



the yellow nineties online

edited by Dennis Denisoff and Lorraine Janzen Kooistra

ELLA D'ARCY (1851-1939)



Steer, P. Wilson. *A Lady*. 1894. Painting. *The Yellow Book* 2 (July 1894): 175. (Possibly Ella D'Arcy; see Mark Samuels Lasner's Index.)

Ella D'Arcy was born in London in 1851 to Irish parents and educated in Germany and France. Initially, D'Arcy studied to become a visual artist but problems with her eyesight lead her to turn to fiction writing as an alternative. Before her appearance in *The Yellow Book's* first volume, D'Arcy had published some of her work in Charles Dickens's *All the Year Round*, as well as in *Blackwood's Magazine* and *Temple Bar*.

Previous publishers had refused to publish D'Arcy's short story "Irremediable" because they felt her treatment of marriage was inappropriate. Her story, which describes the dire reality of a loveless marriage from the male perspective, lead the editor of *Blackwood's* to insist that "marriage was a sacrament and should not be treated so summarily" (Mix 234). Her fiction style won acclaim, however, from Henry Harland and *The Yellow Book* circle. She worked with Harland as assistant editor for the periodical's three-year run.

D'Arcy was also a long-time friend of the writer Charlotte Mew, a *Yellow Book* contributor herself, who was in love with D'Arcy.

Both D'Arcy's style and subject matter were ground-breaking, challenging traditional morality as much as conventional narrative styles. Her writing also questioned the standard representations of women. Of her place in English fiction, William C. Frierson

has said that “the intimate and unromantic detail which characterized her presentations forecast the unsentimental analyses of the late English realists” (qtd. in Mix 235). In 1895, D’Arcy saw the publication of her first collection of short stories, *Monochromes*. This was followed in 1898 by another entitled *Modern Instances*. She published the novel *The Bishop’s Dilemma* that same year. D’Arcy also translated André Maurois’s biography of Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Ariel*, into English. D’Arcy died in 1939.

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Ruth Knechtel completed her Doctorate at York University in Toronto. She has published in *English Literature in Transition* and *Victorians Institute Journal*. In addition, Ruth is in the process of building *The New Woman Online*, a searchable environment including rare documents related to the concept of nineteenth and twentieth century womanhood. Currently, she teaches at the University of Manitoba.

Selected Publications by D’Arcy

- The Bishop’s Dilemma*. London: John Lane at The Bodley Head, 1898.
“The Death Mask.” *The Yellow Book*, Vol. 10 (July 1896): 265-74.
Ella D’Arcy: Some Letters to John Lane. Ed. Alan Anderson. Edinburgh: Tragara, 1990.
“An Engagement.” *The Yellow Book*, Vol. 8 (Jan. 1896): 379-406.
“In Normandy.” *Temple Bar* 130.529 (Dec. 1904): 690-712.
“Irremediable.” *The Yellow Book*, Vol. 1 (April 1894): 87-108.
“A Marriage.” *The Yellow Book*, Vol. 11 (Oct. 1896): 309-42.
Modern Instances. London: John Lane at The Bodley Head, 1898.
Monochromes. London: John Lane at The Bodley Head; Boston: Roberts Bros., 1895.
“The Pleasure-Pilgrim.” *The Yellow Book*, Vol. 5 (April 1895): 34-67.
“Poor Cousin Louis.” *The Yellow Book*, Vol. 2 (July 1894): 34-59.
“Sir Julian Garve.” *The Yellow Book*, Vol. 13 (Apr. 1897): 291-307.
“At Twickenham.” *The Yellow Book*, Vol. 12 (Jan. 1897): 313-32.
“The Villa Lucienne.” *The Yellow Book*, Vol. 10 (July 1896): 274-85.
“The Web of Maya.” *The Yellow Book*, Vol. 6 (Oct. 1895): 291-318.
“White Magic.” *The Yellow Book*, Vol. 3 (Oct. 1894): 59-68.
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Selected Publications about D’Arcy

- Beckson, Karl. “Ella D’Arcy, Aubrey Beardsley and the Crisis at *The Yellow Book*: A New Letter.” *Notes and Queries* 26 (1979): 331-33.

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- . "Christianity in the Fiction of Ella D'Arcy." *Xavier Review* 15.2 (1995): 29-37.
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- Fisher, Benjamin Franklin, and Michael P. Dean, eds. "Ella D'Arcy, First Lady of the Decadents." *University of Mississippi Studies in English* 10 (1992): 238-49.
- Maier, Sarah E. "Subverting the Ideal: The New Woman and the Battle of the Sexes in the Short Fiction of Ella D'Arcy." *Victorian Review* 20.1 (Summer 1994): 35-48.
- Mix, Katherine Lyon. *A Study in Yellow: The Yellow Book and its Contributors*. London: Constable, 1960.
- Stetz, Margaret D. "Turning Points: Ella D'Arcy." *Turn-of-the-Century Women* 3.1 (Summer 1986): 1-14.
- Stetz, Margaret D. and Mark Samuels Lasner. *The Yellow Book: A Centenary Exhibition*. Cambridge: The Houghton Library, 1994.
- Windholz, Anne M. "The Woman Who Would Be Editor: Ella D'Arcy and the *Yellow Book*." *Victorian Periodicals Review* 29.2 (Summer 1996): 116-30.
- See also:** Fisher, Benjamin Franklin. "Ella D'Arcy: A Commentary with a Primary and Annotated Secondary Bibliography." *English Literature in Transition (1880-1920)* 35.2 (1992): 179-211.