



EDITH WHARTON REVIEW

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

An Early Backward Glance: Edith Wharton's Revision of "A Tuscan Shrine" by Judith E. Funston	1
Book Review: Edith Wharton A to Z: The Essential Guide to the Life and Work by Sarah Bird Wright. Rev. by Dean Casale	2
Edith Wharton and the Politics of Colonialism: The Good Public Relations of In Morocco by Charlotte Rich	8
Edith Wharton's "The Blond Beast" and Friedrich Nietzsche by William Macnaughton	13
Review: Paulus Opera Based on Summer Performed at Pittsfield by Carole Shaffer-Koros	20

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An Early Backward Glance: Edith Wharton's Revision of "A Tuscan Shrine"

Judith E. Funston
SUNY Potsdam

According to *A Backward Glance*, one of the few benefits of the Wharton marriage was that Edith's "thirst for travel was to be gratified" (90). During the early years of the marriage, from February to May, the couple went abroad; only then did Wharton "really [feel] alive" (91). Wharton rigorously prepared herself for these trips, many of them in Italy, by reading about local history, art, architecture, and culture.

Wharton's self-education was vindicated when, in the spring of 1894, she "discovered" the terra cotta statuary at San Vivaldo, a monastery several hours from Florence. The life-sized figures, depicting scenes from Christ's Passion, had been attributed to Giovanni Gonnelli, "an obscure artist of the seventeenth century, much praised by contemporary authors, but since fallen into merited oblivion" (*Italian Backgrounds* 92). The San Vivaldo figures--particularly the facial features and hands, drapery, and composition--reminded her of the Presepio, a Na-

tivity scene in the Bargello Museum, attributed to the sixteenth-century school of Giovanni della Robbia. Convinced of the misattribution of the San Vivaldo terra cotta, Wharton contacted Enrico Ridolfi, director of the Royal Museum in Florence, who after studying photographs commissioned by Wharton, declared "with absolute certainty that it is a mistake to attribute these beautiful works to Giovanni Gonnelli, and that they are undoubtedly a century earlier in date" (114).

Wharton naturally prided herself on her discovery--it validated her self-education as well as demonstrated her powers of observation. But it also imparted a seriousness to her appreciation of art in contrast to the amateurs whose travel books flooded the marketplace at the turn of the century.¹ In a July 30, 1894 letter to Edward L. Burlingame, her editor at Scribner's, she tells him of an article she has written describing her find, and asserts that "the subject cannot fail to be of interest to the public, especially as the terracottas are *entirely unknown*, even Miss Paget (Vernon Lee) who has lived so long in Italy & devoted so much time to the study of Tuscan art, never having heard of them or of San Vivaldo" (*Letters* 34).

(Continued on page 3)

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BOOK REVIEW

Edith Wharton A to Z: The Essential Guide to the Life and Work by Sarah Bird Wright. New York: Checkmark Books, 1998. ISBN-8160-3481-8. 330 pp w/ illustrations)

Sarah Bird Wright's *Edith Wharton A to Z* is a remarkable book. It stands somewhere between a curious, handsome coffee-table edition with over one hundred illustrations, and a serious research tool that presents Edith Wharton's "Life and Work" in encyclopedic breadth and exhaustiveness. Ms. Wright has compiled detailed synopses of all Wharton's writings and their critical reception, extensive discussions of important people in Wharton's life, family, friends, and "literary" associates, thumbnail sketches of various historical references and contemporary events, and descriptions of the many places that were significant to Wharton, from "Massachusetts to Italy," as the book's back cover blurb tells us

Thumbing through its pages one is immediately taken by the illustrations. They are generous and wonderfully diverse, from the obligatory portraits and photographic stills of principal players such as Wharton herself: Walter Berry, Teddy, and Henry James, to a map of Wharton's trip through Morocco, to the frontispieces of novels, to *Saturday Evening Post* illustrations of Wharton's short story, "A Glimpse," to a promotional photograph of the "leads" of the 1930 Broadway production *Ethan Frome*, to a photo-copy of the citation that made Edith Wharton "a chevalier of the French Legion of Honor." Devotees and newcomers alike cannot help but be struck by the book's gracious compendiousness. It's as if we're being led on a tour of an extensive and eclectic archive by a knowing curator. Serious scholars in search of a stray fact, as well as casual students in search of an overview and the prevailing Wharton zeitgeist are equally well served. I fall somewhere between these two poles of readers; and I can easily see myself turning to *Edith Wharton A to Z* to check a source, perhaps "get an idea," or to pass around to American Lit. Survey students so they may have a "feel"

for Wharton's life and times.

Unlike other encyclopedic volumes that focus on a single author such as *The Poe Log* and *The Melville Log*, which are organized chronologically, *Edith Wharton A to Z* is organized alphabetically, and this scheme has both its strengths and weaknesses. Readers may "look up" any of Wharton's works, find out the publication dates, often, their initial magazine publication information, their immediate reception, their subsequent transformations into plays or movies, with useful plot summaries and briefly annotated lists of main characters; readers may "look up" subjects as wide ranging as "Appleton and Company" to "Architecture" to "Auvergne," and make use of well thought out appendices like "Media Adaptations of Edith Wharton's Works," "Chronology of Edith Wharton's Writings" and "Family Trees." Although some of the entries are peculiar, like the one entitled "America"--ambitious indeed to imagine that a page-and-a-half discussion will treat Wharton's complex attitude toward her native country--most are chosen judiciously and insightfully, and Ms. Wright reveals a deep understanding of Wharton's biography and its fascinating intersections with the writing. Oddly, despite harkening back to an older form of structuring knowledge--à la eighteenth-century French *Encyclopaedists*--there is something "postmodern" and cyber-savvy about *Edith Wharton A to Z*. With its wide-ranging cross-references and layering of citation upon citation, source upon source, it reminded me of a huge web-site with link upon link. What's missing is a narrative to hold the discrete pieces together such as provided by the bare-bones chronologies of the Logs cited above, but maybe there is something incommensurate in these two forms of knowledge. *Edith Wharton A to Z* leaves us to "surf" on our own, and it's a vivid and informative ride.

Dean Casale
Kean University, Union, NJ

CALL FOR PAPERS

EDITH WHARTON AND EDUCATION

American Literature Association Conference
Long Beach, CA, May 2000

From the chapter on "School-Rooms" in *The Decoration of Houses* to her memories of a largely self-taught youth in *A Backward Glance*, Edith Wharton's writing reflects a pervasive but seldom-noted concern with the phenomenon of education. The variety of ways in which such a concern manifests itself in her life and work will be the focus of this panel. Suggested possibilities: education and issues of class; the role of tutelage or mentorship; women and "the Higher Education;" scenes of reading or instruction; "sexual" or "sentimental education" as central themes; Wharton's response to progressive modes of educational theory and practice. Please send 1-2 page abstracts by November 15, 1999, to Frederick Wegener, Department of English, California State University, Long Beach, 1250 Bellflower Blvd., Long Beach, CA 90840-2403.

(Continued from page 1)

Wharton greatly respected Vernon Lee, whom she had met earlier in 1894 and whose writing on Italy Wharton read, praised, and emulated.² As a result of her acquaintance with Lee, Wharton gained entry to the Italian villas she would describe in the essays of *Italian Villas and Their Gardens* (1904). Although Wharton recognized her debt to this British expatriate, she nevertheless savored her *coup* in Lee's backyard.

Wharton's letter persuaded Burlingame, for "A Tuscan Shrine" appeared in the January 1895 issue of *Scribner's Magazine*, along with Signor Alinari's photographs of the San Vivaldo figures.³ She followed this article with five more describing her impressions of Italian art and culture.⁴ Her reputation as an educated observer of the Italian scene was such that *Century Magazine* commissioned a series of essays to accompany Maxfield Parrish's watercolors of Italian landscapes. According to Wharton, the editors, Richard Watson Gilder and Robert Underwood, wanted appropriately feminine "sentimental and anecdotic commentaries" on Parrish's "moonlight and nightingales" (*A Backward Glance* 139).⁵ Drawing on unpublished correspondence between *Century's* editors and Wharton, Sarah Bird Wright recounts the conflict resulting from Parrish's "picturesqueness" and Wharton's hard-headedness (she continued to demand the inclusion of scale drawings and landscape plans) (38). Wharton's analytical essays, published from November 1903 to October 1904, have little relation to Parrish's dreamy paintings. Wharton tartly sums up the quarrel in *A Backward Glance* by noting that "having been given the opportunity to do a book that needed doing, I resolutely took it" (139). Wharton had the last word; *Italian Villas and Their Gardens*, published in book form in 1904, subsequently became a "working manual" for students of architecture and landscaping.

Wharton's intransigence here departs from the vacillations and evasions that marked her relationship to Edward L. Burlingame, her first editor at Scribner's and indicates growing assurance as a professional writer.⁶ In August 1903 she contacted Scribner editor William Cray Brownell to propose that the "Italian sketches" be published as a volume, arguing that such a book would be successful because "there is such a great rush to Italy every autumn now on the Mediterranean steamers, & people often ask me where these articles can be found" (*Letters* 86).

II

Wharton placed "A Tuscan Shrine," the earliest of her "Italian sketches," at the center of *Italian Backgrounds* (1905), between "What the Hermits Saw," written for the collection, and "Sub Umbra Liliorum," first published in 1902. Ever the deliberate craftsman, Wharton revised the 1895 essay to make its style con-

form to that of the writing done almost 10 years later. Wharton's 1905 revision of "A Tuscan Shrine" makes an illuminating comparison with the 1895 version in that it reflects Wharton's development as a writer and at the same time provides a measure of personal growth by the end of a period beset with neurasthenia and psychosomatic illnesses. Some revisions are superficial, necessitated for example by the deletion of Alinari's photographs; other revisions, however, are radical, resulting in prose with a stronger, more self-confident tone. In short, the writing in the 1905 essay is considerably more skilled and assured than in the 1895 version.

