

To conclude, D'Arcy employs a protomodernist aesthetic of liminal qualities to address the interconnection of a changing environment, spatially and socially, at the fin de siècle with the increasing fragmentation of self and language. By pointing to the inability to define such boundaries, D'Arcy comments on the issues of the indefinable self and the self as performance when set against an environment that not only forms but informs the characters' actions. In so doing, she exposes gender and social dualities of the era and questions assumptions by suggesting instead a fluidity of self as mirrored in the fluidity of modernity.

For D'Arcy, the liminal space involves in some way a transgression or a transformation. That is to say, the liminal space encapsulates the transition from two distinct positions. D'Arcy utilises changes in physical space as a means to highlight not only the transitions themselves, but also the effect these changes have wrought on the characters. The identity shift or narrative complication is thus, in D'Arcy's writing, always easily located by its appropriation in setting.

D'Arcy's writing indicates a preoccupation with the liminal from the point of view of its ability to enact change. D'Arcy, unlike Hickson, is less concerned with the aftermath of change, but more so with the transformative power of change itself. While Hickson identifies herself clearly within the protomodernist framework, D'Arcy's writing is somewhat more elusive in this respect. Conversely, D'Arcy's writing is much more readily identifiable within a realist and naturalist tradition which Hickson's work seems to be less directly engaged with. Both women however write from a perspective that is informed by all these traditions and are able to renegotiate a space whereby to articulate best their ideas.

In her writing, D'Arcy deals intently with the role that setting plays in defining her characters. For example, for the stories which make a point of the move from the countryside or the suburbs into London, the change in setting reflects or enhances the understanding of these characters in specific gender and/or class terms. While the women thrive socially in London, generally speaking, the men suffer due to this change. Thus, D'Arcy takes the class and gender concerns of her time and uses her knowledge of London life as a way to best reproduce these. Setting becomes

a key stylistic invocation in D'Arcy's work that communicates substantial information to the reader about the characters in the story.

Social arrivisme is integral in D'Arcy's work and is perhaps most revealing in its considerations with the rise of the educated mass. Much of this debate on social arrivisme is to do with a much wider debate within the literary and political sphere of the time. Indeed, as a contributing writer for the *Yellow Book*, D'Arcy may be said to speak directly to the educated mass, and the social anxiety of her characters may reflect more broadly the social anxieties that troubled her readership. The fortunes and misfortunes of D'Arcy's characters take on greater significance when cast in the light of contemporary debate. Through social arrivisme, all of D'Arcy's character suffer loss on some level (men lose a sense of self-determinism and the ability to articulate themselves clearly, while women prosper socially but experience losses in love).

Chapter IV

The Liminality of Protomodernism in Mrs. Murray Hickson: Love, Marriage and Morality

*'The liberty of man consists solely in this: that he obeys natural laws because he has himself recognized them as such, and not because they have been externally imposed upon him by any extrinsic will whatever, divine or human, collective or individual.'*¹ – Mikhail Bakunin – *God and the State*

*'Art and morality are, with certain provisos [...] one. Their essence is the same. The essence of both of them is love. Love is the perception of individuals. Love is the extremely difficult realization that something other than oneself is real. Love, and so art and morals, is the discovery of reality.'*² – Iris Murdoch – *'The Sublime and the Good'*

Mabel Kitcat, better known as Mrs. Murray Hickson, published numerous short stories using the name she acquired from her first marriage (Hickson) rather than the one she got from her second husband in 1896 (Kitcat). Her short stories may be said to fall under two broad categories: the 'Teddy' stories (sentimental accounts of a child's point of view of the typical English countryside village) and the stories that are social, cultural and psychological studies of women's roles in marriages and affairs. The latter were included in the *Shadows of Life* collection, published by John Lane in 1898. The collection consists of thirteen short stories, some of which were previously published in diverse periodicals such as *Vanity Fair*, *Chapman's*, and the *Yellow Book*. The collection was initially advertised to be part of the Keynotes Series under the provisional title *Stories*.³ The Keynotes Series included women writers better known today, such as Egerton, D'Arcy, Evelyn Sharp, and E. Nesbit. In this chapter, I will analyse Hickson's representations of relationships between men and

¹ Mikhail Bakunin, *God and the State* (first published 1882; New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1916), p.30.

² Iris Murdoch, 'The Sublime and the Good', *Chicago Review*, 13.3 (1959), 42-55 (p. 51).

³ Advertisements of the Keynotes Series publications are often not consistent with each other, however, in this case it can be assumed that Hickson's volume was not included as it was published after the series had come to its end.

women (in particular, marriages and affairs) set against the backdrop of other New Women writers. In considering these relationships, I will pay specific attention to issues of love, morality, and motherhood with reference to modernity. This chapter builds on the work I presented in the previous chapter on D'Arcy's use of the liminal in order to reflect on the transitory feeling of identity. Whereas the focus in the previous chapter was the limen in setting and mobility, in this chapter I will look more closely at the role of the limen in Hickson's protomodernist writing and her focus on morality. More specifically, I will provide a close reading of five of Hickson's stories taken from her *Shadows of Life*. These are, 'The End of a Dream', 'A Mistaken Identity', 'At the Cross Roads', 'A Vigil', and 'An Awakening'.⁴

Before I embark on a close reading of Hickson's writing, I analyse concisely the current field of criticism on the New Woman movement and more generally women writing in the fin de siècle. I will do this in order to situate Hickson's work within a wider context of New Woman writing and argue for the strength of her work as an understudied, yet influential protomodernist writer. Writing on the brink of modernity and modernism makes Hickson's work an excellent study of how middlebrow fiction not only viewed but also informed the formation of the modern woman. Hickson was able to do this by shaping the conscience of readers into exploring taboo themes pertaining to women's issues, challenging restrictive social identities and expectations, and imagining alternatives for existing gender roles.⁵

⁴ Mrs. Murray Hickson, *Shadows of Life* (London: John Lane, 1898). All subsequent references taken from the short stories will be to this edition, unless otherwise stipulated.

⁵ Standard critical works on the concept of 'feminine middlebrow' that have informed my understanding are: Teresa Mangum, *Married, Middlebrow and Militant: Sarah Grand and the New Woman Novel* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); Joan Shelley Rubin, *The Making of Middlebrow Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Allison Pease, *Modernism, Feminism and the Culture of Boredom* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Jennifer Shepherd, 'Marketing Middlebrow Feminism: Elizabeth von Arnim, the New Woman and the Fin-de-Siècle Book Market', *Philological Quarterly*, 84.1 (2010), 105-131; Christopher Newfield, 'Middlebrow Reading and the Power of Feeling', *American Quarterly*, 51.4 (1999), 910-920. Like middlebrow fiction, filling the in-between and transitory spaces between low and high art, so the studies of the concept are often located not just in the transitory era of the fin de siècle, between two centuries, but also in the transitory inter-war era, most notable examples of which are: Rosa Maria Bracco, *Betwixt and Between: Middlebrow Fiction and English Society in the Twenties and Thirties* (Parkville, Vic: University of Melbourne, 1990), and *Merchants of Hope: British Middlebrow Writers and the First World War 1919-1939* (Providence, Oxford: Berg, 1992); *Middlebrow Moderns: Popular American Women Writers of the 1920s*, ed. by Lisa Botshon and Meredith Goldsmith (Boston, Mass.: Northeastern University Press, 2003); Nicola Humble, *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel 1920s to 1950s: Class, Domesticity and Bohemianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Erica Brown and Mary Grover, *Middlebrow Literary Cultures: The Battle of the Brows 1920-1960* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

Ardis' study, *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism*, was one of the first responses to the criticism of feminist scholars like Showalter, Stubbs and the New Critics that was largely based on modernist beliefs of value which stressed style over content.⁶ Ardis argues that '[t]o attend to marginality, to narrate a shifting limit between the New Woman novel and high modernism' is to expose 'the reactionary conservatism that is so often occluded by the modernist valorisation of style over content'.⁷ She contends that the kind of analysis that focuses on content instead is beneficial because it brings to the surface a neglected side of criticism, one that was actually supported in the Victorian age and encouraged by writers like Charles Dickens. Yet, her theory creates as many (and not dissimilar) problems as it sought to attack.

By the terms of her own theory questioning the value of a 'set of "masterworks"', Ardis unsuccessfully navigates the question of style by creating a new value system that relies heavily on content as the substitute measure.⁸ By this new standard, Ardis would be forced to exclude all the writers who were primarily preoccupied with style but nevertheless remained ignored. Among these could be the aesthetes or writers who, like Hickson, do not easily fall into a definite category where either style or content is promoted but rather reading is enriched by the tight connection of the two.

As Talia Schaffer has commented, scholars like Ardis and Pykett established a drastic type of criticism that 'privileges cultural information rather than formal complexity, authorial passion rather than authorial subjectivity, and direct political address rather than novelistic conventions'.⁹ This approach has undeniably allowed for different kinds of readings of neglected texts. Regrettably, though, by being a mere response to the attitude of neglect as championed by critics of their time, and the non-canonisation of women writers' texts, it becomes just a mirror reflection of

⁶ Ann Ardis, *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism* (New Brunswick, NJ; London: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin De Siècle* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1990); Patricia Stubbs, *Women and Fiction: Feminism and the Novel, 1880-1920* (Sussex: Harvester University Press, 1979).

⁷ Ardis, p. 5.

⁸ Ardis, p. 7.

⁹ Schaffer, *The Forgotten Female Aesthetes: Literary Culture in Late-Victorian England*, p.10. In her subchapter 'The Problem of the New Women', Schaffer offers a condensed and insightful view of the New Woman criticism available (pp. 8-16); Lyn Pykett, *The "Improper" Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing*.

the initial problem. More specifically, although they have introduced readers to forgotten writers and texts, these critics still fail to take these texts beyond the narrow category of a specialised interest in women's issues or, at best, fin-de-siècle writing. In addition, scholars like Gail Cunningham, Jane Eldridge Miller, as well as Pykett and Ardis have expressed their reluctance to accept New Women or feminist texts as worthy of literary praise. This is not surprising since these scholars focus intensively on the subject matter, thereby narrowing their studies to explicitly feminist texts as they are academically more appealing.¹⁰ As a result, although Ardis, for example, starts from an inclusive stance she then progresses to a political and exclusive one by the specificity of her focus.

