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ALA MEET IN SAN DIEGO

The fifth annual American Literature Association Conference will take place June 2-5, 1994 in San Diego. The ALA is primarily composed of American author societies. The conference will be held at the Bahia Resort. Information about the conference and about joining the ALA (\$10) can be obtained from Professor Alfred Bendixen, English Department, California State Univ., 5151 State University Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90032-8110. Two sessions and one seminar on Edith Wharton will be held. An informal meeting of the Edith Wharton Society will also take place.

Thursday, June 2, 3:00-4:20

EDITH WHARTON: MORAL AND MANNERS

Chair: John J. Murphy, Brigham Young Univ.

1. "Justice to Lily Bart: Aeschylus and Wharton's 'Furies,'" Carol J. Singley, Rutgers Univ. Camden
2. "*Ethan Frome* and the Morality of Inertia," Helen Killoran, Ohio University, Lancaster
3. "A Missing Link, Women's Morals: Wharton and (R)evolutionary Theory," Sandra Hayes, Univ. of Notre Dame
4. "Wharton, Nietzsche and the Thematics of Moral Freedom," Sharon Shaloo, Indiana Univ., Bloomington

Friday, June 3, 1:00-2:00

EDITH WHARTON'S LEGACY

Chair: Susan Goodman, University of Delaware

1. "Edith Wharton's Gift to Nella Larsen: *The House of Mirth* and *Quicksand*," Meredith Goldsmith, Columbia University.
2. "The Evolution of the Lily: Wharton's Legacy to the Modernist Fiction of Virginia Woolf," Anne Meade Stockdell, Georgia State University
3. "Thwarted Escapes: *Ethan Frome* and Jean Stafford's 'A Country Love Story,'" Elsa Nettels, College of William and Mary
4. "The Flowers That We Pick: The Gardens of Edith Wharton and Alice Walker," Mia Manzulli, New York University

Friday, June 3, 12:00-12:50

SEMINAR: *THE AGE OF INNOCENCE*

Chair: Annette Zilversmit, Long Island Univ., Brooklyn

No papers given: audience limited to 15

Friday, June 3, 8:30-9:30

MEETING OF EDITH WHARTON SOCIETY

A breakfast meeting of the Edith Wharton Society will take place in the Bahia Dining Room starting at 8:30. Among other issues to be discussed will be plans for the 1995 ALA meeting in Baltimore. One session's topic and panel organizer will be chosen from the members of the Edith Wharton Society attending. So be prepared to offer topic for election. To assure seating try to call Helen Killoran at Bahia before meeting.

THE MOUNT MOUNTS LECTURE SERIES

For the second year a lecture series featuring leading women scholars on Edith Wharton will be held every Monday afternoon at The Mount, Lenox, Massachusetts. Organized and sponsored by The Edith Wharton Restoration, private administrators of Wharton's former summer estate, the nine lectures are called "Women on Women" begin at 4 p.m. and cost \$15 which includes afternoon tea following each lecture. There is limited seating, reservations are required and subscription tickets for series are available. For information and reservations call (413) 637-1899. The schedule is as follows:

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|-----------|--|
| July 4 | Blanche Wiesen Cook - <i>"Beyond Old New York - Eleanor Roosevelt: Politics and Power"</i> |
| July 11 | Cynthia Griffin Wolff - <i>"When Film Fails Edith Wharton"</i> |
| July 18 | Jacqueline Smethurst - <i>"Encountering Wharton in the 1960's: An Englishwomen's Perspective"</i> |
| July 25 | Elizabeth Ammons - <i>"The Color of Whiteness: Edith Wharton and the Subject of Race"</i> |
| August 1 | Pauline Metcalf - <i>"Edith Wharton and Design: The Unspoken Language of Rooms"</i> |
| August 8 | Shari Benstock - <i>"Edith Wharton and the Myth of the Mentally-Ill Woman Writer"</i> |
| August 15 | Janet Goodwyn - <i>"A 'Twilight Sleep' or Picturing Wharton's Alternative American Self"</i> |
| August 22 | Candace Waid - <i>"Taking One's Life: Wharton and the Ends of Writing"</i> |
| August 29 | Jewelle Gomez - <i>"In the Spirit and in the Flesh: Wharton's Stories of the Supernatural and Sensuality"</i> |

“Forbidden Things”: Gothic Confrontation with the Feminine in “The Young Gentlemen” and “Bewitched”

by *Kathy A. Fedorko*

Wharton succinctly captures the essence of the Gothic in her description, in *A Motor-Flight Through France*, of Beauvais cathedral as “an example of what the Gothic spirit, pushed to its logical conclusion, strove for: the utterance of the unutterable.” This “Kubla Khan of architecture” seems, Wharton muses, like “some climax of mystic vision, miraculously caught in visible form” (17, 16). Wharton’s language in this response illuminates the role of the Gothic in her fiction. As a means for exploring areas of experience beyond the realistically expected and accepted, Wharton’s Gothic allows her to press the limits of rationality, to utter the unutterable about sexuality, rage, death, fear, and the nature of women and men.¹