Deleting Alinari's photographs from the magazine version prompted the most obvious changes. Wharton replaced references to the photos with descriptions of the San Vivaldo sculptures. In the 1895 version, Wharton frequently apologizes for the inadequacy of the photographs. In her discussion of "Lo Spasimo," the Virgin's swoon when she sees Christ bearing the cross, Wharton notes that "[u]nfortunately, owing to the narrow, corridor-like shape of the chapel in which it is placed, it is that which the photographer has been least successful in reproducing" (27). These apologetic asides divert the reader from her analysis to the photographs; further, such diversions suggest Wharton's reliance on the photographs rather than on her expertise to make a compelling case. In the book version, Wharton deletes these self-conscious remarks along with the photos. Without the visual props, Wharton's prose is simultaneously more focused and more descriptive. Here is the 1895 description of "Lo Spasimo":

It is the smallest of the groups, being less than life-size, and comprising only the figure of the Virgin supported by the Maries, with a Saint John kneeling at her side. In it all the best attributes of the artist are conspicuous; careful modelling, reticence of expression, and, above all, that "gift of tears" which is the last quality we look for in the plastic art of the seventeenth century. (27)

Compare it to the revised description of 1905:

There is a trace of primitive stiffness in the attempt to render the prostration of the Virgin, but her face expresses an extremity of speechless anguish which is subtly contrasted with the awed but temperate grief of the woman who bends above her; while the lovely countenances of the attendant angels convey another shade of tender participation: the compassion of those who are in the councils of the Eternal, and know that

In la sua volontade è nostra pace. (104)

[In her desire lies our peace.]

In the earlier description, Wharton notes only the Virgin, the Maries, and St. John, leaving two figures unaccounted for. The 1905 version remedies this omission with

the haloed twins supporting the Virgin described as "two kneeling angels." Besides this greater accuracy, the 1905 version specifies the figures' characteristics in persuasive detail: the Virgin's "speechless anguish," the woman's "awed but temperate grief," and the angels' "compassion." Here Wharton presents herself as the reader's guide, not as the diffident amateur. In the essay's earlier version, by contrast, the photography and the bare-bones description place the interpretive burden on the reader. Moreover, Wharton's use of the quote from Dante links the terra cotta group to *The Divine Comedy*, thereby connecting this local art to a larger cultural context, while at the same time proving Wharton's own sophistication.⁷

Omitting Alinari's photographs from the 1905 version necessitates more detailed description and in so doing enables Wharton to take a stronger stance vis-à-vis the reader; many "minor" or superficial editorial changes further enhance the 1905 version's more assertive tone. Editing includes word and phrase additions, deletions, or substitutions, as well as shifts in paragraphing. Some changes--from "friar" to "monk," for example⁸--seem minor, but make the 1905 version more accurate. Other changes tighten and focus the writing. In the description of the approach to San Vivaldo, Wharton removes distracting images: "Presently a murmur of churchbells came through like a mysterious welcome through the trees" (26) is revised to "Presently a murmur of church bells reached us through the woodland silence" (97). The first version suggests mystery where in fact there is none; the second version achieves atmosphere by contrasting the muffled sound of bells with woodland silence. A much surer hand is apparent in the 1905 version by relying on specificity instead of creating mystery to achieve the desired effect.

Wharton also uses typography much more strategically: she breaks up long paragraphs into shorter ones to create mood or emphasis. For example, in the magazine version, Wharton begins the long paragraph describing her first look at a terra cotta group, "The Descent of the Holy Spirit," with this sentence: "Having thus guarded us against possible disillusionment, he [a monk] unlocked the door of the chapel upon what he declared to be an undoubted work of the master--'The Descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Disciples'" (27). In the book version this sentence stands alone as a paragraph, separating it from a lengthy description of "The Descent." Wharton thus creates a moment of suspense with a single-sentence pause before a paragraph now exclusively focused on the terra cotta group.

Other paragraphs, mainly, though not exclusively, in the introductory section, are heavily revised. Again, Wharton tightens her prose, often by deleting adjectives and superfluous details. Here is the 1895 version of the first paragraph:

One of the rarest and most delicate pleasures of the continental tourist is to defy Murray. That ad-

mirable cicerone has so completely anticipated the most whimsical impulses of his readers that (especially in Italy) it is now almost impossible to plan a tour of exploration without finding, on reference to one of his indispensable volumes, that he has already been over the ground, has tested the inns, measured the kilometres, and distilled from the heavy tomes of Kugler, Burckhardt, and Cavalcaselle a portable estimate of the local art and architecture. Even the subsequent discovery of his incidental lapses scarcely consoles the traveler for the habitual accuracy of his statements; and the only refuge left from his oppressive omniscience lies in approaching the places he describes by a mule which he has not taken. (23)

The 1905 version:

One of the rarest and most delicate pleasures of the continental tourist is to circumvent the compiler of his guidebook. The red volumes which accompany the traveler through Italy have so completely anticipated the most whimsical impulses of their readers that it is now almost impossible to plan a tour of exploration without finding, on reference to them, that their author has already been over the ground, has tested the inns, measured the kilometres, and distilled from the massive tomes of Kugler, Burckhardt and Morelli a portable estimate of the local art and architecture. Even the discovery of incidental lapses scarcely consoles the traveler for the habitual accuracy of his statements; and the only refuge left from his omniscience lies in approaching the places he describes by a route which he has not taken. (91)

The tone of the paragraph changes subtly in the revised version. While the first version relies on heavy-handedness--the tourist "defies" Murray and his "oppressive omniscience"--the second version with its fewer adjectives has a lighter touch, for the tourist is invited to "circumvent the compiler of his guidebook" and his "omniscience." After all, Wharton wants a reader who is receptive, not defiant. Wharton also corrects the logic--in the first passage, if Murray's volumes are "indispensable" it makes no sense to exhort the traveller to dispense with them, as well as the description--the "heavy tomes of Kugler, Burckhardt and Cavalcaselle" become the "massive tomes of Kugler, Burckhardt and Morelli" suggesting not simply physical weight as does the first but also breadth and depth of information.

Wharton's lighter hand in the 1905 version shows in her reader's sensitivity and intelligence: she can make a point without hammering the reader with detail or word-smithing. To be sure, Wharton's skill is apparent in the first version of "A Tuscan Shrine," but her writing lacks conviction in her ability as educated observer and writer; in the

second version, Wharton is firmly confident of her expertise and of her writing.

This confidence is particularly apparent in the essay's conclusion, the most radically revised section of "A Tuscan Shrine." Comparing the two versions of the sentence which introduces Wharton's line of reasoning reveals the extent of this growth. The 1895 version: "To a person without technical competence it was naturally bewildering to trace such resemblances between works of art differing almost a hundred and fifty years in age" (31); the 1905 version: "The discovery of this close resemblance deepened the interest of a problem" (110). In the first breathless sentence, Wharton draws attention to her shortcomings; she characterizes herself as a "bewildered person without technical competence." In the second version, Wharton directly goes to work, addressing a "problem" in a business-like fashion. Although both conclusions weigh the same facts, the 1895 version emphasizes Wharton's status as an amateur who has stumbled on "resemblances" between the Bargello's "Presepio" and San Vivaldo's terra-cottas; in the 1905 version, this resemblance becomes a "discovery" which launches Wharton, an educated and perceptive observer, on a path of evidence and logic that builds inexorably to a conclusion challenging the experts.⁹

Yet another indication of Wharton's growth is her radical revision of the paragraph explaining the reasons for her discovery. In the earlier version, Wharton laboriously retraces her line of thinking in a single, lengthy paragraph:

To a person without technical competence it was naturally bewildering to trace such resemblances between works of art differing almost a hundred and fifty years in age. It was impossible not to reject at once the theory of a seventeenth-century artist content to imitate, with Chinese accuracy, the manner of the Robbias; yet, how fall back upon the more improbable hypothesis that the terra-cottas of San Vivaldo were really a century older than was popularly supposed? I had been too much impressed by the beauty of the groups to let the question rest, and I therefore determined to have them photographed, that they might be submitted to a more critical examination than mine. As soon as the photographs were finished I sent them to Professor Ridolfi, who had listened with the greatest courtesy and patience, but with some natural incredulity, to my description of the terra-cottas. He was kind enough to send me at once an exhaustive opinion of the groups; and I have no hesitation in quoting from his letter, as I had previously told him that I hoped to publish the result of my investigations. (31)

In the later version, Wharton replaces this paragraph with two:

To the infrequent sight-seers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there would be

nothing surprising in such an attribution. The perception of differences in style is a recently-developed faculty, and even if a student of art had penetrated to the wilds of San Vivaldo, he would probably have noticed nothing to arouse a doubt of the local tradition. The movement toward a discrimination of styles, which came in the first half of the nineteenth century, was marked, in the study of Italian art, by a contemptuous indifference toward all but a brief period of that art; and the mere fact that a piece of sculpture was said to have been executed in the late seventeenth century would, until very lately, have sufficed to prevent its receiving expert attention. Thus the tradition which ascribed the groups of San Vivaldo to Giovanni Gonnelli resulted in concealing them from modern investigation as effectually as though they had been situated in the centre of an unexplored continent, and in procuring for me the rare sensation of an artistic discovery made in the heart of the most carefully-explored artistic hunting-ground of Europe.

My first care was to seek expert confirmation of my theory; and as a step in this direction I made arrangements to have the groups of San Vivaldo photographed by Signor Alinari of Florence. I was obliged to leave Italy before the photographs could be taken; but on receiving them I sent them at once to Professor Ridolfi, who had listened with some natural incredulity to my description of the terra-cottas; and his reply shows that I had not over-estimated the importance of the discovery. (112-13)

Wharton's insecurity is the dominant tone of the first version. She presents herself as bewildered, confronted by impossibilities and improbabilities, and denigrates her own perceptiveness by submitting to "a more critical examination than [hers]." She even needs to explain why Ridolfi wrote to her. In contrast, the second version radiates with a sense of mastery. She gives her readers a lesson on the vagaries of critical fashion; additionally, by eliminating many of the first-person references she takes an authoritative stance; and by attributing critical blindness to prejudices created by "expert opinion," she neatly echoes the essay's opening theme of rejecting guidebook expertise for a fresh approach.

Moreover, Wharton shifts the focus in her description of Ridolfi's expert opinion. In the first version this description is included in the paragraph on Wharton's reasoning, and underscores her timidity, suggesting her hesitantly approaching the great authority who seems to tolerate her by listening with "the greatest courtesy and patience." In the second version, however, her dealings with Ridolfi now have their own paragraph, and Wharton consults Ridolfi for "expert confirmation" rather than submitting to critical examination—a world of difference. This

(Continued from page 5)

difference is also apparent in the final sentences of the Ridolfi sections: in the first, Wharton "hopes" to publish her findings; in the second, Wharton's find is simply corroborated by Ridolfi, who confirms her estimate of "the importance of the discovery."