Seemingly, at the other end of this scale, stands the exclusive theory with leading scholars like Rita Kranidis and Jane Eldridge Miller who study texts that have served to further the women's cause.¹¹ In the end, although the two theories start from very different points they both end up studying texts that are explicitly political, narrowing them down to a specific subject matter and thus, allowing their continuous non-canonization and marginalisation, the reason against which they were formed in the first place.

With this chapter, I suggest a unitary theory that brings together these two theories and redresses much of their shortcomings. Reflecting the liminal status of Hickson as a writer, I suggest instead an individualised approach to the writer, rather than any attempt to make her fit into some sort of politicised group that is more in line with a scholar's given interests. The aim of this chapter is not only to show that Hickson challenged the status quo for how women were viewed in moral terms. It is also to show that her choice of language, style and narration – all characteristic of protomodernism – were also challenging literary standards of the time. It is thus made clear how style and content are deeply interwoven in her work. Her writing, which is neither highly politicised, nor explicitly feminist, does not, ironically, align her with either the 'exclusive' or 'inclusive' models. It is not surprising then that both of the above mentioned strands of criticism fail to accommodate her work

¹⁰ See Gail Cunningham, *The New Woman and the Victorian Novel* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978); Jane Eldridge Miller, *Rebel Women: Feminism, Modernism, and the Edwardian Novel* (London: Virago Press, 1994).

¹¹ Penny Boumelha, *Thomas Hardy and Women: Sexual Ideology and Narrative Form* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982), pp. 63-64; Rita S. Kranidis, *Subversive Discourse: The Cultural Production of Late Victorian Feminist Novels* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995).

satisfactorily. These types of criticism would probably deem Hickson's writing to be too feminine but not feminist enough. Hickson resists conscription into any of the following categories: New Woman, Aesthete, Victorian, radical, conservative, feminist, or anti-feminist. Her shifting, multi-layered status, though, and her non-conformism allow for a better understanding of the period, as she is virtually free of restrictive political or literary didacticisms.

Hickson's writing is characteristically 'turn-of-the-century' as it is situated in the middle of two periods: the Victorian and the Modernist. She combines conservative ideologies with alternative, more radical approaches. Perhaps the unusually wide and liberating definition of a New Woman writer provided by Ann Heilmann comes closest to describing Hickson's writing satisfactorily: 'The site of ceaseless debate and narrative exploration as well as literary innovation, the New Woman forged and occupied the interface between mass-market consumerism and proto-modernist aestheticism'.¹² Hickson addresses both the mass readership (*Windsor Magazine*, *Chapman's*) as well as the perceived cultural elite (*Yellow Book*) and in this way she differs from the modernists' elitist view of literature and readership. Hickson, in her fiction, creates an alternative future characterised by its optimism (yet, non-utopian in its conception) in terms of the female social position, but this ideal is firmly grounded within notions of a more pragmatic and troublesome present. Finally, in line with Schaffer's wider definition of the aesthetes – involving love of nature and language experimentation – Hickson may well be associated with the aesthetes. Schaffer argues, '[w]omen writers enjoyed aestheticism because its elaborate language allowed them to write the pretty visual descriptions that critics liked, yet it was also avant-garde enough to permit a new range of daring topics'.¹³ However, again, Hickson resists single categorisation. Her stories do not share the dreamlike quality of the aesthetes' choice of archaic language and unreliable narration. Instead, they are quite the opposite, in that they are representative of women's lives during the fin de siècle, using contemporary, condensed language and a detached, yet insightful narration. This study has been greatly informed by Schaffer's and Ledger's approach to women's texts, as well as Kranidis' methodology. More specifically, Schaffer offers an alternative, non-categorising

¹² Ann Heilmann, *Feminist Forerunners: Womanism and Feminism in the Early Twentieth Century* (London: Rivers Oram, 2001), p. 1.

¹³ Schaffer, p. 5.

reading of the period by reading and re-reading female aesthetes, as well as realists, sensation novelists, naturalists, socialists and anarchists, among others.

Debora Thom focusses on the details of the material existence of women, while Ledger argues instead that the textual representations of the New Woman are as important as their 'real', daily experiences, since for the most part the New Woman was a discursive issue and therefore is available to us textually.¹⁴ However, Ledger also uses historical sources when appropriate and considers the relationship of the New Woman and the social and cultural reality of the period. By using an approach that focuses on the connection of style and content, we are able to understand more about women's social reality in the fin de siècle. This union of style and content is another way with which I attempt to create a unified theory based on the limen.

Ledger's approach is in many ways similar to Kranidis' methodology of regarding the analysis of a text as a historical endeavour in itself. She argues that '[a]n exploration of the socially symbolic relationships among late Victorian politics, culture, and art, and the subordination of women's autonomy as writers and social beings', makes possible the process of what Fredric Jameson describes as an allowance for 'general matters and specific events [to] recover their original urgency... [by telling them] within the unity of a single collective story'.¹⁵ Kranidis also stresses the fact that a consideration of a political and cultural reality of the era 'includes not only events as they were perceived and represented generally, but also includes the marginalised discourses that commented on such events as they sought to change them'.¹⁶ It is my aim in this chapter to comment not only on the content of Hickson's stories but also to see them as text, which means to analyse its formal and stylistic approaches, and ultimately to comment on the connection between content and style. In addition, I will be looking at the political and cultural reality of the era through the work of other women writers of the period, and thus attempt to bridge Ledger's and Kranidis' approaches.

¹⁴ Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 3; Deborah Thom, 'A Lop-Sided View: Feminist History or the History of Women?' in *Critical Feminism: Argument in the Disciplines*, ed. by Kate Campbell (Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1992).

¹⁵ Kranidis, p. i; Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Methuen, 1981), p. 19.

¹⁶ Kranidis, p. xii.

To study Hickson in the cultural reality of her era and in accordance with her own obsession with reviews as illustrated in Chapter II, means to also situate her in the context of criticism by the period's press. In general, the reviews that Hickson received for her volume *Shadows of Life* were largely unsympathetic. Although the reviews generally recognised her literary merit, they consistently argued that the subject matter (women affected by situations in marriages and male-female relationships) and the characteristically female point of view, were all indicative of weakness, sadness or boredom. This attitude is similar to D'Arcy's reviews in which she was praised for her literary talent but heavily criticised for her subject choice when that included similar studies of relationships. In addition to the criticism levelled against her choice of subject, Hickson is also criticised for adopting a 'modern' style she is not really equipped to use. Described as 'exercises of pathos' (*Academy*), 'morbid' (*Outlook* and *Athenaeum*) 'grey and depressing' (*Bookman*), the stories of this collection differ greatly, both in their reception and subject matter, from her previous sentimental and romanticised 'Teddy' stories.¹⁷ In escaping the sentimentality of her Teddy stories and experimenting with form and content, Hickson's work is heavily criticised. Her short stories are not recognised as realistic in subject matter because the society is not ready to acknowledge taboo matters such as adultery and female sexuality.

The fact that these technically accomplished texts are criticised for being *too* concerned with women's issues, whereas earlier sentimental stories were widely approved and lauded, echoes Schaffer's view that 'women writers' interests seemed irrelevant to the "great" concerns of literature'.¹⁸ The result of this is the exclusion of their work from the male-codified canon and critical disapproval when these works dare to specifically address 'women's issues'.

Athenaeum patronisingly argues that:

¹⁷ 'The Newest Fiction', *Academy*, 1360 (1898), p. 575; 'He, She and It', *Outlook*, 1.25 (1898), p. 796; 'Literary Gossip', *Athenaeum*, 3545 (1895), pp. 456-7; 'Shadows of Life', *Bookman*, 14.84 (1898), p. 168.

¹⁸ Schaffer, p. 10.

It is to be regretted that *Shadows of Life* (Lane), Mrs. Murray Hickson's clever little sketches, have suffered from an artistic standpoint by being collected into one volume. They are so exclusively concerned with the shadows of woman's life, told from woman's point of view, and dealing almost exclusively with woman as the victim, that, taken altogether, they become monotonous.¹⁹

It is therefore recognised that her writing is aligned to W. T. Stead's definition of 'The Modern Woman novel [which] is not merely a novel written by a woman, or a novel written about women, but it is a novel written by a woman about women from the standpoint of Woman'.²⁰ Although elsewhere the *Athenaeum* critic recognises the stories as worthy of literary praise, the critic seems more concerned by the radical choice of subject and point of view:

To say that they are morbid is superfluous; but none the less the majority are quite worthy of the power and insight which the author has already shown herself to possess. We only regret that in the present instance these qualities are not allowed fuller scope, but are for the most part confined to the complicated and depressing reflections of the one sex with regard to the other.²¹

It is not only the 'narrow' focus on the female characters and their views, actions and feelings that critics opposed. The element that they strongly oppose is the transgression that underlines all the stories, especially as it originates from women, and reflects their 'modern' views on love, where companionship, instead of superior-inferior power dynamics, forms the basis of a successful relationship between men and women.

¹⁹ 'Literary Gossip', pp. 456-7.

²⁰ W.T Stead, 'The Book of the Month: The Novel of the Modern Woman', *Review of Reviews*, 10 (1894), 64-74 (p. 64).

²¹ 'Literary Gossip', p. 457.

