



the yellow nineties online

edited by Dennis Denisoff and Lorraine Janzen Kooistra

***THE YELLOW BOOK:* INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME 8 (JANUARY 1896)**

In January 1896, the latest volume of *The Yellow Book* met with stiff competition in the aesthetic periodical market, as *The Savoy*, a new magazine edited by Aubrey Beardsley and Arthur Symons, made its debut the same month. Customers might have found *The Savoy's* cost of 2 shillings and 6 pence, in comparison to *The Yellow Book's* 5 shillings, an incentive to buy, though with the latter weighing in at 406 pages compared to the former's 171 pages, the price differential may have seemed warranted. Purchasing decisions may ultimately have been directed by the reviews, as critics inevitably compared the new periodical to the established quarterly. According to the *Athenaeum*, *The Savoy* "declines to be seen as an offshoot of *The Yellow Book*, and although many of the contributors are the same, it is free from some of the offences of the older periodical" ("Our" 117). Meanwhile, *The Bookman* observed that the literature of *The Yellow Book* "is better now than ever, yet ever since Aubrey Beardsley dropped out of it, its popular vogue seems to have declined" ("Untitled"). Writing for *The Critic* before the new magazine had even made its appearance, Arthur Waugh speculated that "If *The Savoy* is half as good as it promises to be, it will knock the reputation out of *The Yellow Book* in one number (374). Waugh's observation did not prove prophetic, and Symons introduced *The Savoy's* second number with a defiant declaration that the reception of the first "was none the less flattering because it has been for the most part unfavourable."

The reviewer for *The National Observer* proclaimed Volume 8 of *The Yellow Book* to be "lighter in colour than its predecessors, bulkier, and in every way better ("Yellow"). While it is rare for an issue of the periodical to contain more art works than literary works, the number of content items—23 literary works and 26 visual works—is roughly the same as previous volumes; the bulk arises primarily from the length of the short

stories. At 37 pages, the longest piece is “The Deacon” by Mary Howarth, editor of the women’s column in the *Daily Mail*. *Yellow Book* editor Henry Harland’s 28-page story, “P’tit Bleu,” is suggestive of George Du Maurier’s recent international success, the novel *Trilby* (1895). George Gissing’s 27-page “The Foolish Virgin,” his only contribution to *The Yellow Book*, is reminiscent of his novel *Odd Women* (1891) in subject and style. And, with Ella D’Arcy’s 27-page “An Engagement,” we have four stories making up 30 per cent of the issue’s entire content. With such a substantial body of literary material to edit, Harland must have been glad to find a replacement for D’Arcy as sub-editor on her departure for France. In late December 1895, Ethel Colburne Mayne took up the position Harland called “derisory.” As Mayne recalled, “‘Derisory’—a very favorite word of his—the post may have been, so far as salary was concerned; but I need not enlarge on how little derisory it seemed to a girl who had lived all her life until this in Ireland, and was entirely unknown to the literary world” (qtd. in Lasner 18).

The literary contents of Volume 8 are marked by a strong presence of Bodley Head authors. In addition to Harland and D’Arcy, these include Richard Le Gallienne, Nora Hopper, and Evelyn Sharp, as well as the 20-year-old John Buchan, who had recently replaced Le Gallienne as John Lane’s principal manuscript reader. Of the 6 authors that Lane chose to advertise at the end of the publication (as opposed simply to listing them in the *Belles Lettres* catalogue), five have works in Volume 8, including Harland, D’Arcy, Kenneth Grahame, Rosamund Marriott Watson, and H.G. Wells. The latter’s “A Slip under the Microscope” was his only *Yellow Book* publication. Although Lane was clearly using *The Yellow Book* to promote works published by his own company, the majority of the authors included in this issue had not published with Lane previously.

In keeping with the Bodley Head brand, the literary contents of Volume 8 pursued a number of New Woman and aesthetic themes. Gissing and Wells both contributed stories exploring the impact of class on opportunities for women. Other stories that deal with the limited agency of young women include Frances E. Huntley’s “Two Stories,” H.B. Marriott Watson’s “A Resurrection,” D’Arcy’s “An Engagement,” and Sharp’s “In Dull Brown.” Wells and Sharp’s contributions are particularly sensitive to the added burden that intelligence often placed on women. Approaching the subject from the other

direction, Ada Levenson offers a particularly witty mockery of the easy lives of the wealthy, vacuous young men who often associated themselves with Aestheticism. In “The Quest for Sorrow,” an 18-year-old aesthete decides he wants to experience sadness for once in his life but, unfortunately, even his intentionally horrible poetry gets published by a periodical that mistakes it for an “amusing parody on a certain modern school of verse” (328).