Rather than stressing her inexperience and amateur status, as she does in the 1895 version, Wharton emphasizes her own expertise—an expertise apparent in her writing skill as well as in her discriminating perception. No doubt Wharton felt this triumph in 1894—her July 30 letter to Burlingame fairly crows—but she dissembled her pride in the essay meant for public consumption; well-bred young matrons of old New York did not brag about themselves, much less their scholarly accomplishments in the rare case they had any. In the later version, however, Wharton tosses aside the guidebook to lady-like behavior and takes a new approach: she demands the recognition due her, savors her triumph and claims membership in the community of scholars.

III

In November 1905 Wharton's serial novel, *The House of Mirth*, was issued in book form. Her second novel, (her first, *The Valley of Decision*, a thoroughly researched novel of settecento Italy, was published in 1902), *House* was an immediate critical and popular success. Years later, glancing backward in her autobiography, Wharton commented that with *The House of Mirth*, she was "turned from a drifting amateur to a professional" (209), indicating that the novel marks her recognition of authority. Earlier, in March of that year, appeared *Italian Backgrounds*, a collection of previously-published and newly-written essays on Italian art and culture.¹⁰ "A Tuscan Shrine," appropriately placed at the center of volume, is both old and new: old in that it recounts the facts of Wharton's memorable artistic find; new in that it reflects Wharton's writerly skill and, more important, personal confidence.

At the end of 1894, the year in which she made her "discovery" at San Vivaldo, Wharton suffered a nervous breakdown, which Cynthia Griffin Wolff attributes to the stresses of Wharton's "campaign to create a separate self," a campaign that included rejection of Lucretia Jones's influence and her search for intellectually-congenial companionship (77). This breakdown prevented her from completing a collection of short stories Burlingame was eager to publish. By 1896 she was well enough to collaborate with Odgen Codman on *The Decoration of Houses*; she was also regularly producing fiction, in spite of more health problems which necessitated S. Weir Mitchell's rest cure in October 1898.¹¹

The new century saw an Edith Wharton more poised and self-assured. Frequent research trips to Italy, designing and building The Mount, her friendship with

Henry James, and the publication of *Crucial Instances* (1901), *The Valley of Decision* (1902), *Sanctuary* (1903), *Italian Villas and Their Gardens* (1904), and *The Descent of Man, and Other Stories* (1904) all marked the early years of the decade. But 1905 was a watershed, marking the publication of *Italian Backgrounds* and *The House of Mirth*, both seminal works in Wharton's oeuvre. Each essay in *Italian Backgrounds* is, in spite of Wharton's deprecation in her autobiography, noteworthy for various reasons, but the oldest, "A Tuscan Shrine," is especially so in light of the extensive revisions Wharton made to bring it into conformity with later essays. Indeed, these revisions of "A Tuscan Shrine" offer a remarkable look at Wharton's development, professionally as well as personally.

Notes

¹ In "Edith Wharton and the Dog-Eared Travel Book," Mary Suzanne Schriber describes what she terms "the decaying mansion of travel writing" (149) of the nineteenth century and the ways in which Wharton "expanded" the genre of travel writing and "made the conventions of travel writing over in her own image" (151).

² Vernon Lee's writings on Italy indelibly stamp the essays in *Italian Backgrounds*. Although Wharton would later deprecate those essays—in *A Backward Glance* she calls them "facile vibrations" added to the "chorus" of nineteenth-century art appreciations (141)—she nevertheless continued to hold Vernon Lee in high regard. Her "deliciously desultory volumes" formed the core of Wharton's Italian library (*A Backward Glance* 140); her introduction to and subsequent friendship with Lee enabled Wharton to explore the Italian "background" off limits to the average tourist. R.W.B. Lewis notes that Wharton "took to the older woman at once, as she would do to other women over the years who, like Vernon Lee, combined gifts of mind and imagination with a somewhat unorthodox private character[...]. She was voluble, forceful, wide-ranging, and mercilessly clever, and she exuded such a knowledge of historical Italian life that more than once during these first visits Edith Wharton was reduced to humble silence" (72). See also Mrs. Charles White's lively sketch of the two women, included in Percy Lubbock's *Portrait of Edith Wharton* (113-15).

Vernon Lee is very much present in Wharton's Italian writings: *Italian Villas and Their Gardens* (1904) is dedicated to her, a "lover of Italian Garden-Magic;" but it is in *Italian Backgrounds* that Lee's voice is most clearly heard. The spirituality in "What the Hermits Saw" can be traced to Lee, and Wharton's concept of "background," explicated in the essay "Italian Backgrounds," is patterned on Lee's discussion of backgrounds—"landscapes in which our fancy, our memories, could work" (58)—in "The Lie of the Land: Notes about Landscapes."

³ Two of Alinari's photographs—of "The Ascension" and "Lo Spasimo"—are reproduced in Eleanor Dwight's *Edith Whar-*

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

ton: *An Extraordinary Life* (72-73).

⁴ Previously published essays in *Italian Backgrounds* (1905) include "A Tuscan Shrine," *Scribner's Magazine* 17.1 (January 1895): 23-32; "An Alpine Posting Inn," *Atlantic Monthly* 85 (June 1900): 794-98; "Sub Umbra Liliorum," *Scribner's Magazine* 31.1 (January 1902): 22-32; "Midsummer Week's Dream," *Scribner's Magazine* 32.2 (August 1902): 212-22; "Picturesque Milan," *Scribner's Magazine* 33.2 (February 1903): 131-41; and "The Sanctuaries of the Pennine Alps," *Scribner's Magazine* 33.3 (March 1903): 353-64.

In "Edith Wharton and Travel Writing as Self-Discovery," Schriber makes two somewhat confusing remarks about the composition of *Italian Backgrounds*. She notes that "[h]aving begun to dabble in travel writing as early as 1894, Wharton published in 1905 her first travel book, *Italian Backgrounds*, including an essay on Parma that had appeared in *Scribner's Magazine* in 1902" (259). This is the truth but not the whole truth, as evidenced by the above publishing history. Schriber also comments that Wharton "return[ed] in 1903 from the trip to Italy that provided much of the material for *Italian Backgrounds*" (266); again, this is misleading: the majority of the *Italian Backgrounds* essays had already been written and published by the time of her return to the United States. These inaccuracies in no way undermine Schriber's perceptive analysis of the relationship between Wharton's "self-discovery" and her travel writing; indeed, my essay reinforces her thesis by tracing Wharton's growth in specific detail.

⁵ Schriber notes that "Travel writing thus freed Wharton to write with unabashed intellectual abandon, to indulge the exercise of a mental prowess frowned upon in women in America but accepted and sometimes even celebrated in Europe" ("Edith Wharton and Travel Writing" 265). Sarah Bird Wright, in *Edith Wharton's Travel Writing: The Making of a Connoisseur*, devotes Chapter 3 to com-

paring Wharton's work to that of other female travel writers. Wright notes that "[t]he usual paradigm for women's travel books was to recount the daily happenings of a single journey or extended tour in copious detail[...], rarely did they provide a context of history, mythology, literature, art, or religion" (46).

⁶ Lewis documents this relationship in chapters 5 and 6.

⁷ Shirley Foster, in "Making It Her Own: Edith Wharton's Europe," notes that "as a woman travel writer Wharton faces the hazard of her texts being labelled 'autobiographica' hence 'unreliable,' thus denying them literary standing" (131). By quoting Dante, Wharton demonstrates her knowledge and thus her authority.

⁸ A monk lives in a monastery and takes a vow of stability; a friar belongs to a mendicant order.

⁹ Wright points out that the expertise and authority Wharton assumed in "A Tuscan Shrine" grated on some art historians and reviewers. She notes that Bernard Berenson "scoffed" at Wharton's "preposterous suggestion that any of them could have been by one of the della Robbias" (Lewis 269). She also describes the more public reaction of *The New York Times* reviewer Walter Littlefield, who portrays Wharton as a "priestess" who has "aspired far beyond her capacity in attempting to till consecrated aesthetic fields" (54). It is interesting to note that such reactions were prompted not by the 1895 version of "A Tuscan Shrine," but by the 1905 revision, which, to be sure, was more visible in book form, but also, as I argue, had a more self assured tone.

Currently, Wharton's discoveries have, despite Berenson's scoffing, been generally supported by art historians. Dwight summarizes the scholarship (284).

¹⁰ Wharton wrote "What the Hermits Saw", "March in Italy," and "Italian Backgrounds" for the book edition.

¹¹ Wolff provides a detailed analysis of Mitchell's treatment and its ramifications for Wharton in *A Feast of Words: The Triumph of Edith Wharton* (85-91).

(Continued on page 8)

CALL FOR PAPERS

EATING AND ORALITY IN THE LIFE AND WORK OF EDITH WHARTON

American Literature Association Conference Long Beach, CA May 25-28, 2000

Cynthia Griffin Wolff has attributed to Edith Wharton an "infantile sense of unsatisfied, insatiable oral longing." Whether or not such a longing manifests itself in Wharton's fiction and other writings is open to debate, but as both a hostess and a novelist of manners she undeniably brought together some of literature's most memorable diners, dinners, and dining rooms.

In addition to the oral personality and oral sexuality in Wharton's life and work, possible topics for this panel include culinary taste and table manners as motifs in Wharton's fiction; Wharton's own aesthetic of dining as conveyed in her autobiographies and the *Decoration of Houses*; connections between culinary and other kinds of taste, gourmandism and sexual appetite, abstemiousness and control; food loathings, cravings, and eating disorders; the club dining room or restaurant as setting; the function of informal, such as *al fresco*, meals; the table as a site of struggle and seduction; class, gender, and ethnic differences in attitudes towards food. Please send 1-2 page abstracts by November 15, to Elizabeth Keyser, PO Box 9674, Hollins University, Roanoke, VA. 24020.