The protomodernist elements in Hickson's writing, which assist in making statements about the psychological portrait of women and juxtapose the style and the subject of her stories, were precisely the unique essence of her writing that came under attack in reviews of the time: 'Mrs. Murray Hickson writes well; but the shortness and finality of her sentences occasionally obscure her meaning, and she leaves us almost too abruptly to work out the after crises for ourselves'.²² In fact, two of the stories that are the most revolutionary as they experiment widely with form, style and narrative, (a near-surrealist tone is distinctive) are described in the same review as 'needlessly repulsive' ('The Waters of Death' and 'A Desert Story'). The obfuscation Hickson uses, as well as the open endings, have the intention of reaching women readers while limiting the backlash against her stories, as was often the case with other openly radical New Woman writers. But, more importantly in relation to liminality, it also manages to mark the connection between the difficulty and murkiness of the issues discussed with the appropriate language and style. Finally, this review proves that the subject matter and style are so closely connected in Hickson's stories as the critic opposes both levels simultaneously and recognises them as indistinguishable by indicating that the result of her open-ended style is leaving readers to 'work out the after crises [with regards to the subject matter] for [themselves]'. By the consistent use of this technique in every story, Hickson trains her readers into recognising the urgency of the matters she discusses and the lack of answers or alternatives available, making a strong claim for a political, social change in the way women are regarded.

The review in *Outlook* does not differ much from the previous in its attitude. Employing a slightly mocking tone, the writer of the *Outlook* review comments on the fact that 'all the tales, it is scarcely necessary to add, are written from the woman's point of view'.²³ Carrying on in the same tone, the critic comments on the male characters being of the 'well-known colourless type commonly introduced into this kind of work' and the female ones as 'such creatures as certainly no other kind of men could have endured for more than five minutes'.²⁴ Although the critic does not discuss what is meant by 'such creatures', it is understood that only a colourless type of man – a type of man that real-life men would surely never aspire to be –

²² 'Literary Gossip', p. 457.

²³ 'He, She and It', p. 796.

²⁴ 'He, She and It', p. 796.

would be able to stand these complex, modern, sexually liberated women with intellectual abilities, firm beliefs in morality, and strong emotions leading passionate lives and pushing for meaningful relationships based on their specific ideas of love and companionship. What the critic terms as the colourless man, New Women writers described as the New Man in his capability to deal aptly with the complexities of the New Woman.²⁵ The *Outlook* critic also recognises Hickson's ability to write well but feels this is overshadowed by the wrong selection of subject matter:

We are conscious as we read of a terrible seriousness behind her work – a seriousness which seems almost pathetic. Not that her 'form' is at all bad. She has the knack of getting at the right moment, for it is by the presentation of a culminating, intense moment, emotion, or mood in a woman's life that she seeks to give the sexual tragedy of the whole of it.²⁶

The critic in the quotation above fails to appreciate Hickson's 'form' in its protomodernist approach and thus denies the intensity this approach lends 'intense moment[s], emotion[s], or mood[s]' when providing a psychological portrait of the characters. I wish to clarify here that the liminal moment is not necessarily 'a moment', in other words it is not defined by brevity. Hickson, as this chapter will show, stretches the liminal moment in order to explore its possibilities. To understand this liminal moment fully, one needs to place it within a wider chronotopical context that is informed by protomodernism. The liminal quality of protomodernism (neither fully Victorian nor Modernist) resists easy categorisation.

²⁵ Further analysis of Hickson's representation of the New Man with specific textual examples to follow later in this chapter. For a critical analysis of the fin-de-siècle concept of the New Man see: *Maternal Instincts: Visions of Motherhood and Sexuality in Britain, 1875-1925*, ed. by Claudia Nelson and Ann Sumner Holmes (New York: St. Martin's Press; London: Macmillan Press, 1997); Stephanie Forward, 'The "New Man" in Fin de Siècle Fiction', *Women's Writing*, 5.3 (1998), 437-455; Sally Ledger, 'The New Woman and Feminist Fictions' in *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle*, ed. by Gail Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Brenda Ayres, 'Under the Hill: The 'Man Question' in the New Woman Novels of Marie Corelli, Jessie Fothergill, and Mary Linskill in *Writing Women of the Fin de Siecle: Authors of Change*, ed. by Adrienne Gavin and Carolyn Oulton (London: Palgrave, 2011).

²⁶ 'He, She and It', p. 796.

This perhaps explains to some degree the limited reception of D'Arcy's and Hickson's work.²⁷ Switching between first and third person narration in her stories, Hickson manages to communicate more in this way than if she had used the traditional third person omniscient narrator alone. This was a technique favoured by D'Arcy too, as I showed in the previous chapter, who used it to provide a totality of character embedded in the environment. Like D'Arcy, Hickson trains her readers into deducing more than the information she offers, prompting them, thus, to gradually look beyond the written word and find their own questions and answers to the contentious issues raised. The review above is perhaps most significant in its identification of an important framing aspect of Hickson's fiction: her exploration of the 'sexual'. Hickson's representations of relationships, many of which are adulterous, place sexuality as a central concern. The centrality of this theme locates Hickson among the forerunners of women's writing in the fin de siècle and cements her position as a writer (like Egerton and D'Arcy) renegotiating sexual and gender binaries, instead suggesting a liminal reconsideration of the status quo.

Predictably then, another review taken from the *Bookman* seems to also attack the subject matter of Hickson's stories by defining it precisely as modern. The critic argues that Hickson lacks the literary skill to describe 'modernity' interestingly or accurately. This study, though, shows how Hickson uses not only a precisely modern approach towards the subject matter, but also provides a complementary protomodernist style of writing that aligns her work with other short story women writers of her time. The reviewer criticises Hickson's perception of modernity thus:

It would be well if Mrs. Hickson would forget all about 'modernity'. It strikes us she has no particular desire to deal with the subjects and phases of life that are classed under that name; and in dealing with them she has no special knowledge or skill. She seems to be merely echoing the talk of others

²⁷ My comparative analysis of recent critical theories on the fin de siècle/ New Woman writer and fin-de-siècle reviews of Hickson's writing points to the inadequacy of a theoretical framework in which liminal writers, such as Hickson or D'Arcy can be read, studied, reviewed or analysed. My thesis seeks to rectify this gap by promoting an understanding of the liminal while at the same time respecting the writers' more fluid categorisation as liminal writers.

and obeying a fashion of the hour. Her stories of typically modern life are very unimaginative.²⁸

In the process of this study, I will use my own analysis of the stories together with critical reading available to me in order to present Hickson as an extremely dexterous and capable user of protomodernist techniques. She employs these techniques not just because they might be part of the 'fashion of the hour', but because they best emphasise her subject matter and reflect on emerging modernity as a site of social and moral turmoil.

For many writers, the selection and sequence of the stories in the collection is important for their work, and this is the case with Hickson's collection too. I examine the stories in the sequence they appear in *Shadows of Life*. Hickson builds on each story and is increasingly bolder in her treatment of the subject matter as she moves from one story to the next. In terms of style, she increasingly substitutes realist conventions for more radical protomodernist innovations. This is perhaps clearest in the difference between the first collected story, 'The End of a Dream', and her final story, 'A Desert Story'. The former is largely a realist story whereas the latter is a fantasia, an allegory where the style recreates the illusionary, dreamlike effects of a desert. This change between literary movements was one that for D'Arcy was clearest within the narrative of a single story, whereas for Hickson this change is most evident when taking into account the entire volume. While the approach differs, nevertheless, the result is broadly the same: they prepare or rather train the reader in accepting new literary forms and more open discussions about subjects which were considered taboo.

In 'The End of a Dream', an unnamed female character has an extramarital affair while her husband is sick and facing death. When her lover falls ill, she defies social propriety and goes near him. Soon after the doctor announces her lover's death, she receives a letter informing her of her husband's death. Using an ambiguous title as well as an ending, Hickson blurs the line between dream and reality. The dream to which Hickson refers to in the beginning is not just the

²⁸ 'Shadows of Life', p. 168.

extramarital affair cut short by death, but perhaps also the ideal picture of a marriage, which stops being regarded sentimentally as a dream when it does not fulfil the woman's desires, both emotional and sexual.

In a commodified society, it is necessary to comment on the materiality of life as an informant of the social and cultural landscape. Chapter II addressed textual materiality. The stress here will be materials used in everyday life and the way these items are used within the narrative of the story as symbolic of wider societal issues. In Hickson, objects in the story are of crucial importance as they further underline a troublesome reality and bring to the surface what is usually left unsaid by the narrator and/or initially unacknowledged by the characters themselves. The philosophy of modernist poets, 'no ideas but in things' finds a resonant voice in 'The End of a Dream' several years before it finds definition within the works of Ezra Pound or H.D.²⁹ Things like a letter or a ring, therefore, become placeholders for more difficult topics of discussion. In 'The End of a Dream', the letter the woman receives informing her of her husband's death points to the lack of intimate communication and bond between the couple as the letter is one place removed from face-to-face interaction. Indeed, from the beginning of the story, there is a strong sense of an oppressive, rather unpleasant marriage, translated in the description of the woman's wedding ring. Her attempt to hide the wedding ring is also a clever hint at the affair: 'She wore several diamond rings on her left hand, whose glittering stones almost hid the wedding ring' [TEOTD, 19]. The wedding ring is not only of a lesser value than the rest of her jewellery, but also being much smaller, is a pressing, constant reminder of her unfulfilling marriage ('the narrow gold circlet, being much smaller, remained in its place' [TEOTD, 19]). Furthermore, when she leaves to see her lover, she carries a book in her hand, which apart from being a good excuse for her to embark on the walk alone, serves as a companion to her. Used during the solitary dinner hour, the book underlines the complete absence of the husband from her life, both physically and emotionally. It is because of her need to satisfy herself in both ways, Hickson suggests, that the woman has an affair.

²⁹ 'No ideas but in things' is a famous quote found in Williams Carlos Williams' poem, 'A Sort of a Song' and repeated in *Paterson*. William Carlos Williams, *Paterson* (New York: New Directions, 1992). Williams urged poets to abandon traditional poetic forms and unnecessary literary allusions, and depict, instead, the world as it is.