If reviewers praised some of the literary contents, they found the artwork reproduced in Volume 8 of exceptionally high quality. *The National Observer* describes Volume 8’s literary works as “very good” but notes that the visuals are “excellent” (“Yellow”). Following on Volume 7’s successful experiment with devoting its entire artistic contents to a regional art school (the Newlyn group of Cornwall), Volume 8 exclusively features established members of the Glasgow School of Art. Katherine Mix proposes that this regionalist focus occurred because Harland found artistic selection burdensome and “shifted the responsibility to other shoulders” (191). However, with Lane and Patten Wilson in charge of the visual materials after Beardsley’s dismissal, it seems more likely that *The Yellow Book* chose to shift focus to some of the innovative movements outside of London. As Margaret Stetz and Mark Samuels Lasner observe, in doing so, the magazine also challenged “the convention of seeing artists as solitary geniuses, by presenting groups and schools of artists whose works were integrally related to one another.” Indeed, as they conclude, the turn to regional art schools was a “provocative and ambitious [way] of using the visual contents of the magazine,” one which amply refutes the notion that, “in losing its first art editor, the *Yellow Book* immediately lost all creative energy” (34).

The Glasgow School is explicitly acknowledged on the table of contents to Volume 8, with David Young Cameron given credit for the cover and title-page designs. Since almost all the artists contributed paintings rather than black-and-white line drawings, Joseph Swan’s Electric Engraving Company provided half-tone reproductions. While certain stylistic and thematic interests dominated the School, the view of the artists as a group was based primarily on their affiliation with the Glasgow School of Art. As Lucy Monroe commented, in a highly positive response to the first American exhibition of

their work in Chicago in 1896, “Their originality is no more remarkable than their dissimilarity. No man seems even to have studied with another, and it is difficult to trace the origin of their divergent methods” (374). An appreciation of their contribution to modernist art therefore requires attention to their diversity as much as to any similarities. Indeed, Francis Henry Newbery—a contributor to Volume 8 and Headmaster and Director of the Glasgow School of Art (1885-1918)—encouraged instructors and students to see themselves as part of an international community. He invited London-based artists to Glasgow to teach or lecture, including Robert Anning Bell, Walter Crane, and William Morris. He also arranged a successful exhibition of Glasgow artists, including Charles Rennie Mackintosh, at the Turin Exhibition of Decorative Art in 1902, for which Newbery received an Italian knighthood.

Most members of the Glasgow School had studied outside of Scotland, including Kellock Brown, whose sculpture “The Ballad Monger” is photographically represented in Volume 8. Many trained in Paris, including William Kennedy, John Lavery, James Paterson, and Alexander Roche. The School’s members especially drew inspiration from French naturalism and the work of Jules Bastien-Lepage. Other influences include John Constable, John Everett Millais, and James McNeill Whistler. An idyllic element marks many of Volume 8’s landscapes and depictions of rural life, such as Kennedy’s “Stacking Hay,” David Gauld’s “Study of a Calf,” and James Whitelaw Hamilton’s “A Pastoral.” These works reflect the School’s interests not only in naturalism, but also post-Impressionism, an aspect lost somewhat in the half-tone reproductions in *The Yellow Book*.

A strong decorative element in works by artists such as Gauld, George Henry, and Australian-born Edward Atkinson Hornel reflects the School’s involvement in symbolism, art nouveau, and the arts and crafts movements. Both Gauld and Harrington Mann also worked in stained glass. Henry and Hornel, meanwhile, painted in Japan for one and a half years in 1893-94. In a lecture he gave in February 1895, Hornel, in accord with Victorian Japonism, declared that he was not interested in Japanese politics, preferring to remember the citizens spending the day “mid plum or cherry blossom, or at night, joyous and elevated with saki, amusing themselves with

pretty geishas, dancing to the weird music of the Samisen” (qtd. in Checkland, 142). Hornel exhibited some of his Japanese paintings at Alexander Reid’s Gallery in Glasgow in May 1895 (Checkland, 146), with the work “Geisha” that appears in *The Yellow Book* being representative.

Despite the focus given to the Glasgow School, the regional artists did not use the opportunity to express much affinity with the Celtic or Scots revival. That said, Cameron’s work for the cover does allude emblematically to this northern movement, with symbols of Scotland (the unicorn and thistle) and England (the lion and rose) in its design. Both flowers and both animals appear in the Royal Coat of Arms of the United Kingdom, while the rose is absent from the Scottish version. Thus Cameron’s cover does not accord with the Scottish heraldic variant; however, the spine of Volume 8 has only the image of the thistle. Newbery’s “Under the Moon” is perhaps the only piece in the issue that clearly references Celtic spirituality, depicting four young women, perhaps girls, intimately engaged in what appears to be a nocturnal pagan ritual or celebration. The figures’ plain dress suggests the event is not a special occasion but a common, rural practice. In this sense, one may read the many other depictions of rural life in Volume 8 as tributes to cultural traditions having a central, ongoing place in modern Scots politics and culture.

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