(Continued from page 7)

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Edith Wharton and the Politics of Colonialism: The Good Public Relations of *In Morocco*

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Few critical examinations of Edith Wharton's work have treated her final volume of travel-writing, *In Morocco* (1920), which describes her trip to that country in 1917 at the invitation of its French Resident-General, Marshal Louis-Hubert Lyautey.¹ One critic briefly mentions a tendency in Wharton's text toward "vindication of the superior French protectorate, which has served[...] to save Morocco from itself" (Wright 105), but none of the existing discussions has dwelt on the significance of this subtext of *In Morocco*. On one hand, Wharton asserts at the outset that the book is merely intended for pleasure-travelers, while on the other, she consistently valorizes French colonial rule in Morocco in a way that cannot be considered apolitical. Moreover, Wharton's repeated

praise for the French protectorate is accompanied by numerous generalizations about the "Arab mind," the "soûl of Islam," or the native Moroccans, suggesting the Orientalist perspective that supported such colonial enterprises. Indeed, Wharton's text may be seen to perform several of the tropes or rhetorical practices of colonial discourse that have been identified in journalism and travel writing throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.²

However, historical studies of Lyautey's career in Morocco illustrate, not surprisingly, that his tenure was not as enlightened, democratic, or peaceful as Wharton suggests. In light of this understanding, Wharton's book reveals a political agenda of positive public relations for Lyautey's colonial administration. Superficially, such a bias in Wharton's text reflects her liking for the General, a previous acquaintance from France whom she greatly admired and who hosted her most graciously—and to whom she dedicated the book³. However, *In Morocco's* support of Lyautey's colonial practice also arises from two more important, interrelated sources. One was Wharton's deep concern for French culture and civilization, threatened by World War I at the time of her travels, as they justified France's colonial enterprises abroad. The other, complementary factor is Wharton's own positioning as a Western, privileged, early twentieth-century viewer of Morocco as the Orient, which Edward Said has established as one of Europe's "deepest and most recurring images of the Other" (1). These two factors together illuminate Wharton's subjectivity as ideologically driven to confirm the authority of French colonization.

One cannot read *In Morocco* without noticing the preponderance of Wharton's complimentary references to the French government of that country. Such comments constitute the book's most apparent positive public relations for French colonialism. Moreover, they perform what has been called the trope of "affirmation" in colonialist texts, or what David Spurr describes as "that element in colonial discourse which continually returns to an idealization of the colonialist enterprise against the setting of emptiness and disorder by which it has defined the other" (109). According to Spurr, such affirmation often "justifies the authority of those in control of the discourse through demonstrations of moral superiority" (110). Although such a sense of superiority does not accompany all of Wharton's affirmative statements about Lyautey's rule, when they are considered along with her generalizations about Arab culture, her comments indeed seem to establish a moral hierarchy of French over Moroccan.

For example, even before her first chapter, Wharton includes a note mentioning that she will use the French spelling for place-names, since "this seems justified by the fact that they occur in a French colony, where French usage naturally prevails" (xiii). In order to be consistent for her reader, the "ordinary traveller," Wharton asserts that she will also use French spelling for proper names and other Arab words. Thus, Wharton's text imme-

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

diately supports French influence in Morocco, not conceding that native usage also "naturally prevails" there. Of course, the circumstances of her visit are relevant to this detail of her text, as she and some officials were specially invited to Morocco by Lyautey for an exhibit of arts and industry in Rabat and were hosted in grand style. One senses the privileged atmosphere of Wharton's visit in her letter of September 26, 1917, to Mary Cadwalader Jones: "I write from a fairy world, where a motor from the 'Résidence' stands always at the door, to carry us to new wonders[...]. [W]e have simply floated about in Résidence motors, shown the Merimede ruins by the Director of the Beaux Arts, shown the Exhibition by the General himself, & so on" (Lewis and Lewis 399-400). Wharton's letter implies how the ease and luxury of her visit was made possible by Lyautey, illuminating her decision to privilege French spellings in the book, but that choice also sets the tone for her text as an affirmation of the colonial project.

In the text of *In Morocco*, Wharton's self-representation as an exclusive sightseer also emerges, and she frequently confirms how the French administration facilitated her tour. Early on, she writes:

Three years ago Christians were being massacred in the streets of Salé[...]and two years ago no European had been allowed to enter the Sacred City of Moulay Idriss[...]. Now, thanks to the energy and the imagination of one of the greatest of colonial administrators, the country, at least in the French zone, is as safe and open as the opposite shore of Spain. (4-5)

Wharton's implied dichotomy between the savagery of the country, before Lyautey's leadership, and its subsequent Europe-like safety reveals an Orientalist perspective that is reiterated in her many generalizations about the Moroccan people and culture. While praising the condition of roads in this region, she adds, "In the French protectorate constant efforts are made to keep the trails fit for wheeled traffic, but [the Spanish zone] shows no sense of a corresponding obligation".⁸ Though such comments superficially suggest convenience for Wharton as a Western traveler in what she calls a "country without a guide-book" (3), they also metaphorically affirm the imperial ideal of French progress and civility smoothing out the roughness and barbarity of the Moroccan landscape and culture.

Wharton's greatest praise for Lyautey is reserved for his concern with architectural integrity and preservation. She believes that, before Morocco came under the rule of the "great governor" who now oversees it, other colonists' constructions mined old Arab towns such as Tangier and Casablanca. She asserts that Lyautey does not tolerate such activity:

Respect for native habits, native beliefs, and native architecture is the first principle inculcated in

the civil servants attached to his administration. Not only does he require that the native towns be kept intact, and no European building erected within them; a sense of beauty not often vouchsafed to Colonial governors causes him to place the administration buildings so far beyond the walls that the modern colony grouped around them remains entirely distinct from the old town. (23)

In other places in the text, Wharton reaffirms this idea of Lyautey as a sensitive, beneficent guardian of Moroccan artistry. For example, she praises the preservation of an ornate Medersa, or house of learning, noting how "this lovely ruin is in the safe hands of the French Fine Arts administration, and soon the wood-carvers and stucco-workers of Fez will have revived its old perfection" (26). In this manner, Wharton's treatise on Morocco asserts the humanism and accomplishment of the French protectorate's policies, but it also suggests the inability of the Moroccans to care for their own handiwork.

This perspective of superiority is revealed more overtly in another aspect of *In Morocco*: Wharton's generalizations about the Moroccans, the Arabs, or Islamic culture, which reflect an Orientalist view supportive of the colonial enterprise. Edward Said's seminal study defines this outlook as an "ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" that gives rise to "theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, 'mind,' destiny, and so on" (2-3). He asserts that Orientalism relies on a "positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand" (7). In Said's view, this perspective from within the "umbrella of Western hegemony" has engendered "a complex Orient suitable for study in the academy, for display in the museum, for reconstruction in the colonial office, [and] for theoretical illustration in anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial, and historical theses" (7). Wharton's text, with its many comments about the backwardness, mystery, and strange beauty of Moroccan culture, the Arabs, and Islam, indeed seems to describe such a site of Otherness. As such, her text further affirms French colonization, for both its "management" of this barbaric country and its allowing Westerners the chance to study Morocco's strange and fascinating culture.

Wharton's Orientalism first emerges when she sets General Lyautey's focus on historic preservation in favorable contrast to what she sees as the typically "Arab" lack of concern with such matters:

In Morocco, as a rule, only mosques and the tombs of saints are preserved--none too carefully--and even the strong stone buildings of the Almohads have been allowed to fall to ruin[...].

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

This indifference to the completed object[...] has resulted in the total disappearance of the furniture and works of art which must have filled the beautiful buildings of the Merinid period. (86)

Her regret over the Arab's "indifference to the completed object" resurfaces in other places in the book. For example, in commenting on the poor state of some Medersas in Rabat, she writes, "These exquisite buildings [...] have all fallen into a state of sordid disrepair. The Moroccan Arab, though he continues to build--and fortunately to build in the old tradition, which has never been lost--has, like all *Oriental*s, an invincible repugnance to repairing and restoring, and one after another the frail exposed Arab structures[...] are crumbling to ruin" (19-20, my emphasis). To one as concerned with architecture, interior decoration, and historical preservation as Wharton was, this alleged quality of the Moroccan character is deeply problematic and suggests a need for Western intervention.

Wharton also describes other traits of Moroccan culture with an Orientalist perspective that by turns condescends to or exoticizes her subject. For example, after listing the topics studied in the Medersas, including "the talismanic numbers, and the art of ascertaining by calculation the influences of the angels," she comments, "Such is the twentieth-century curriculum of the University of Fez. Repetition is the rule of Arab education as it is of Arab ornament. The teaching of the University is based entirely on the mediaeval principle of mnemonics" (100). Wharton's equation of Arab methods of higher learning with "mediaeval" Europe is on one level an example of the travel narrative's typical use of analogy, but its connotation of primitiveness is heightened by her description of the Arab curriculum.

At another point, Wharton passes judgment on Moroccan society as a whole, commenting, "Overripeness is indeed the characteristic of this rich and stagnant civilization. Buildings, people, customs, seem all about to crumble and fall of their own weight: the present is a perpetually prolonged past" (85). Again, her diction is strongly connotative, implying the Moroccans' need for outside "help" in order to maintain their society. Elsewhere, Wharton links a discussion of Moroccan architecture to a cultural generalization: "Underneath the tower the vaulted entrance turns, Arab fashion, at right angles, profiling its red arch against darkness and mystery. This bending of passages, so characteristic a device of the Moroccan builder, is like an architectural expression of the torturous secret soul of the land" (17). This comment exemplifies the tendency to exoticize her subject material that Wharton's text often demonstrates. Wharton's descriptions of women in the Moroccan harems, though they also contain an arguably feminist critique of the women's enslavement, also show this exoticizing tendency, as has been noted in other discussions

of this text.⁴

Wharton's commentary verges into more overtly racist territory when she describes being surrounded by Moroccans in a marketplace. She writes, "from all these hundreds of unknown and unknowable people[...] there emanates an atmosphere of mystery and menace more stifling than the smell of camels and spices and black bodies and smoking fry which hangs like a fog under the close roofing of the souks" (137). Her use in this passage of the terms "mystery" and "menace" to describe the Arab people again underscores a basic premise of Orientalist perspectives, dichotomizing the unknown and threatening against the familiar and safe. Furthermore, Wharton's language here contains another rhetorical component of many colonialist texts: that of debasement, or the abjection of a racial or cultural Other, through representations of suffering, defilement, or filth arising from a "dark precolonial chaos" (Spurr 78). This process, prompted by fear and/or loathing, is a "necessary iteration of a fundamental difference between colonizer and colonized" (Spurr 78) to forestall white fears of becoming "swallowed up" in a darker race. In this case, Wharton's description of the "stifling" smell of the "black bodies" around her is such a debasement of the Other, a distancing gesture spurred by her anxiety at being surrounded by the "hundreds" of Arabs.