The woman's sexual desire that cannot be fulfilled in her marriage (probably due to her husband's illness) is fully acknowledged by the author. At the same time, Hickson does not seem to favour 'free love' and another marriage is always offered as an alternative to a bad marriage when an affair appears. Adultery is described and accepted only because there is the promise of a future marriage embedded within it: "There shall be no question here of right or wrong; we love one another too well for that. If he dies you will marry me; if not, we must wait –" [TEOAD, 25]. Although Hickson echoes Egerton's disdain for conventional morality, she believes that their love, which seems unquestionable and infinite, should ultimately lead to marriage. Even so, sexual desire and sexual liberation outside marriage are not left unpunished as both men in the woman's life, husband and lover, die.

The scene between the woman and her lover is sexually loaded and the elliptic language and syntax are not only typical of Hickson's style, but also an efficient way of avoiding saying things explicitly, and thus emphasising them even further by drawing attention to their absence: "'So you have come,'" he said. "After last night I hardly dared to hope it. And yet –"' [TEOAD, 22]. The sexual tension is undeniable and it becomes obvious that they share a passion that is not idealised but materialised: 'He turned towards her with a gesture of passionate eagerness' [TEOAD, 23]. In a parallel way to D'Arcy's linguistic shifts, Hickson marks the status of their relationship by her use of language. Later, when the understanding between the characters grows deeper, and they both realise that their bond is strong, the passion becomes more intense and the language clearer: 'They were standing close together; in the dim light their nearness seemed the more acute and masterful, but, by a great effort, he crushed back the passionate impulse which bade him stoop and kiss her as he had kissed her only the night before' [TEOAD, 26]. The change in language, from elliptic to clear, points to the close connection of style and subject, where a clear dialogue mirrors a transparent relationship. In D'Arcy's story 'A Marriage', the order was reversed. The power struggle between the couple was reflected in their language, which in the case of Catterson meant a gradual move towards fragmentation of language and ultimately silence, signalling thus the absence of communication between him and Nettie.

Hickson purposely leaves the endings unresolved in order to raise questions and alert the readers' attention to social expectations and women's reactions to them. Like Egerton and D'Arcy, Hickson prefers the freedom of the open endings that short stories foreshadowing modernist techniques could provide. As Ledger has argued, the short story was still considered a relatively 'modern' form in the 1890s. Hickson seems to be influenced by Egerton, especially the latter's *Keynotes* collection, in her use of protomodernist techniques.³⁰ According to Ledger, 'Egerton's short stories have characteristics which we would now associate with a modernist literary aesthetic: they are compressed, elliptical, impressionistic rather than explanatory, and focus on the inner consciousness of their female subjects'.³¹ All of the above characteristics can be found in a varying degree in all of Hickson's stories. The open-endedness, as well as the psychological sketches and the ellipses are characteristics of Egerton's, D'Arcy's and Hickson's protomodernist aesthetic.

The elusiveness of the protomodernist style serves to underline the fact that the issues Hickson writes about might be a daily reality but they are rarely discussed openly. Certainly, the alternatives explored in her stories (adultery and divorce, to name but two) are considered even more taboo discussions. But while these alternatives are offered as feasible solutions, they are deferred to a future beyond the scope of the narrative frame. The idea that the stories deal both with a clear present and an imagined future is indicative of the liminal space between two distinct literary periods: the realist and the modernist. At the close of 'The End of a Dream', questions are raised as to what one may deem as moral. Is the husband's death still desirable? Did she really never love him as she claimed to her lover? If so, why does the letter informing her of her husband's death provoke such strong emotions in her? The narrator explains: '[e]ven now the sense of the words she read pierced to her dulled brain and caught her sudden and vivid attention.... Her husband had died the night before and she was a widow' [TEOAD, 33]. The matter-of-fact manner of the last sentence comes in contrast with the sentimentality of the sentence preceding it. Thus the conflict between morality and the woman's desires, that is the story's focal point, is further highlighted. Is the husband's death still a salvation or does it seem more like a punishment for her sexual transgression? It is in her following stories

³⁰ George Egerton, *Keynotes* (London: E. Mathews & John Lane, 1893).

³¹ Ledger, p. 187.

that we are able to see how Hickson elaborates further on the questions she raises here regarding morality.

‘A Mistaken Identity’ is a story that deals as much with modernity as with the New Man and the New Woman. The narrator and the characters express a number of opinions regarding the modern, New Man versus a more traditional one, and the modern woman’s ideas about the morality of love and marriage. The different views portrayed by each character and the narrator serve to undercut any definite standpoint. In discussing the subjects mentioned above, Hickson initially employs a nineteenth-century, romanticised, realist narrative, but in Hickson’s story, the marriage begins the narrative rather than concludes it. Schaffer has commented on the issue of the marriage plot which, transformed into a marriage problem, renders marriage as more problematic. Often novels ‘would advocate drastic measures such as divorce or adultery’, alternatives that Hickson explores in her stories as well.³² Hickson provides comment not only on the issue of marriage per se, but also highlights the failings of the nineteenth-century genre which uses marriage as a way of resolving issues at the close of the narrative. She gradually changes from a realistic to a more elusive style (with protomodernist characteristics such as detailed psychological portraits) which reaches its peak in the ending where Eleanor and Arnoldson (the New Man of the story) discuss Eleanor’s marriage. The ending of the story suggests the failings of the realist form, and the romantic marriage plot, and proposes instead a third way.

Beginning with the ambiguous title, the author introduces her study of the emerging identity of the modern man and the modern woman. Even at the end of the story, where there is no closure, we are left to wonder to whom the mistaken identity of the title refers to. It could of course refer to Carlton, the husband, who was initially mistakenly taken as a New Man, and thus would share the same ideal values about partnership and love as the New Woman (Eleanor), based on ‘loyalty of heart and spirit’ [AMI, 53]. It could also refer to Eleanor, who has failed the cause of the modern woman by the end of the story (“‘Can’t you see Philip,” said Arnoldson, “that such a woman as your wife suffers a martyrdom because of what you call your different points of view? And can’t you see how, in so far as you fail her, she fails

³² Schaffer, p. 40.

herself and her own ideal?” [AMI, 54]. Equally, it may also refer to Arnoldson, for refusing to be the man Eleanor expects him to be at the close of the story. Hickson, thus, creates a web of unclear identities in order to discuss the complexities of gender, relationships, marriage and unfulfilled romance.

‘A Mistaken Identity’ begins with a description of a splendid outdoor setting and Eleanor surrounded by newspapers containing complimentary reviews regarding her newly published novel. The introductory image of an accomplished, educated woman writer surrounded by her readings is in stark opposition to the concluding one of the same woman sitting indoors passively by the fire, her loneliness accentuated by the emptiness of the room and the lack of any intellectual or menial work: ‘She had neither book, nor work in her hands, and she was staring desolately into the fire, which had burnt so low that the room felt cold and comfortless’ [AMI, 55]. Just like the room, her marriage feels like a confining space that denies her intellectuality and emotional fulfilment. When faced with the truth of her husband’s adultery, she confesses to Arnoldson: “[T]his life stifles me – it is horrible” [AMI, 57]. Hickson does not condemn marriage in itself in her work. In fact, as highlighted in ‘The End of a Dream’, she believes it is the ultimate goal of a loving relationship. She comments, though, on the complicated situations women find themselves, trapped in a marriage that does not satisfy their ideals or morals. The stifling ending for Eleanor resembles Catterson’s in D’Arcy’s ‘A Marriage’. The cold and limiting space the characters occupy literally reflects their figurative space in the relationship. However, what is idealistic for Hickson’s characters is illusionary for D’Arcy’s. Hickson and D’Arcy use inflections of the liminal in order to address the interrelation of space and the fragmented self.

In their first meeting, Eleanor and Arnoldson discuss two issues which underpin the story: the idea of female duty (which also encapsulates the idea of morality) and the notion of evolution. Although perhaps not apparent from the start, these two concepts are indeed closely connected. This connection becomes clearer by taking into consideration T.H. Huxley’s essay ‘Evolution and Ethics’ (1893). Huxley clarifies the idea of the ‘survival of the fittest’ by defining the fittest as not

the one best adapted to changing conditions, but the best in moral value.³³ He argues that social progress calls for ethical progress, defined as the survival of those who are ethically the best rather than those who happen to be the fittest. He urges that:

the practice of that which is ethically the best – what we call goodness or virtue – involves a course of conduct which [...] requires that the individual shall not merely respect, but shall help his fellows; its influence is directed, not so much to the survival of the fittest, as to the fitting of as many as possible to survive.³⁴

In this sense, he connects the evolutionist theory to the idea of duty rather than eugenics.³⁵ In a similar way, when Arnoldson claims that ‘the ideals of women go far to mould the characters of men’, Eleanor responds by defending the powers of womanhood in moulding men yet not quite acknowledging the idealistic, eugenic power of the New Woman. Talking about Eleanor to Arnoldson, Carlton explains that she “‘belongs to the Advanced Womanhood. She believes in most women, and in a few, very few men; moreover, she holds that we are all capable of an infinite development’” [AMI, 40]. Arnoldson admires her, thinking her views are “[i]mprobable... and terribly ante-dated. Let us hope not impossible” [AMI, 42]. Eleanor believes that one should always be true to his/ her desires. This largely constitutes her understanding of morality which is informed by ideas of pure love and companionship. At the same time, and with no lesser conviction, Eleanor believes that it is her duty to society as a modern woman to educate and bring about change in those men still versed in old patriarchal traditions. The crux of the story revolves around moments of conflict between these two views.

³³ T. H. Huxley, ‘Evolution and Ethics’ in *The Fin de Siècle : A Reader in Cultural History, c. 1880-1900*, ed. by Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 238.

³⁴ Huxley, pp. 238-9.

³⁵ For an interesting discussion of Eugenics and the New Woman novel see Angelique Richardson, *Love and Eugenics in the Late Nineteenth Century: Rational Reproduction and the New Woman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

In their last meeting at the end of the story, Arnoldson again reminds Eleanor of her duty as a woman to bring about change in men. Eleanor remains undecided. Satisfying her own desires was not realised given that her husband did not share her particular views of a strong, exclusive companionship. However, the alternative of sacrificing herself and her ideals to stay with her husband in order to mould him into a better moral man seems to her a disgusting, unbearable and immoral sentence. As Stephanie Forward has argued, Sarah Grand also ‘makes the point that a woman’s purity can be tainted if she lives in close proximity with a vulgar man, because tacit acquiescence inevitably leads to corruption and brutalisation’.³⁶ In fact, ‘if she countenances such vice she is in a sense helping to perpetuate it’.³⁷

The idea of duty is highlighted: a wife feels ‘unwomanly’ for not loving her husband but at the same time she cannot betray herself by rejecting her emotions. Morality in Hickson’s stories is interpreted as being true to one’s conscience. This specificity of morality is what makes it so fragile. In Hickson’s stories, this type of morality is questioned by male characters who articulate conventional social standards. Carlton describes Eleanor’s decision to leave him as ‘unreasonable’ precisely because he fails to see her morals and her decision to be faithful to them. Hickson’s use of the limen in terms of morality here points to the emergent ethics of female free will, but further complicates the discussion by the male-presented counterargument of a naturally inherent social responsibility.

As Teresa Mangum has written of Grand’s *The Heavenly Twins*, Hickson’s stories also have the quality of guiding the audience toward critical, comparative, resistant reading strategies by the repetition and variation of female experiences.³⁸ The characters who are shown to read or carry a book also read social institutions such as marriage and the woman’s position in it. Eleanor, who is also a writer, is the one that is shown to have the ultimate power of turning her husband into a better man. The open ending, though, does not offer absolute information on whether she will exercise that power. Her writing/‘writing’ abilities are undermined by the reality of her experience of marriage: her second novel is a disaster.

³⁶ Forward, p. 442.

³⁷ Forward, p. 440.

³⁸ Teresa Mangum, *Married, Middlebrow, and Militant: Sarah Grand and the New Woman Novel* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), p. 61; Sarah Grand, *The Heavenly Twins* (London: W. Heinemann, 1893).

The articulation of the idea of morality being identified with fulfilling one's (and particularly a woman's) desires was extremely radical for the time. J.C.B. Gosling argues that a hundred years ago, objecting to the idea of pleasure in an explanation of morality was based on the claim that 'any appeal to pleasure as the final justification of action necessarily undermines morality, substituting some selfish or at least easy motive for the disinterested self-sacrifice of the pursuit of duty'.³⁹ In contrast, Hickson as well as other New Women writers claimed that 'moral' was synonymous to being true to one's self, its desires, its emotions, and its ideals. According to Mona Caird, for example, '[t]he idea of duty is to be banished. There is to be a full understanding that the woman has an obvious right to possess herself, body and soul, exactly as she wills'.⁴⁰ In turn, this is the way they could feel free from patriarchal oppression related to gender roles and expectations. As Gosling explains, 'free acts are just those which are explained by desire' since who is not free if not the one who does what one wants?'.⁴¹

The issues of duty and morality that are discussed in all of the stories I am studying, echo Grand's novel *Ideala* (1888).⁴² My approach to Hickson's stories thus benefits from Mangum's approach to Grand's novel, especially with regards to the definition of morality as being in accordance with one's desires and conscience. *Ideala* forces the readers to consider the consequences of a bad marriage: dishonesty, emotional adultery, and erasure of her desires.⁴³ Mangum argues that in *Ideala*, Grand 'refines the notion of duty, particularly for women. It also clarifies the relation between unhappily married women and civil law; for Grand these women are forced by legal codes of the government and the church *into* immorality'.⁴⁴ *Ideala* argues that "only love that lasts can sanctify marriage, and a marriage without such love is an immoral contract," [I, 200] and adds "Should you not say that in acting against my conscience I acted immorally?" [I, 199]. In a similar way, duty and morality in Hickson's stories are closely related to the high ideals of love, characterised largely by 'loyalty of (...) heart and spirit' [AMI, 53]. When this love ceases to exist, when

³⁹ J. C. B. Gosling, *Pleasure and Desire: The Case for Hedonism Reviewed* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 6.

⁴⁰ Mona Caird, *Is Marriage a Failure?*, ed. by Harry Quilter (London: Sonnenschein, 1888), pp.17-8.

⁴¹ Gosling, p. 88.

⁴² Sarah Grand, *Ideala: A Study from Life* (Privately printed, 1888. Reprint. London: Heinemann, 1893).

⁴³ Mangum, p. 73.

⁴⁴ Mangum, p. 70.

the loyalty of the soul and trust are broken, women are devastated by the reality of their shattered marriages because to these they have tied their morals, ideas, lives, essentially their whole existence.

Mangum argues that '[u]ntil Ideala is rudely shaken by incontrovertible evidence of her husband's cruelty and adultery, her passion, her sensitivity, her imagination, and her impulse to shape her own identity are moulded to her notions, that is society's notions, of wifely duty'.⁴⁵ In 'A Mistaken Identity', Eleanor is encouraged by Arnoldson to mould her husband according to her notions and the ones she would hope society to have. But as in *Ideala*, the call for this action stems from her wifely duty. Eleanor wishes she could do that solely as a woman (in truth to her self) rather than as a wife (pertaining to her socially-governed role). However, Eleanor, like Ideala, shaken by her husband's infidelity, finds herself outside the comforts of a happy marriage 'outside the sphere of action and unable to imagine an alternative social role'.⁴⁶ Eleanor, like Ideala, like other heroines in *Jude the Obscure* (1896), *Story of an African Farm* (1883), or *The Woman Who Did* (1895), 'grows ill, libidinous, and self-destructive'.⁴⁷ When Arnoldson comes to see her, he finds her all of the above: pale, considering an affair with him, and accepting a non-productive position of physical, emotional and intellectual passivity. Even more similar are Hickson's and Caird's endings in *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894) and *Whom Nature Leadeth* (1883) in the sense that the conclusion 'is muted, but dignified; indeed, it marks a step forward in women's writing. The heroine does not die, overcome by insurmountable forces ranged against her. The text ends neither with a sense of unmitigated disaster, nor with boundless false optimism; instead there is a mood of quiet conviction'.⁴⁸ Although this type of ending seems to be in tension with an active quest for voice and power (especially in Caird's writing), it marks a beginning for a characteristically new kind of writing, which is protomodernist but hints more forcefully at modernist sensibilities. The writers understand and underline

⁴⁵ Mangum, p. 72.

⁴⁶ Mangum, p. 72.

⁴⁷ Mangum, p. 72; Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (London: Osgood, McIlvaine and Co., 1896); Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm* ([S.I.]: Hutchinson, 1883); Grant Allen, *The Woman Who Did* (London: John Lane, 1895).

⁴⁸ Forward, p. 451. Mona Caird, *The Daughters of Danaus* (London: Bliss, Sands and Co., 1894); *Whom Nature Leadeth* (London: Longmans and Co., 1883).

the limitations that society poses in this quest so an optimistic ending would appear utopian and unrealistic, damaging their argument overall.

In both Grand's novel and Hickson's story, men and women appear to have different definitions of morality. Mangum shows that Grand's 'narrator argues that "moral laws" define the duty of individuals who must sacrifice themselves for the good of the community at large. Ideala, however, resists the narrator's narrow social definition of morality. For Ideala love, and some synthesis of responsibility to oneself and one's desires, must be taken into account when defining morality.'⁴⁹ When Arnoldson talks about Eleanor to Carlton he seems to have understood her completely ("can't you see how, in so far as you fail her, she fails herself and her own ideal?" [AMI, 54]). Yet, he betrays himself and her by asking her to stay with Carlton. In this sense, he seems to be truer to his duty towards a fellow man than to his capacity as a New Man. This deeper sense of communication, a male solidarity that is not quite there for women in any of Hickson's stories, is only one of the reasons why Arnoldson decides to go speak to her. The other main reason is his insistence on retaining an idealised image of Eleanor in order to love her from a distance. Like the narrator who wants Ideala to be silent and stoic about her marriage, Arnoldson envisions an idealised version of Eleanor, one where in her 'womanly' ways, she forgives her husband and accepts his morals while betraying her own. This reflects Mangum's view of the male narrator in *Ideala*: Mangum sees his key role as a variation of the social transaction Eve Sedgwick calls a foundational structure of fiction.⁵⁰ More specifically, as culture regards women the property of fathers, male lovers, or husbands, homosocial bonds between men are forged through not only the exchange of women but also, as Sedgwick points out, through competition over them.⁵¹ The idealisation upon which Arnoldson's love depends as well as his service to another man, are motivations that rise higher than his New Man identity and lead him to ask Eleanor to do what she regards as immoral, namely stay within a marriage that works against her desires. Finally, as Forward has argued, Caird, Grand, Schreiner and Egerton 'gave much thought to the positive qualities required in men if relationships between the sexes were to improve; nevertheless

⁴⁹ Mangum, pp. 72-3.

⁵⁰ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 1-17.

⁵¹ Sedgwick, pp. 25-6.

they seem to have found it difficult to depict New Men convincingly'.⁵² In the same way, Hickson, although created Arnoldson as a convincing and interestingly different character, she failed to provide longevity for him and had him moving abroad at the end of the narrative. If the New Woman is not yet fully realised in her social capacity, the New Man, being a product of the New Woman's thought, is even further from a tangible reality.