Along with Wharton's outright praise for Lyautey, these reflections on the Moroccan culture and people constitute an equally powerful means of valorizing French possession of the country. They inscribe *In Morocco* as a colonial discourse, affirming Western notions of the exoticism and backwardness of the East, and the corresponding necessity for European management. A dichotomy thus emerges from Wharton's text, with French colonization as enlightened and beneficial and Moroccan culture as primitive and barbaric, despite the latter's richness and beauty.

However, the historical realities of the French regime challenge Wharton's representation of it, for scholarship on Lyautey's tenure in Morocco reveals that his administration was neither as culturally sensitive nor as all-powerful as she implies. Of course, there exist hagiographic texts about Lyautey that affirm his "possession" of the country. One biography concludes by praising Lyautey's references to the North African country as "my Morocco." The biographer asks rhetorically, "[Lyautey] has been reproached for this use of the possessive pronoun, but is not the Morocco of to-day his creation, and he its maker?" (Howe 334).⁵ Lyautey is also commended in such texts for his belief in the colonial ideal of "association,"⁶ one that was more sensitive to indigenous cultures than the traditional policy of "assimilation."

More recent historical evidence, however, suggests discrepancies between the French governor's avowed policies and his real practices. William A. Hoisington, Jr. has revised hagiographic views of the French sol-

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

dier-administrator, indicating that while he supported the objective of "indirect rule," or local administration rather than central management from France, as well as the more culturally-sensitive ideal of association rather than assimilation, he failed to achieve either. Hoisington introduces his study with the reflection that "Lyautey's method of pacification in Morocco differed in practice from what he proclaimed it to be and indirect rule failed to live up to its name. Neither succeeded in ending Moroccan resistance to France and neither achieved the Franco-Moroccan partnership that Lyautey said was his goal" (vii). Also, Gerald Doiron's study of Lyautey contends that his policies did not live up to the broad-minded and cooperative ideals that allegedly underlay them. He concludes:

[Lyautey's] reforms[...] led to the development of a dual state emerging in Morocco, one French and one Moroccan. This dualism virtually ensured the impossibility of applying the policy of association [...] for each group lived separately in their own milieu [...] minimizing the contacts essential for understanding and cooperation which are the foundations of the policy of association. The indigenous peoples of Morocco were second class citizens in their own country which was dominated, controlled, and directed toward European oriented interests. (v)

Such contentions are borne out by the examination of specific aspects of Lyautey's administration.

For example, there were clear inequalities in Lyautey's seemingly enlightened approach to managing Moroccan towns and restructuring the country politically. Though Lyautey was praised by some for his practice of building French administrative structures outside the limits of native towns, as Wharton notes, detractors called this practice "urban apartheid" (Hoisington 109). Hoisington concedes that ghettoizing the Muslim population within a cramped central section of Rabat, the protectorate's headquarters, was not Lyautey's intention, but "what was clear from the start[...] was that all Rabat would be remade according to French blueprints and ruled not very indirectly according to French designs. If this was an urban partnership, it was negotiated strictly on French terms" (109). Also, after the Treaty of Fez in 1912, which had formally established the French protectorate in Morocco, Lyautey had reorganized the country's previous central governing body, the Makhzen, but had done so in a manner which took away all its policy-making autonomy (Doiron 168, Hoisington 48). In this way, Lyautey was able to give outsiders the impression that his was a progressive, democratic approach to colonial government, even if the reality was not so.

Finally, there was native resistance to Lyau-

tey's government, largely on the part of Berber tribesmen in outlying regions, which was never completely quelled during the time surrounding Wharton's visit. For example, historian Alan Scham notes that in 1918, "rebel forces were [temporarily] successful in closing the Taza corridor again" (35), a logistically important zone to the east from which Lyautey had encountered resistance throughout 1914. Wharton's travel book briefly acknowledges native opposition in Morocco to the French, noting that only a year before her trip, the city of Moulay Idriss, which "had held out fanatically on its holy steep[...] saw that the game was up, and surrendered without a pretense of resistance" (49). However, her language downplays the continued threat of rebellion against the French protectorate, even during the time of her visit.

With such historical realities in mind, Wharton's book reveals a new dimension as a source of beneficial public relations for Lyautey's colonial government. Wharton's politicization of a travel book intended merely "for the use[...] of the happy wanderers" touring Morocco (xi), of course, comes most simply from her admiration of Lyautey, whose generous hospitality and protection enabled her to see many sights that Western visitors, particularly women, had never seen. Indeed, Wharton's tour was part of a series of visits calculated by Lyautey to show off the fruits of his colonial administration, and if *In Morocco* is any indication, these politically-motivated tours were a great success in cultivating European approval for the colony.

Moreover, Wharton's great respect and concern for French civilization, as threatened by World War I at the time of her visit, informed her perspective on that country's presence in North Africa, contributing to its bias toward French ways, even imperialism. In *Orientalism*, Edward Said writes, "It can be argued that the major component in European culture is precisely what made that culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures" (7). In this sense, perhaps Wharton's evaluation of Morocco as a fascinating, yet inferior Other allowed her to feel a greater sense of stability in French culture. By defining the latter in terms of what it was *not*, she would indeed draw on the "Occidental vs. Oriental" dichotomy that Said describes as underlying the Orientalist perspective.

It is also relevant to Wharton's project that Morocco was threatened with capture by Germany during the First World War. One source of admiration for General Lyautey was that he not only saved Morocco from falling into German hands, but actually increased France's landholdings there, as Wharton so proudly asserts in her travel book (217). Thus, Wharton's praise for continued French control of Morocco also corresponds to her anxiety for and support of France's success in the First World War. Indeed, though her book was published after the Armistice, the political subtext of *In Morocco* can be seen as

(Continued on page 12)

(Continued from page 11)

another iteration of Wharton's pro-France patriotism.

Perhaps most operative to Wharton's views on Morocco and French colonization, however, is her inseparability from her historical context, an era in which the cultivation and expansion of European empires was repeatedly justified by notions of racial and cultural hierarchy. Expressions that to our postcolonial consciousness are undeniably racist were widespread and often accepted as naturalized views in the "golden age of Empire," or the decades between 1850 and 1930. Many historical, literary, and journalistic texts in the vein of Rudyard Kipling's poem "White Man's Burden" (1899) bear out this view, upholding Western representations of the "colored" races of the world as variously childlike, morally degraded, inscrutable, or sullen—and, most importantly, in "need" of European management.⁷

Thus, Wharton's comments in this book about the "tortured soul of Islam," her generalizations about Arab "overripeness," and her exotic descriptions of Moroccan harems, even though the latter also register a qualified feminism, would not have been criticized by most of her Western readership in 1920. Moreover, it is clear elsewhere in Wharton's writings that she was not immune to racial and ethnic prejudices that were widespread in the early twentieth century, as the anti-Semitism of *The House of Mirth* suggests.⁸ Even the brief allegory from early in Wharton's career, "The Valley of Childish Things," seems to reflect the colonialist rhetoric so widespread at the turn of the century. The story's repeated emphasis upon the value of "building bridges, draining swamps, and cutting roads through the jungle" (*Collected Stories* 58, 59) echoes the ideal of simultaneous material improvement and the "civilization" of a less-advanced Other that pervades colonial discourse (Spurr 118-19).

Despite the contextualizing factors that may in some sense mitigate (or at least illuminate) *In Morocco's* colonialism, however, it remains that Wharton's book of travel writing reifies Orientalist notions of Arab civilization as replete with both "barbarous customs and sensuous refinements" (157). She concludes one chapter with a summary of these contradictory, but finally stultifying, qualities of the Arabs:

Revering the dead and camping on their graves, elaborating exquisite monuments only to abandon and defile them, venerating scholarship and wisdom and living in ignorance and grossness, these gifted races, perpetually struggling to reach some higher level of culture from which they have always been swept down by a fresh wave of barbarism, are still only a people in the making. (157-58)

Wharton's text thus implies that this population requires the leadership of General Lyautey, the man who scored a political coup in the eyes of the French people in

keeping "possession" of Morocco during the First World War. As such, her volume about Morocco is a text that, despite protests to the contrary, carries a clear political agenda, and it provides felicitous public relations for an enterprise that by nature would be susceptible to criticism, even in an age that usually rationalized the Western conquest of "savage" lands. Indeed, *In Morocco* merits further notice for its revelations about Wharton's relationship to global politics of the early twentieth century, through its affirmation of both the French colonial project and the Orientalist attitudes that sanctioned such enterprises.

Notes

¹ Elizabeth Ammons (142) and Judith E. Funston have noted Wharton's feminist attentions in this text to the oppression of Arab women, while Mary Suzanne Schriber has focused on the work in relation to conventions of travel-writing. Sarah Bird Wright, on the other hand, discusses the volume as the culmination of Wharton's "connoisseurship" as the traveler and observer.

² For a useful discussion of the tropes and representational techniques of colonial discourse, see David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration*.

³ R. W. B. Lewis discusses Wharton's admiration for Lyautey and the privileged atmosphere of her visit in his *Edith Wharton: A Biography* (404-05). Shari Benstock's biography of Wharton also discusses her trip and the subsequent book (336-37), noting that some reviewers of *In Morocco* criticized its constant praise of the French administration. Benstock concludes that, though Wharton's praise was because she "believed strongly" in Lyautey's form of colonialism, "in some sense, she saw just what General Lyautey wanted her to see" (337).

⁴ See Elizabeth Ammons' and Judith E. Funston's discussions of *In Morocco*.

⁵ For another complimentary biography of the French general, see André Maurois' *Lyautey* (1931).

⁶ William A. Hoisington, Jr., defines this approach as "the effort to link diverse peoples with France while preserving their historical and cultural identity, their political and social structures" (vii).