Heilmann views Ideala as an example of the 'ideal' feminist who sees herself as an 'inspiration to humanity' by embracing a self-sacrificial attitude. However, I would suggest that this is not Ideala's but the narrator's view. In other words, the projected image of a conservative, dominant, patriarchal society. Ideala rejects it by embracing both her own desires and her ideal view of becoming useful to society. Her approach is not self-sacrificial as she still acknowledges her own desires, and remains true to her definition of morality, which combines the two elements of personal and social duty. Furthermore, Heilmann argues that Caird rejects, in an assertive manner, the self-sacrificial attitude by stressing that women had a right to 'claim the fullest opportunity for development', and that 'self-denial amounted to no less than self-destruction'.⁵³ Heilmann adds that 'no free and egalitarian society could be built over the bodies of individuals, as Schreiner suggested so momentarily in "Three Dreams in a Desert" (1887)'.⁵⁴ Hickson is not as clear with her view on the matter. Instead, she underlines the issue's complexity and stresses the social difficulties encountered in utopian discussions of the subject. In 'A Mistaken Identity', the open ending allows for ambiguity with regards to Eleanor's attitude. Her passive demeanour might lead one to think of her as a woman resigned to her fate. However, her wish for alienation and silence need not necessarily be interpreted in these terms alone. A reading of Kathleen Blake's *Love and the Woman Question in Victorian Literature: The Art of Self-postponement*, helps illustrate the potential for Eleanor's subversive power in reticence. Blake argues against the idea that free love and sexual liberation equal feminism. Based on literary texts, as well as archives from reader's correspondence with journals, Blake discovers a line of

⁵² Forward, p. 437.

⁵³ As quoted in Heilmann, *New Woman Strategies: Sarah Grand, Olive Schreiner, Mona Caird*, (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 158.

⁵⁴ Heilmann, p. 158.

thought that largely associates feminist thought with asceticism as a radical choice.⁵⁵ Although Hickson is not in favour of asceticism, her view that women must not fall short of their higher ideologies about love and life while they are within marriage is equally radical. Women in Hickson's stories refuse to entrap themselves in relationships that sink them below their ideals of morality regarding love and comradeship. Hickson thus offers an interesting combination of Darwinism and feminism. After most of her heroines state that they believe in an evolutionary nature of humankind, it is no wonder that a failure of that behaviour on behalf of their lovers moves them into the radical reaction of not surrendering in a lower, immoral bond with them. In this way, Hickson is the middle ground between Schreiner's absolute self-sacrificial role of the socialist Christian New Woman, Grand's eugenic higher morality and Caird's militant feminist attack on institutions of a patriarchal society.

Literary approaches to Darwinism with specific attention to the progress of change in style are worth considering. Leslie Stephen argues that natural selection could also make comprehensible the rise and fall of literary genres.⁵⁶ As I have shown, Hickson suggests the inefficiency of an absolute romantic and realistic plot, instead incorporating protomodernist elements that allow for an impressionistic understanding of marriage. In addition, by using evolutionary theory, Hickson makes use of a feminist strategy, as Kranidis has argued, which combines 'the conventional, tradition-bound figure of womanhood with the enlightened New Woman' in order to challenge gender and social roles.⁵⁷ Kranidis identifies the New Woman in the following terms: 'this new type of heroine is more a literary and political attempt than an actualised, accomplished fact or an established type' as the New Woman in fiction 'has not yet materialised socially'.⁵⁸ This 'new type of heroine' in Kranidis' terms fits aptly with Hickson's depiction of Eleanor, a New Woman whose evolution from the fictional literary sphere to a realised social place forms the desired ends.

With the exception of 'A Mistaken Identity', motherhood is never discussed in Hickson's stories. The absence of mothers suggests that the aim of sexuality need

⁵⁵ Kathleen Blake, *Love and the Woman Question in Victorian Literature: The Art of Self-postponement* (Brighton: Harvester, 1983).

⁵⁶ Leslie Stephen, *The Science of Ethics* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1882).

⁵⁷ Kranidis, p. xiv.

⁵⁸ Kranidis, p. xiv.

not always be procreation. Thus, the social expectations (and by extension pointedly patriarchal expectations) of childrearing are circumvented, and instead the prime focus seems to be on the fulfilment of female sexual desires. Heilmann argues that '[a]t a time when feminists like Grand and Schreiner invoked women's "innate" maternal qualities as evidence of their moral superiority, Caird forged a critique of motherhood as an oppressive patriarchal institution'.⁵⁹ Hickson proves to be even more controversial than all of the above by placing men in the role of caregivers for children. Furthermore, this may represent a reimagining of fin-de-siècle gender roles, where traditional male and female child-caring roles are reversed.

During a walk in the countryside, Eleanor, Carlton and Arnoldson encounter a woman (the wife of one of Arnoldson's keepers) who carries 'a little wailing girl, scarcely more than a baby' [AMI, 44], in her arms. When they ask what the matter is, the woman tells them that the mother of the girl got drunk 'as usual' [AMI, 44] and beat her child. When Eleanor tries to hold the little girl, she shrinks from her and continues to cry. Both the woman and Eleanor are unable to comfort the child despite their supposed innate motherly instincts. In addition, the actual mother of the child is dangerously impotent. However, when Arnoldson carries the baby, the sobs drop immediately 'into a soft moaning' [AMI, 46]. This moment of a man succeeding in a role traditionally reserved for women is a striking and unconventional image, an immensely ante-dated idea. Although the differences between the sexes are indeed stressed in the stories, surprises like this are presented as welcome signs of evolution and continuous improvement.

The idea of the New Man acquiring new roles and occupying a more diverse role in his companionship with the New Woman, was not only limited to Hickson's discussion of motherhood, but also appears in other women writers' texts. For example, the idea of role reversal is also apparent in Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm*. When Gregory Rose follows Lyndall, he finds her ill in a hotel and disguises himself as a nurse to take care of her. Forward argues that '[i]ronically; Lyndall has spent much of her life envying men their power and opportunities, but Gregory chooses role reversal and aspires to womanhood to help her'.⁶⁰ Ruth Parkin-

⁵⁹ Heilmann, p. 158.

⁶⁰ Forward, p. 438.

Gounelas argues that the novel can be seen as an allegory about gender conditioning, and contains ‘a specific programme for the solution to the problem of sexual polarisation’.⁶¹ Lyndall had once remarked sarcastically that he was ‘a true woman – one born for the sphere that some women have to fill without being born for it’ [*TSOAAF*, 210]. In Gregory, ‘Schreiner embodies her view of how a transformation in male attitudes could bring about a new era in human relationships’.⁶² Likewise, in Egerton’s ‘The Spell of the White Elf’ (1893), the female protagonist who is a writer explains how she and her husband were given a child by a relative.⁶³ While the woman lacks a maternal instinct, the husband takes great care of the baby. He is a New Man, who takes care of the responsibilities of the household so that she can write. Forward argues that ‘the tale suggests that relationships do not have to conform to gender norms, to conventional standards, but that other modes of living are perfectly possible’.⁶⁴ In a similar way, the subplot in ‘A Mistaken Identity’ argues for a new mapping of social roles which are connected to each individual rather than gender expectations of both men and women.

‘At the Cross Roads’ and ‘A Vigil’, were published together in the *Yellow Book* under the general title ‘Two Studies’.⁶⁵ Significantly, although this general title is removed, they come together in the collection as well. Even though their plots do not intertwine, they are both studies of the different attitudes of men and women in relationships.

‘At the Cross Roads’ is one of Hickson’s most obscure and modernist short stories, experimenting with language, style and structure. Employing yet another ambiguous title that relates to its liminal nature as well as the open ending, Hickson, may be referring to the cross roads of the two sexes, trying to find common lines of intersection, namely common points of understanding. The cross roads also stand for different journeys, leading to and originating from different places, yet there is a

⁶¹ Ruth Parkin-Gounelas, *Fictions of the Female Self: Charlotte Brontë, Olive Schreiner, Katherine Mansfield*, (London: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 102-105.

⁶² Parkin-Gounelas, pp. 102-105.

⁶³ Included in *Keynotes*.

⁶⁴ Forward, p. 445.

⁶⁵ Hickson was aware of Egerton’s writing. They were both represented by the same publisher (John Lane) but more importantly similarities are present in their use of protomodernist techniques. Furthermore, they both favour the short story and invest in detailed psychological character profiles. Egerton’s ‘A Cross Line’, published in 1893 also shares a similarity in its title with Hickson’s ‘At the Cross Roads’; Mrs. Murray Hickson, ‘Two Studies’, *Yellow Book*, 5 (1895), 104-116.

meeting point, a point of understanding, that the woman in the story is desperately trying to find. The placement of this story itself in the middle of the collection is significant since it is from that story onwards that the style and language become more abstract and original and the issues discussed more radical and subversive. Finally, taken as it is, the phrase ‘at the cross roads’ refers to a crucial decision someone has to take that will be of significance from that point onwards. The cross roads in this way represents the epitome of the liminal moment, a moment when everything ‘trembles in the balance’.⁶⁶ Liminality in this story is stressed by means of language and description. By retaining information with regards to the nature of the problem between the characters, Hickson further emphasizes the depth of their miscommunication and misunderstanding. The dialogues as well as the narration underline the contrasts in body language, emotions and actions: ‘[...] their eyes looked into each other’s, *his seeking, hers evading*, a solution to the problem which confronted them [ATCR, 65, my emphasis]; “I wrote to you – you know what I wrote. And then your letter...” [ATCR, 68]. Conflicts in movements and ellipses in language both serve to underline the intensity of the moment. Resolution is of little importance here. What Hickson focuses on instead, is the description of the torturous debate, the moment from which any possible outcome might spring. The focus of language, setting, narration and description are thus on the liminal moment.