⁷ Spurr discusses many examples of such texts, from late eighteenth and early nineteenth century travelogues and colonial administrators' memoirs to articles appearing in periodicals such as *National Geographic* and *Time* in the 1980s. Other useful studies of the connections between colonialism and travel writing include Sara Mills' *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism*, and Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*.

⁸ For discussion of anti-Semitism in Wharton's work, see essays by Hildegard Hoeller and Irene Goldman.

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 12)

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Edith Wharton's "The Blond Beast" and Friedrich Nietzsche

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In a letter written in early summer 1908, Edith Wharton mentioned that she had been reading Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*; after praising his "wonderful flashes of insight" and "power of breaking through conventions," she encouraged her friend Sara Norton to "read him if you haven't" (*Letters* 159).¹ R.W.B. Lewis maintains that, during this period, Wharton read not only *Beyond Good and Evil* but also *On the Genealogy of Morals* and *The Will to Power*, the philosopher's lengthy, posthumously published collection of notes. More recently, Shari Benstock asserts that, in 1907 and 1908, Wharton "read all of his works, as part of her reading program in philosophy" (172).² Despite this evidence the few scholarly references to Nietzsche's influence on Wharton have centered almost exclusively on how he helped justify her clandestine affair with Morton Fullerton. Lewis writes, for example: "It was of course the affair with Fullerton that had aroused Edith to these considerations of naked instinct and the status of the body" (*Biography* 230). As well, Carol Singley asserts: "Although Wharton does not mention Nietzsche in her fiction, her letters reveal how important he was in helping her solve a spiritual crisis brought on by a passionate extramarital love affair" (17).³ Although I have no doubt that Nietzsche attracted Wharton in part because his ideas helped rationalize her affair, I also believe there was more to the Nietzsche-Wharton connection than this. Several Nietzschean ideas interested and challenged her; they also influenced some fiction⁴ she wrote between approximately 1909 and the outbreak of war in 1914. The most obvious example is the short story, "The Blond Beast," which I will discuss here. At the essay's conclusion, however, I will point briefly to *Ethan Frome* and *The Custom of the Country* as further evidence of the ways in which Wharton's reading of Nietzsche affected her writing.

"The Blond Beast" was published in *Scribner's Magazine* in September, 1910,⁵ and also in the 1910 collection, *Tales of Men and Ghosts*.⁶ The beginning of the five-section story depicts the joyous and confident response of a young man, Hugh Millner, as he leaves the New York home of a wealthy philanthropist, Orlando G. Spence, to whom he has just become private secretary. Millner has also met Spence's frail son and heir, Draper, who eagerly talks to Millner as they walk along Fifth Avenue. Most of the story takes place two years later and focuses on the events that first lead to Millner accepting a bribe from Spence, and then returning it as he prepares to leave his surprised employer. Almost all of the critical references to "The Blond Beast" have been either dismissive, perfunctory, or perplexed.⁷ Readers made aware, however, of how important Nietzsche is to the text should discover it to be

(Continued on page 14)

(Continued from page 13)

an interesting, complex one that is primarily about the education of a potential "superman."

The most obvious signal of the story's involvement with Nietzsche, of course, is its title⁸. This alludes to the notorious term first used in *On the Genealogy of Morals* (40, 42, 86) to epitomize a type of commanding, aggressive, violent barbarian. His "unbroken strength of will and lust for power" (BGE 201) helped historically, according to the philosopher, to force the creation of "noble races" (GM 41). Such men are "involuntary, unconscious artists" who create "a ruling structure that lives" (GM 86). In several works Nietzsche also eagerly observes signs of the reappearance of this type of man in the nineteenth century. In *The Will to Power*, for example, he asserts that he is "glad about the military development of Europe[...]. Beautiful men are again becoming possible[...]. The barbarian in each of us is affirmed; also the wild beast" (78). Later, he predicts that "now there are coming new barbarians (cynics, experimenters, conquerors)" who will combine "spiritual superiority with well-being and an excess of strength" (478).

Wharton's story suggests that it is this idea about a new kind of "blond beast"--the so-called "superman" or "overman" (in German, *Übermensch*)--that has shaped the portrayal of her protagonist. The story also suggests she has created someone whose conception of himself and his likely career have been influenced by the same idea (even though he does not understand Nietzsche nearly as well as he thinks he does). That Millner sees himself as potentially this new kind of "barbarian" is shown in several ways in the opening section. There is his response, for example, to Draper's admiration for his healthy good looks: "Millner tingled again with this tribute to his physical straightness and bloom.⁹ Yes, he looked his part, hang it - he looked it!" (132). One notes as well the narrator's description of Millner's words and thoughts provoked by Draper's question about purpose: "'A purpose? I should rather say so! I believe in nothing else,' cried Millner, feeling as if his were something he could grip in his hand and swing like a club" (133). Additional evidence is the "complacency" he feels upon obtaining his position, and the "vision" of future success "revealed to him from the Pisgah" of Spence's "marble steps" (131). Other passages in the same section reveal Millner's self-image as the iconoclastic, purposeful, strong-willed, and confident potential Nietzschean higher man who is fully prepared to use the "timidities and conformities of his patron as the means of his own advancement" (135). He is also, in theory at least, prepared to exhibit a Nietzschean ruthlessness in the pursuit of his goals: "To a young man so untrammelled by prejudice it was self-evident that helpless philanthropists like Orlando G. Spence were just as much the

natural diet of the strong as the lamb is of the wolf" (135). In ironic passages early in the story such as this one--Spence is obviously *not* helpless--Wharton implies strongly that her naïve and theoretical Nietzschean has a lot to learn.

Arguably the most important Nietzschean concept is the "will to power"--his assumption that the active drive to expand and dominate, rather than merely to survive by adapting, or to obtain pleasure--is the principle that governs all organisms in the universe.¹⁰ Several passages at the beginning of the story, suggest that Millner possesses at least a superficial understanding of the principle; such passages suggest also that he believes in its validity in large part because, as in the passage about "helpless philanthropists," he sees himself as the probable victor in any struggle for authority. What the story implies, however, is that Millner's theoretical understanding of the "will to power" needs to be tested and deepened through experience. This testing and deepening occur while he is private secretary to Spence.

The most significant part of this experience takes place two years after he has begun his job, within a few hours of one day, to which Wharton devotes four of her five sections. The first crucial event is Spence's attempt to persuade Millner not to reveal to a muckraking journal that he has continued to own stock in a rubber plantation even after, more than a year before, he had publicly denounced its owners for peonage abuse. Complicating Spence's life is his son's decision to give up teaching a Bible Class due to the effects of the "Higher Criticism" (143) on his religious beliefs. Because Spence is preparing to speak at the opening of a Missionary College to which he has contributed five million dollars,¹¹ he is worried that, as Millner says to Draper, "any hint of internecine strife will weaken his prestige" (140). Moreover, Trustees of the College have been alerted by a journal to the possibility of a scandal. Therefore, Spence also wants Millner to convince Draper to return to Bible Class teaching.

Just prior to his first confrontation with the philanthropist in section III, Millner reflects that, during the two years with him, his "original conception of his employer's character had suffered extensive modification, but no final outline had replaced the first conjectural image" (141-42). As a result, he has learned "that life was less of an exact science and character a more incalculable element, than he had been taught in the schools." Another result of his experience has been a salutary drop in his somewhat fatuous self-confidence: he "had begun to suspect that one might be necessary to Mr. Spence one day and a superfluity, if not an obstacle, the next, and that it would take *superhuman* astuteness to foresee how and when the change would occur" (142; my emphasis).

One thing strongly implied in Wharton's treatment of Spence is that there are two obvious "blond beasts" in

(Continued on page 15)

(Continued from page 14)

the story, something that Millner seems to sense (although he does not articulate this insight), and eventually comes to respect. Spence is the "blond beast" who, as he has become older and gained influence, has allowed his early probably ruthlessly egotistical will to power to become sublimated in philanthropic activity.¹² Nonetheless, he is still on occasion willing to ignore conventional moral standards, as he seems to have done during the plantation affair. This capacity is also revealed in the impatience, almost contempt, that he displays in answering a question from the *Investigator* about the relation between one's business conduct and one's religious and domestic life. Spence says: "Why, that's a stupid question. [...] A man ought to do good with his money--that's all" (139). As the story proceeds, Millner seems to recognize that "good" to Spence is whatever he considers it to be, although, for the sake of public appearances (as Nietzsche had recommended),¹³ he is willing to pretend otherwise.

What Millner definitely learns about the will to power in his contest with Spence is that there is more involved in expressing this will than merely winning a carefully defined prize. As Nietzsche frequently argues, the feelings expressed through and derived from willing are not only complex but also often more significant than any material object.¹⁴ Initially, during the conversation that eventually leads to the bribe, Millner feels "as if the globe had swung around, and he himself were upright on its axis, with Mr. Spence underneath, on his head" (145); a bit later, as it becomes even clearer that he is controlling Spence, "His sensation was that of the skillful carver who feels his blade sink into a tender joint" (146). Immediately after, "the surprised sense of mastery was like wine in his veins"; at the same time, however, the conflict makes him respect and appreciate Spence. Then, Millner experiences in Spence's resistance an "homage to his [Millner's] capacity," which "nerved him to greater alertness, and made the concluding moments of their talk as physically exhilarating as some hotly contested game." Paradoxically, when Millner achieves his concrete goal (money), "his first conscious thought was one of regret that the struggle was over. He would have liked to prolong their talk for the purely aesthetic pleasure of making Mr. Spence lose time, and, better still, of making him forget that he was losing it" (146). Nietzsche's belief that the most important dimension of "power" is a complex, life-affirming feeling--intimately connected to one's self-worth and even to an instinct for beauty--is clearly the source of Wharton's depiction of the contest between Millner and the "helpless philanthropist."