The female character in ‘At the Cross Roads’ believes in her love’s ability to turn the male character into a New Man. Her modern views regarding equality, though understood, are not embraced by the man. Thus, her efforts in love, though appreciated, are never fully comprehended and they do not lead to his desired change: “Though I could not be your wife, I imagined I was everything else you needed: your friend, your comrade, your very heart and life. As your love raised and made me a better woman, so I believed that my love made you a better man” [ATCR, 68]. Whereas in ‘The End of a Dream’, elliptic dialogues are used as a way of showing a deeper understanding between the lovers, here the combination of such dialogue with a cryptic language, stresses the lack of understanding or rather misunderstandings in their relationship. The epigraph, ‘For to no man is it given to understand a woman, nor to any woman to understand a man’, presented clearly under the title, sums up the whole story. In the end, the woman understands the

⁶⁶ Turner, p. 44.

futility of her trying to communicate her ideals and morals: “I shall never make you understand” [ATCR, 68]; “Indeed – indeed, you do not understand” [ATCR, 69]; “I don’t think we see it in the same light, and if you do not understand I cannot explain myself” [ATCR, 70]. She finally resigns herself as she recognises there is never going to be any deeper understanding between her highly-valued, modern ideals and his internalised, masculine identity.

At the conclusion of the story, the woman realises she did not accomplish her goal of making him a better man: ““That is how I feel,” she said to herself. “It is all dead now; he will never understand it; but that is how I feel. If it had been before his love for me – but now I know I was no help to him, only a hindrance, and all the best of me seems cold and dead”” [ATCR, 71]. Hickson is not just warning women that trying to change men might prove to be a futile process: “I expected more than a man is capable of” [ATCR, 70]; “It was insane pride that made me so sure your welfare lay in my hands” [ATCR, 69]. But Hickson also stresses the self-destructive nature of such an effort, since failure may also result in an ultimate failure to believe in the same ideals that these actions were founded upon. This brings an unavoidable emotional and intellectual ‘death’. As in ‘A Mistaken Identity’, this story also concludes with a lone female figure sitting by the fire in a ‘dreary’, ‘tawdry and commonplace’ [ATCR, 71] hotel room. In addition, the final scene comes into contrast with the introductory image of the boat coming to the harbour, moving from an idyllic open space to the confinement of a rented room (the same shift was shown in ‘A Mistaken Identity’).

‘A Vigil’, the second of the ‘Two Studies’, is concerned with a woman who is the victim of an adulterous marriage, rather than the instigator of an adulterous affair. Thus in both ‘At the Cross Roads’ and ‘A Vigil’, Hickson places the woman as the focal point in moments of sexual anarchy. In a letter describing the sexual anarchy of the fin de siècle, Gissing states the following:

Among our English emancipated women there is a majority of admirable persons; they have lost no single good quality of their sex, & they have gained enormously on the intellectual (& even on the moral) side by the

process of enlightenment, that is to say, of brain-development.... And I believe that the only way of effecting this is to go through a period of what many people will call sexual anarchy.⁶⁷

Gissing stresses what Showalter has also pointed out when discussing women writers of the period: that social change and sexual turmoil, review and reconstruction went hand in hand.⁶⁸ Hickson manages to discuss the marriage institution and social issues that affect women by recognising adultery as a pivotal part of this sexual anarchy, and thus one that might be expected inasmuch as it might surprise. However, she uses a double standard as her purpose is to stress the woman's point of view. Whereas affairs between wives and lovers are treated with a varying degree of understanding, affairs between husbands and mistresses are unreservedly condemned.⁶⁹ The latter are shown to be the cause of radical change in marriage, resulting in disillusionment and alienation for the wife while criticising the weak nature of men. In truth, Hickson discusses two different phases of a bad marriage. She shows us husbands who cheat on their wives without providing us with clear reasons as to the motivation behind this. Yet when it is the wives who transgress, Hickson is at pains to furnish these women with reasonable cause, namely that these women find themselves in immoral relationships.

The *Bookman* review of 'A Vigil' comments that in this story 'we are given a very true, a very subtle reflection of the little jars of life, of the slight antipathies, the minor infidelities, the slow chills that kill love more certainly than does any crime'.⁷⁰ The subtleties referred to in the *Bookman* review are best reflected by objects in the story carrying wider connotations for the story as a whole. The couple in 'A Vigil' have been married for some time and therefore are well versed in the realities of their marriage. This idea of the passage of time in their marriage is cleverly hinted at by the presence of a 'dainty Dresden china timepiece' [AV, 73] which was given to them as a wedding present. Intriguingly, this timepiece is used to also mark the

⁶⁷ George Gissing, *The Collected Letters of George Gissing: 5 Vols*, ed. by Paul F. Mathiessen et al. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1990-1994), Vol. 5, p. 113.

⁶⁸ Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin De Siècle* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1990).

⁶⁹ The only exception is 'An Awakening', the story that focuses on the mistress's point of view.

⁷⁰ 'Shadows of Life', p. 168.

change in the wife's attitude as she awaits the return of her husband home. Gradually, as the clock ticks on, the concerns of the present awaken in her mind the pains of the past, and she begins to see their marriage in a radically new light. When he fails to return in time, it slowly dawns on her that she has been trapped in a failed marriage for some time, a fact that she has been unable to see for the past two years. Her whole marriage, indeed her whole life, is re-evaluated, thus, in one night. Emotionally paralysed by her husband's betrayal, she listens apathetically to his excuses knowing he lies. In the end, she enters a different era of marriage. Now, she cares 'only for the physical comfort of apathy and quiescence' [AV, 80].

The eagerness with which she waits for him in the beginning makes his failure to appear all the more painful and emphasises the power of her realisations. In between these two identities, that of the dutiful wife and that of apathy, the woman finds herself in the potential for doubt and change in the liminal moment. She begins accepting that 'for many weeks the rift between her and her husband had been widening' [AV, 76], then thinks or rather hopes he is injured in some way and that caring for him might bring them close again. Finally, the idea of his adultery, although at first 'dismissed with horror and self-loathing' [AV, 78], is slowly accepted. Pain and death within marriages in Hickson's stories are usually seen unconventionally as beneficial, and always in accordance to what they can contribute to the marriage or the extramarital affair. In this way, Hickson overturns the conventional plot of realistic stories found especially in novels which end with marriage, or in the case of New Women novels, death. In Hickson's stories, it is only the men who suffer from illnesses or death. Yet the prospect of death or death itself is not, as it is in New Women novels, at the closure of the narrative, but rather marks the climactic moments of the story. These moments stress the erosion of the couple's bond and often provide reasoning for the women's conduct when embarking on adulterous affairs.

Telling the narrative from the perspective of the mistress, 'An Awakening' represents an extramarital affair that is not romanticised at all, and one where its threat to marriage is negated by the end of the story. Crucially, it is the daily routine of marriage and not the highly romanticised aspects of love that seem to carry the greatest power in the story. The mistress (Margaret) yearns for a relationship with the husband (Ferquharson) which is built on marital routine rather than the 'free

love' she offers him. Whereas the relationship between Margaret and Ferquharson is passionate, it 'does not allow of the dear daily ties, the quaintnesses, interests, and oddities, which cement and fill, in the crannies of ordinary married life' [AA, 104] and this becomes an insurmountable failing. Emphasising this fact, Hickson makes Ferquharson feel compelled to return home on time for dinner in accordance with his daily routine, and thus the mistress sees herself not in a position of privilege but as the outsider.

Rather than fall distraught at this realisation, Margaret becomes a better woman, a modern woman indeed, who instead of selfishly surrendering to her feelings, and sentimentality, acknowledges the lost emotions but uses her reasoning skills in deciding to flee: 'Margaret was a woman of modern and complex moods. She had sacrificed her life to her love, and had held the sacrifice cheap, thinking little of the sin, and nothing – in comparison with his fulfilment and her own – of the wrong done to others, or of the complexities of the situation' [AA, 102]. In her jealousy of Ferquharson's wife, Hickson describes the shadows of a married life Margaret longs for. The wife is privileged in the experience of all that marriage has to offer, both the good and the bad: 'Of these details, these lights and shadows which her life lacked, his wife had ample experience.' [AV, 105]

Ferquharson, in his moral world is able to delude himself that little has changed, and returns to his wife as if nothing had happened, downplaying his role in the extramarital relationship and absolving himself of blame by locating the transgression with Margaret. True to her morals, however, Margaret recognises that since the situation between her and Ferquharson has changed irrevocably, staying around him would mean that she is no longer true to her conscience and her desires. Margaret's morality will not allow her to defraud or delude herself: once she discovers that she will never have Ferquharson fully to herself and be privy to the subtleties of marriage, she cannot move forward in the relationship in light of this knowledge.

In her search for a love that conforms to her moral stipulations more satisfactorily, the narrator depicts the tragedy of Margaret's realisation in the heroic terms of female martyrdom:

Margaret had sacrificed her life for love. [...] Love was Margaret's ideal – omnipotent, important, first, last, and brooking no impediment; and yet – and yet, as she sat there in the ever-deepening dusk, the new voice in her heart, which had gathered strength of late, spoke aloud and preached to her another creed; a creed which her girlhood had known, her womanhood repudiated; a creed older than this modern phase, and more beautiful: a creed to which, when the laws and effects of life close round us, we all, like children gone astray, turn in relief and sorrow-taught submission. [AA, 107-8]

Although undeniably this story is the only one that portrays a marriage in a somewhat positive light, the most important and radical issue is, I argue, Margaret's claim to her independence. While other stories discuss the repercussions of adultery, which in itself was a radical taboo subject, in this story Hickson depicts an even more revolutionary idea, that of a woman's independence from the male-dominant world that surrounds her (an idea that returns to Blake's contentions presented earlier in this chapter). Like Chopin's *The Awakening*, 'An Awakening' starts with the idea of ownership and ends with independence.⁷¹ Interestingly enough, apart from the similarities in the title, content and style, the two stories were both termed 'morbid' in reviews of the time.⁷² The use of this term may be an indication of the stories' centrality and interest in the sexual nature of women, and their struggle for independence, both themes that threatened the social status quo and traditionally defined gender roles.

In both Chopin's and Hickson's stories, the two female protagonists feel the urge to escape. In acting on this urge and in an attempt to regain control of their body and soul, Chopin's Edna finds comfort in swimming while Margaret moves out of her house to a more removed space. Heilmann has argued that by swimming, Edna 'establishes her sense of self-ownership, physical, mental and spiritual. [...] In control of her body, she becomes aware of its potential for pleasure and learns to claim her right to self-determination'.⁷³ The attempt to carve out a physical space for

⁷¹ Kate Chopin, *The Awakening* (Chicago; New York: H. S. Stone, 1899).