Two of the story's most puzzling sections center on the would-be *Übermensch's* response to incidents

that involve suffering, a particularly debatable area in Nietzsche's philosophy. Wharton herself frequently showed great interest in the problem of suffering, for example, in the novel published just prior to "The Blond Beast," *The Fruit of the Tree*, in which the crucial episode is a young woman's mercy killing of her friend, who has been horribly injured in a riding accident. In the short story the first incident (in section I) focuses on Millner's peculiar response to a scruffy, dying dog that he encounters after his first visit to Spence's mansion. Before seeing the animal, Millner thinks: "We're all born to prey on each other, and pity for suffering is one of the most elementary stages of egotism" (135). Then, when he observes the dog trying to cross Fifth Avenue, Millner muses contemptuously that it [...] was really a perfect type of the human derelict which Orlando G. Spence and his kind were devoting their millions to perpetuate, and he reflected how much better Nature knew her business in dealing with the superfluous quadruped. (136) Nevertheless, Hugh cannot stop himself from following the dog and also defending it from the potential cruelty of "two idle boys," at which point the narrator comments: "He did not know why he was doing it, but the impulse was overmastering" (136). Eventually, after predicting that in the morning the dog would probably be dead, which would be the "best solution," Hugh concludes ruefully that "since pity for suffering was one of the most primitive forms of egotism, he ought to have remembered that it was necessarily one of the most tenacious" (137).

The second episode, late in the story, centers on Hugh's response to Draper's pain when, because of the plantation affair, the young man has cause to doubt his father's honesty. Just prior to meeting Draper, Hugh luxuriates in thoughts about his victory over Mr. Spence: "It was Corsica, [...] it was the kind of spot that posterity might yet mark with a tablet" (147). Because of his triumph, Hugh decides that now is the proper time to leave his job and escape "bondage." Almost at the same moment, however, he also undercuts his self-image as Napoleon (whom Nietzsche cites several times as an historical example of the superman)¹⁵ when he suddenly realizes he will regret leaving Draper. Regret, he assumes, is an inappropriately weak emotion for a potential higher man, particularly about Draper, whom by now Millner has classified as being much inferior to himself and Orlando Spence (although there are hints that he may be wrong about this).¹⁶

Millner also pities Draper after reading a letter brought to him by Draper that accuses his father of unethical behavior: "The youth's features were tightened by a smile that was like the ligature of a wound. He looked white and withered" (148). Further complicating Millner's self-image is his surprised recognition, just before he uses the word "blackguardly" to refer to the charges against Spence,

that the lie which Mr. Spence had just bought of him was exactly the one he could give of his own free will to Mr. Spence's son. This discovery gave

(Continued on page 16)

(Continued from page 15)

the world a strange new topsy-turviness, and set Millner's theories spinning about his brain like the cabin furniture of a tossing ship. (148)

Later in the same scene "Millner looked compassionately at the boy's struggling face. Decidedly, the battle was to the strong, and he was not sorry to be on the side of the legions. But Draper's pain¹⁷ was as awkward as a material obstacle, as something that one stumbled over in a race" (149). Because Millner's "theories" about himself have allowed no space for compassion, he is disturbed to discover this capacity within himself.

Many of Nietzsche's recommendations are, of course, notoriously savage about the actions appropriate to the higher man when confronted by the suffering of people less healthy, gifted and, in general, less genetically fortunate than himself.¹⁸ It could be argued, therefore, that Millner's compassionate response to the suffering animal and young man are intended by Wharton as implicit criticism of Nietzsche's sometimes ferocious doctrine, because Millner, to live up to his conception of "blond beast," must become a less admirable human being. On the other hand, passages in the texts Wharton read suggest a more humane Nietzsche and a kinder, gentler *Übermensch*. In a section in *Beyond Good and Evil* entitled "What is Noble," for example, Nietzsche asserts that to be noble one "must remain master of one's four virtues: of courage, insight, sympathy, and solitude" (226). Later in the same section, Nietzsche writes: "A man who has his wrath and his sword and to whom the weak, the suffering, the hard pressed, and the animals, too, like to come and belong by nature, in short a man who is by nature a master--when such a man has pity, well *this* pity has value" (230). In view of such sentiments, another interpretation of the two episodes about suffering seems plausible: rather than being critical of Nietzsche, they suggest that here, as in other areas, Millner does not understand Nietzsche well enough. At the same time, the episodes provide further evidence of Millner's potential to develop because they suggest his instinctive capacity to feel softer emotions in appropriate circumstances.

Wharton continues to emphasize her protagonist's potential in the story's brief, initially puzzling last section, which begins, significantly, with the narrator's comment that "The peril conjured," Mr. Spence "had recovered his dominion over time. He turned his commanding young man, however, refuses to be "commanded" and during the scene coolly informs his employer he plans to leave; then he returns the money. When Spence demands a "guaranty" their bargain will not be violated, Millner says "I've given you my word." Although Spence is cynical about the promise, the fact Millner requires Spence to depend upon it may be interpreted as hav-

ing extremely important Nietzschean implications: in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, for example, Nietzsche argues it is only the "emancipated individual" who has the "right to make promises" (59). He speaks also about a promise as "no mere passive inability to rid oneself of an impression,...., but an active desire not to rest oneself, a desire for the continuance of something desired once, a real memory of the will" (58). Later in the same essay he asserts that individuals "who give their word as something that can be relied on" do so "because they know themselves strong enough to maintain it in the face of accidents" (60). Wharton's suggestion is that, by this stage in his development, Millner's self-confidence is justified and well-earned, in contrast to the story's beginning, when his confidence is clearly delusive.

Spence continues, on the other hand, neither to trust Millner nor to understand any form of guaranty that excludes money, so he offers more. At this point, after assuring Spence "You're safe--you're safe as you'll ever be" and still being challenged to provide a "guaranty," Millner remembers his first meeting with Draper and says, "What guaranty? You've got Draper!" When viewed from a Nietzschean perspective, Millner's reference to Draper may be read as further evidence of his own capacity to develop. Millner's response suggests that he possesses not only Nietzsche's harder virtues (such as strength of will), but also some of the softer ones. He shows, for example, a capacity for sympathy (because he believes that Draper will suffer a great deal if his image of his father is shattered). As well, he reveals a "high-grade graciousness toward his fellow men" (BGE 222). Finally, he seems able to act out of "gratitude" (BGE 64) rather than resentment (a crucial Nietzschean "vice") for his experience with the Spences, because, as he says to Mr. Spence, "Oh, I've got all I want--all and more!" (151). Although Wharton does not specify exactly what motive drives Millner's action here, she does imply strongly that it is based on his values, and a mature self-respect. She also implies, in this provocative story's open yet buoyant ending,¹⁹ that if Millner maintains his capacity for development, her "blond beast" may become one of Nietzsche's sovereign souls.

As previously mentioned, this story is only the most obvious example of how, for a period at least, Wharton experimented with Nietzschean ideas in her fiction. The period seems to have begun in late 1908 or early 1909 and lasted until 1914, around the outbreak of World War I, when, for several years Wharton immersed herself in heroic work on behalf of refugees.²⁰ During these years Nietzsche, in the popular mind, was identified with the most despicable aspects of the German nation.²¹ Readers who come to Wharton's fiction written during this pre-war period knowing about her interest in Nietzsche will find evidence of his influence. In *Ethan Frome*, for example, ideas about what Nietzsche calls *ressentiment* and about how "The sick represent the

(Continued on page 17)

(Continued from page 16)

greatest danger for the healthy" (GM 121) seem prevalent. He states: "The sick woman especially: no one can excel her in the wishes to dominate, oppress, and tyrannize" (GM 123)²². Nietzsche's influence is also present in *The Custom of the Country*, not only in the way Wharton uses the idea of the will to power to explain character relationships, but also in her conception of individual characters. Elmer Moffatt, for example, is very much the "blond beast", it seems to me: he has an impressive will to power, he endures and learns from failure, and he has an iconoclastic sense of humor. At the end of the novel, on the other hand, his metamorphosis into "synthetic, summarizing, justifying man" (WP 464) seems to have stopped, in large part because the herd values and impressive will to power of his wife, Undine Spragg, have begun to dominate. There is, of course, not space here to do more than glance briefly at these echoes of Nietzsche. That they are there, however, and their presence is important seem undeniable to me.

Notes

¹ Wharton seems to have been reading the book in German, rather than in translation. References to Nietzsche in two letters written three years later (May 12 and 16, 1911) make clear that her interest in him remained strong. In her letter to Morton Fullerton, for example, in which she describes her admiration for a new biography of Richard Wagner, she writes: "I don't know what I shall do when it's done. Everything else will seem insipid—even Nietzsche" (*Letters* 237-38).

² Benstock suggests that the young French novelist and poet, Anna de Noailles, on whom Nietzsche had a large influence, "may have awakened Edith's interest in him" (172). On the other hand, in her July 7, 1908 letter to Sara Norton she says that "I never read any Nietzsche before, except a glance at *Zarathustra*" (159). During these years the philosopher was, of course, infamous on both sides of the Atlantic as H.L. Mencken suggests in the introduction to his 1908 book: "There is no escaping Nietzsche. You may hold him a kissing and a mocking and lift your virtuous skirts as you pass by, but his roar in your ears and his blasphemes sink into your mind. He has colored the thought and literature the speculation and theorizing, the policies and superstition of the time [...]. His ideas appear in the writings of men as unlike as Roosevelt and Bernard Shaw even the newspapers are aware of him. He is praised and berated, accepted and denounced, canonized and damned" (VII). Given this notoriety, and given that other friends of Wharton were interested in Nietzsche (such as "Vernon Lee"—pen name of Violet Paget—whose article on him had appeared in *The North American Review* in 1904), it is quite possible that Wharton's decision to read Nietzsche seriously could have had several causes. For information

about the reception and influence of Nietzsche, readers might wish to consult Bridgwater, Donadio, Pütz, and Smith.

³ Singley also suggests that Nietzsche attracted Wharton because "he rejected the downward cycle of evolution and the levelling effects of Darwinism" and because he helped stimulate in her the "Neoplatonic quality of will that seeks transcendence without limitation" (18). Pütz's edition of articles on American writers influenced by Nietzsche does not include a single reference to Wharton although it includes significant discussion of, among others: Howells, James, Mencken, London, Dreiser, Pound, O'Neill, and Hemingway.

⁴ They also influenced a few poems written in response to her affair with Fullerton, most notably "Ogrin the Hermit," which she wrote in early spring, 1909. See Lewis, *Biography*, 256-57.

⁵ Wharton's April 30, 1909, letter to John Hugh Smith suggests, because of its reference to Nietzsche—she had been reading an article by Ernest Seilliere on a correspondence between Nietzsche and Taine—that she may have begun the story around that date. On the other hand, she does not actually name the story with the "tremendous subject" that she was "starting in on" (*Letters* 177); moreover, she refers to "starting in on Man Tales V" and "The Blond Beast" appears eighth in the collection.

⁶ There do not seem to be any other obviously Nietzschean stories in this collection which, according to Benstock, was written over a "two-year period of stressful change in her life when she was unable to find the energy and peace of mind to continue her work on *The Custom of the Country*" (243-44).

⁷ Barbara White objects to the story's supposedly arcane vocabulary and says the tale is "barely intelligible" (24); R.W.B. Lewis believes that the story "has to do (apparently) with an unprincipled young man acquiring a moral sense" (*Biography* 296); and Carol Singley says only that "'The Blond Beast' explores challenges to traditional faith posed by the higher criticism" (3-4). Richard Lawson's *Edith Wharton and German Literature* contains a sometimes useful discussion of "The Blond Beast" (30-39). My own attitude toward the story differs substantially from his, however, particularly in my interpretation of Orlando Spence, and of the two episodes that focus on suffering.

⁸ Lewis maintains that the "Nietzschean title is only skimpily fulfilled in the story" (*Biography* 296). In his edition of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Kaufmann notes the several appearances of the term in Nietzsche's writings, and then attempts to defend him from charges of racism and ultra-nationalism. Kauffman quotes his own book (chapter 7, section III), for example: "The 'blond beast' is not a racial concept and does not refer to the 'Nordic race' of which the Nazis later made so much. Nietzsche specifically refers to Arabs and Japanese [...]" and the

(Continued on page 18)

(Continued from page 17)

'blondness' presumably refers to the beast, the lion" (40-41, note 3). Even early in the century, however, well before World War I or II the term was controversial.

⁹ Nietzsche makes a great deal of the contrast between the physiological and psychological conditions of health (which are characteristics of vital individuals and cultures) and of sickness (characteristic of decadent persons and cultures).

¹⁰ Alexander Nehamas writes: "The will to power is an activity that consists in expanding a particular sphere of influence, physical or mental, as far as it can possibly go" (80).

¹¹ Many of Nietzsche's comments are, of course, extremely critical, even contemptuous, about organized religion, particularly Christianity, whose values represent the morality of the "herd." On the other hand, in passages such as the following, entitled "When the 'masters' could also become Christians," he discusses the potential usefulness of religion: "Likewise, it lies in the instincts of the rulers (be they individuals or classes) to patronize and applaud the virtues that make their subjects useful and submissive" (WP 127). Later in the same passage he asserts: "in short [...] Christians are easier to rule than non-Christians."

Complaining about his son and his wish to give up his Bible Class, Spence says to Millner "And it's Draper's duty, as the son of a wealthy man, and the prospective steward of a great fortune, to elevate the standards of other young men--of young men who haven't had his opportunities. The rich ought to preach contentment, and to set the examples themselves[...]. We ought to be cheerful, and accept things as they are--not go about sowing dissent and restlessness" (143).

¹² About altruism Nietzsche writes: "where the individual seeks a value for himself only in the service of others, one can be certain that exhaustion and degeneration are present. An altruistic disposition, genuine and without tartuffery, is an instinct for creating at least a secondary value for oneself in the service of other egotisms. Usually, however, altruism is only apparent; a detour to the preservation of one's own feeling of vitality and value" (WP 413).

¹³ Nietzsche frequently speaks of the need for powerful men to wear masks, so as to escape being limited by the "herd": "what is noble"--that one constantly has to play a part (WP 498). Later he writes: "Often they [great men] have been capable of masterly dissimulation and assumed the outward forms and gestures of great virtues. Often they handled virtue seriously and with a passionate hardness against themselves" (WP 507). In addition to Nehamas, among the other Nietzschean scholars whose work has been helpful to me are Kaufmann, Ackermann, and Bernstein. Bernstein's study contains, I think, a balanced evaluation of Nietzsche.

¹⁴ "'Useful' in the sense of Darwinist biology means

proved advantageous in the struggle with others. But it seems to me that the feeling of increase, the feeling of becoming stronger, is itself, quite apart from any usefulness in the struggle, the real progress" (WP 344).

¹⁵ "Napoleon: insight that the higher and the terrible man necessarily belong together[...]the most powerful instinct, that of life itself, the lust to rule affirmed" (WP 526).

¹⁶ Early in section IV Millner thinks patronizing thoughts about Draper: "Draper, dear lad, had the illusion of an 'intellectual sympathy' between them; but that, Millner knew, was an affair of reading and not of character" (147). Throughout this section, however, there are several suggestions that Draper may not be the lovable but also feckless and unfocused person that both Millner and his father believe him to be. As the scene progresses, for example, Draper loses his usual self-deprecating, fumbling manner, and pushes Hugh hard about Mr. Spence's possible dishonesty. Moreover, as Draper takes control of the interview, Hugh twice is surprised to observe resemblances between Draper's language and that of his father "making a statement to a committee meeting" (148-49). Perhaps, therefore, readers are being invited to discern that beneath Draper's "shy shamle and wistful smile" (147), there is another "overman" beginning to develop. Nietzsche writes: "The sublime man has the highest value, even if he is terribly delicate and fragile, because an abundance of very difficult and rare things has been bred and preserved through many generations" (WP 518). Because events are filtered through Millner's consciousness, however, Wharton makes it almost impossible to decide whether or not these hints are intended to suggest the presence of a third "blond beast" in the story.

¹⁷ I think this "pain" is probably real. Draper, however, may be using his intuition about Hugh's probable response to the pain to save his father, because Draper realizes that Hugh knows enough to destroy Mr. Spence's reputation.

¹⁸ "This universal love of men is in practice the preference for the suffering, underprivileged, degenerate: it has in fact lowered and weakened the strength, the responsibility, the lofty duty to sacrifice men" (WP 142).

¹⁹ Wharton saw in Nietzsche resemblances to her much admired Walt Whitman and also to Emerson, whom she believed to have influenced Nietzsche (see *Biography* 236, and Singley 19-20). At the end of the story, Millner's optimistic self-confidence is suggestive of all three men.

²⁰ See Lewis, *Biography*, chapter V, "The War Years: 1913-1918". Lewis writes, "She would never be again reconciled to modern Germany, nor ever bring herself to visit the country again" (393-94). He mentions as well, however, that in the winter of 1917, when her spirits were at the lowest ebb, she reaffirmed her loyalty to the older German literature, such as that of Goethe and Schiller.

²¹ Chapter Ten, "The 'men of 1914' and Nietzsche," of

(Continued on page 19)

(Continued from page 18)

Bridgwater's book contains abundant evidence of the anti-Nietzschean feelings of the time. He mentions, for example, that "the First World War was actually dubbed the 'Euro-Nietzschean' war by a bookseller in the Strand" (143), and that H.L. Mencken, "America's foremost Nietzschean, was actually arrested after being denounced as an agent of 'the German monster, Nietzsche'" (145).

²² Nietzsche goes so far as to write: "the healthy should be segregated from the sick, guarded even from the sight of the sick, that they may not confound themselves with the sick" (GM 124).

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ERRATUM

Please note that the Spring 1999 issue of the *Edith Wharton Review* was misnumbered Volume XVI, No. 1. It should have been Volume XV, No. 1.

Notes and Queries: New Feature

If you have a brief note or question about Edith Wharton or her work, please send it to the Editor for possible publication in this new column.

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The stage setting was a cleverly designed set of slatted walls which, with the aid of slide projections, adapted to form outdoor scenes, Lawyer Royall's home, and the North Dormer library where Charity works. Charity, who hates books, in one library scene is shown cataloging volumes such as *Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Scarlet Letter*. With the exception of a solo scene in her bedroom, Charity seems to lack psychological depth; her behavior at times seemed like that of a bored, rebellious teenager. She sings three romantic duets with Lucius. Perhaps the least characteristic of the spirit of Wharton's work is the Fourth of July celebration during which Charity and Lucius sing extremely lyrical lines--sounding a bit too-Broadwayish--framed by the vulgar comments of a prostitute and the curses of Lawyer Royall.

In this production, Lawyer Royall's character seems to be driven, at least at the beginning of the opera, by lust for his young ward, especially when Lucius Harney, sung by Michael Chioldi, appears on the scene. After the pregnant Charity has been deserted by her young lover, however, the judge's character seems to mature and, in a Whartonian act of renunciation, Royall spends their wedding night sleeping in a chair while the expectant Charity continues to dream of Lucius. The opera's final image is much more tragic than Wharton's novel implies.

Carole Shaffer-Koros

REVIEW

Paulus Opera Based on *Summer*

Performed at Pittsfield

Late this summer, the Berkshire Opera Company presented the world premier of the specially commissioned opera *Summer* by composer Stephen Paulus and lyricist Joan Vail Thorne. Limited to four performances, the opera was sung by an outstanding cast, with Charity Royall performed by mezzo-soprano Margaret Lattimore and Lawyer Royall impressively sung by bass-baritone John Cheek. Drawing audiences from far and wide, for each performance the 500-seat Koussevitzky Arts Center at the Berkshire Community College was a complete sell-out. The audience's appreciation for this artistic translation of Edith Wharton's novella was enhanced by an informative, slide-illustrated pre-performance lecture by Scott Marshall, Associate Director of the Edith Wharton Restoration.

Edith Wharton Panels at Chicago MLA

Edith Wharton and Female Homoeroticism

30 December 8:30-9:45 AM, Field, Hyatt Regency
Moderator, Annette Zilversmit, Long Island U.

1. "Paris Murders and Lesbian Panic: Historicizing 'All Souls.'" Annette Zilversmit, Long Island U.
2. "Suppressing the Love of Women: Misdirected Desire in *The House of Mirth* and *Dora*." Lisa Sewell, Villanova U.
3. "Homoerotics via Heterotics: Edith Wharton's *The Mother's Recompense*." Radhika Mohanram, U. of Waikato, NZ.

Public and Private Spaces in Edith Wharton

29 December 12:00-1:15 pm, Atlanta, Hyatt Regency
Moderator, Jean Franz Blackall, Emerita, Cornell U.

1. "The Publicity of the Private." Mark Eaton, Oklahoma City U.
2. "Thresholds: Edith Wharton's 'Pomegranate Seed.'" Jeffrey A. Weinstock, George Washington U.
3. "'At Home in the Great World': Public and Private Spaces in Wharton's Fiction." Ann Gaylin, Yale U.