⁷² 'Notes from Bookland', *St. Louis Daily Globe – Democrat Review*, 13 May 1899, p. 5.

⁷³ Heilmann, 'The Awakening and New Woman Fiction' in *The Cambridge Companion to Kate Chopin*, ed. by Janet Beer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 87.

themselves means that these women also find themselves in a space that allows them to rethink and re-evaluate their positions as women of the fin de siècle. Michael Gilmore argues, 'in responding to the demands of her inner nature, Edna discovers the sensibility of an Impressionist painter and dissolves the external structures of her world'.⁷⁴ By turning inward like the impressionists, Edna and Margaret are finally able to hear more clearly their inner desires. Both women reflect on the complex exploration of the dilemma of duty towards society ('the external structures') versus being dutiful to one's self. In the beginning, caring little for society's norms and stipulations, means there is no moral impediment for Margaret in her pursuit of Ferquharson. However, when Margaret finally acknowledges the reality of her situation, and thus her social duty and higher moral ideals, she chooses alienation, both spatially and sexually.

Apart from similarities in subject matter, Chopin and Hickson share similar styles. Like Egerton, D'Arcy and Chopin, Hickson avoids the didactic, propagandist tone in her stories and instead uses a more subtle style in order to discuss her representation of women. In 'An Awakening', moments that discuss the affair are marked by an aestheticist and decadent atmosphere. The heavy smell of flowers coming from the garden creates a seductive atmosphere while 'the night [is] warm and silent' [AA, 106]. Scents of heliotrope and sunset light create the ideal setting she associates with their relationship: 'she loved him, he was hers, his place was here beside her' [AA, 106]. Without Ferquharson, the environment becomes wild and meaningless. When Margaret decides to move away, she opts for the simple and minimalistic formal furniture of a rigid, uninviting London lodging. London becomes here a way out, an exit from a long and tedious state. A state in which Margaret was tormented between her love for Ferquharson and duty (her duty to herself and her emotions on the one hand and her duty to womanhood and society on the other). London, despite its status as a big city and the possibilities that this brings with it, nevertheless acts as a 'confinement' for Margaret who remains within a small and impersonal lodging. This makes it difficult therefore for the reader to reach any definitive conclusions as to the success or failings of this decision. London stands in

⁷⁴ Michael T. Gilmore, 'Revolt Against Nature' in *The Cambridge Companion to Kate Chopin*, ed. by Janet Beer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 65.

contrast to the initial aestheticised setting and complicates any definitive moral answers.

To conclude, D'Arcy attempts to deal with questions of morality and the exploration of the self (the self as performance, the fragmented self, and the connection of self to language) by emphasising the significance of framing these issues within a consideration of mobility in its rapid succession of changes. Hickson, on the other hand, is more concerned with prolonged moments, where mobility follows pregnant pauses and seeming stagnation, with specific references to the act of waiting. Suspending the moment for as long as possible allows Hickson to explore the long-lasting effects of choices with regards to morality. D'Arcy, on the other hand, employs a series of threshold states to reflect on the fragmentation of identity and language. By their different use of protomodernist techniques and the idea of liminality, they both stress the need for an exploration of emerging attitudes with regards to class, gender and morality at the *fin de siècle*.

This chapter has shown how Hickson challenges our critical perceptions of modernity and modernism, the avant-garde and the traditional, the high- and the lowbrow. Writing about similar issues, in the same periodicals, at the same time as other women writers, her resistance to categorisation has led to her neglect within the literary establishment despite the fact that many of her contemporaries enjoy recognition and fame. However, her work's resistance to definitive categorisation, although problematic in her posterity, in its protomodernist approach carves out new and interesting areas of critical and analytical thought that enrich our understanding of the *fin de siècle*, and raises important questions about our assumptions about this period.

In Hickson's work, content and style are closely interrelated. This chapter has shown how an understanding of either of these terms depends on an appreciation, first and foremost, on the way these two inform one another. Hickson is adept at utilising style and content together as a means of clarifying, intensifying and furthering the thematic concerns of her fiction. She is not unique in this approach, but is perhaps one of the most able practitioners of this approach within the writings of the *fin de siècle*.

A characterising feature of Hickson's work is her avoidance of absolutism and didacticism. This is of particular note given the practices of her contemporaries, specifically in relation to New Woman writing. This difference in approach further sets Hickson apart from her contemporaries, and the effect of her writing is that it encourages the reader to draw more heavily on their own thinking and experiences in reaching conclusions. Thus, where moral questions are raised (namely questions surrounding sexual transgression, ethical duty, and personal desires), these questions become less about the debate between right and wrong and more about the debate itself. The space for this debate presupposes a certain social readiness which Hickson forges in her writing, but nonetheless in light of the cultural limitations of her time.

As in Woolf's terms, 'if honestly examined life presents question after question which must be left to sound on and on after the story is over', Hickson's fiction is centred on an honest examination of the questions and problems that life can present, particularly when seen from the perspective of a modern, Advanced woman (as defined by Hickson herself).⁷⁵ In her fidelity to the complexities of the issues she explores, Hickson's work continues to have resonance for readers of our time, precisely because it resists ready and formulaic answers and easy moral judgements. The liminal space, as a theoretical framework, is the term best posited in defining the grey and problematic elements of private and social life.

⁷⁵ Woolf, 'Modern Fiction', p. 163.

Conclusion

This study began by positing several seeming dichotomies, and worked these out with specific reference to issues surrounding the place of professional women writers in the fin de siècle. Broadly, these conflicts, inherent in the fin de siècle, were identified as Victorian/modernity, high art/commodification, elite culture/mass, and sub-/urban spaces. This study showed the unique place for a reading of D'Arcy's and Hickson's writing, when framed by notions of liminality. As the periodical that best encompassed many of these seeming dichotomies, the *Yellow Book*, in its materiality and historical significance, became a focal point of the study in its own right.

With specific attention to the fin de siècle, itself an era on the brink of modernity, the limen in the text comes to expose and emphasise the liminality of the period. Whether it is a prolonged moment of waiting during which Hickson studies the potentiality in terms of ethics and social agency or a succession of liminal moments as captured in mobility and environment that reflects a fragmented and performative self in D'Arcy, this thesis has stressed the liminal qualities of protomodernism in the writers' stories.

To briefly summarise the work of the previous chapters, in the first two chapters I sought to establish a theoretical context of the women's position in the periodical press of the late nineteenth century in general, and that of the *Yellow Book* in specific, with a view to use this information as sociocultural context. In chapters III and IV, I attempted to redress the inadequacy of the current critical framework with regards to fin-de-siècle writers by introducing a textual and contextual analysis of D'Arcy's and Hickson's work that serves to justify their 'rediscovery'. I have thus approached them by considering such matters as style and content in their work that move away from a fetishised political analysis of their writing, respecting instead their resistance to a clear-cut categorisation.

More specifically, I analysed D'Arcy's protomodernist style as one found in the interstices of such diverse literary movements as realism, naturalism, and symbolism. Rather than negating them, D'Arcy re-imagines their main

characteristics and applies them on her own protomodernist style with an emphasis on language and identity. I conclude that this is done by employing the idea of liminality to explore the interconnections between setting, language and psychology of the character. Setting in her work is crucial but does not function as an absolute determinist factor. Instead, in contrast with other scholars who have debated her use of the suburban space, I argued that D'Arcy never accepts a fatalistic perception of the environment in which the character's response is preconceived and fixed. Rather, pointing to the liquidity of the self, D'Arcy stresses the result of action. Characters find themselves in situations that are always a result of their ethical agency. This has been perceived as a cynical attitude on behalf of D'Arcy who lacks compassion for her characters – especially female ones. Yet, I demonstrated that this is rather a result of D'Arcy's concept of the setting as symbol that portrays social and individual attitudes. The move from rural to suburban and urban spaces marks this symbolism and is reflected on the liminal writing that exposes social and moral tendencies of the fin de siècle.

In my analysis of Hickson, I proceeded to show that her liminal approach to protomodernism exposes the ethical debates of the time with specific attention to women's morality. In her use of the limen, Hickson employs protomodernism to address such important issues of the time as the fluidity of gender roles and the individual's moral duty to society and one's self. Read against a number of New Woman writers, her protomodernist writing marks an attempt that moves away from the didacticism usually found in explorations of such themes in canonical New Woman texts. Instead, Hickson tries to train the readers by slowly building a wider and more honest platform which urges an exploration of such ethical questions in accordance to the individual's, not society's, conscience.

It is the aim of this thesis to urge a critical re-examination of these writers, hence throughout this study, there is reference to a wider body of work that more fully represents the literary output of these two professional women writers. Such a study would allow for deeper explorations of the link between the writing of these two women and the stylistic and linguistic traits of modernity which permeate their work. Indeed, such a study might allow one to trace their influence through established writers of the early twentieth century, and argue specifically where these influences reside. In addition, this thesis argues for a re-examination of late-

nineteenth-century writing through the application of the underexplored idea of liminality and the potential it offers for a study on a unification of form and content. As potential for further exploration, this thesis welcomes a study which may focus on the women writers of the *Yellow Book*. In such a study, which may be based on the principle of studying simultaneously production, circulation, and consumption, then a detailed list of sales may be useful in making claims about the impact of this periodical on its audience during the fin de siècle. This would allow for the study to take into account the reception of the periodical from the perspective of its readership, and not only limit itself to an appraisal based solely on its critical reception. This study may go as far as to offer sociological analysis. However, given the research undertaken during this study, and the difficulties encountered in trying to locate such material, the promise for this study lies largely with the assumption that it is still possible to unearth such data. As things stand, we can only infer as to the value of this periodical on its readership in more abstract terms, namely its power of influence.

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