Gothic art is noted for its agitated, restless, intense straining against limitations, whether sexual, religious, psychological, social, or physical. In expanding the observer’s/reader’s sense of reality, the Gothic intensifies consciousness of the world both within the mind and beyond the real, “the world of the supernatural, of forces beyond reason, knowledge, and control” (Bayer-Berenbaum 65). A literature of disorienting extremes, the Gothic encourages its readers to enter their fears and know them viscerally. One of the most fundamental fears derives from gender identity and the mutual terror, anxiety, and dread women and men arouse in one another. The Gothic both mimics and amplifies stereotypical gender roles and the conflict inherent in their idealization (Day 5).²

In matters pertaining to the sexes, Wharton talked and wrote sometimes like a misogynist, sometimes like a misandrist, often like an essentialist. In *French Ways and Their Meaning* she denigrates women.³ But in her letters, diaries, and fiction, and in her conversations remembered by others, she can seem as uncomfortable with aloofness, control, and rationality, traits she typically accords men, as she can with vulnerability, passivity, and submission to objectification, traits she typically accords women. Her contradictory views of women and men, feminine and masculine, reflect a complicated interweaving of family and social environment, historical time, and individual psychology. One result of this ambivalence is that those

who knew her and those who now read and write about her views on gender reflect similar contradictions. According to her contemporaries, Wharton might be a “very good friend” to her female friends or she might prefer men to women, depending on whom one believes.⁴ Her fiction might be pervaded by “a profound misogyny” or distorted by misandry, she might fear and reject the “feminine-maternal” or yearn for maternal nurturance, depending on which critic one reads.⁵

The Gothic served Wharton well as a kind of psychic theater, a means for dramatizing the conflict between female and male selves in a “dialogue with the unconscious” (Wehr 58). She uses traditional Gothic elements in her stories and novels and also revises them to suit her fictional aims. The captive woman under threat and the brutish, sexually threatening man appear in Wharton’s Gothic, but they are modified and modulated throughout her career as she uses the form to explore and expand the nature of feminine and masculine ways of being and knowing. Key characters in the Gothic fiction often go through a traumatic “coming-to-awareness” process, a revision of their sense of who they are, particularly as women and men, and how they relate to their accustomed world.⁶ Usually the process is initiated by an uncanny or supernatural encounter in a mysterious house, which can serve as an emblem for a character’s inner life. The house in turn is often beset by symbolic weather — heavy fog, rain or snow — emphasizing psychic isolation.

In coming to awareness, characters are often threatened by the abyss of their inner darkness where they confront fearful qualities that Wharton associates with the feminine: vulnerability and overwhelmingness but also receptivity, eroticism, intuitiveness, fierceness, mysteriousness. As often as characters become aware of these fears, the awareness is suppressed or denied. Such suppression and denial are at work in “The Young Gentlemen,” a story whose narrator and male protagonist manifest intense discomfort with the feminine as they experience it. “Bewitched,” in contrast, plays with the nature of the masculine by portraying a male character whose acknowledgment of and respect for the

intuitive and mysterious encourage him to stay open to female power and alternative ways of knowing and being, such as those possessed by witches.

The Gothic house in "The Young Gentlemen" is an isolated "foursquare and stern" one owned by Waldo Cranch, "built of a dark mountain granite" standing at "the far end of the green, where the elms were densest and the village street faded away between blueberry pastures and oak woods."⁷ The remoteness of the house in Harpleton, a small New England town which prides itself on its remoteness from modernity and change, encourages the reader to expect that the house hides a secret. The expectation is tickled by the detail that all the front doors in the town are kept unlocked except Cranch's, which his servant Catherine keeps "chained and bolted" (HB 50). We then know that Cranch is suppressing his essential self and is being supported in it by his servant.

The unaware male narrator, a familiar element in Wharton's Gothic, is especially obtuse and supercilious in "The Young Gentlemen" about kinds of knowledge other than his own, particularly the intuitive.⁸ This is quickly apparent when he discounts the observations of his old aunt Lucilla Selwick, who, he says, "remembered heaps and heaps of far-off things; but she always remembered them wrongly" (34). Though he concludes "It will be seen that Aunt Lucilla's reminiscences . . . were neither accurate nor illuminating," we eventually learn that exactly the reverse is true (36, ellipsis mine). Lucilla's memory of Waldo Cranch moving into town with a black-and-white hobbyhorse on top of his belongings is accurate, just as her story of a woman's premonition of her husband's death is probably true. The narrator's "ancient relative," as he refers to her, "propped up in her bed and looking quietly into the unknown while all the village slept," might well be considered the town's "witch," the source of ancient female wisdom and (in)sight that the narrator can't or, more accurately, won't accommodate into his frame of reference (60).

Characteristically, the narrator is irritated and condescendingly scornful when Mrs. Durant, a close companion of Waldo Cranch, recounts Cranch's horrified anger at having a picture of the back of his house's wing appear in an illustrated magazine and when she empathizes with his response. "That there should be grown-up men who could lose their self-command over such rubbish, and women to tremble and weep with them!" the narrator sneers. "The truth was, I had never thought of Cranch as likely to lose his balance over trifles. He had never struck me as unmanly" (55). His reaction neatly encapsulates his stereotypical views of men and women, views that the story undermines.

The narrator is also reticent about going to Cranch's house with Mrs. Durant, when she urges him to accom-

pany her because she fears that Cranch has done something desperate. Not surprisingly he recoils when he sees Waldo Cranch's two dwarf twin sons, the secret Cranch has been hiding in the wing of his house. Although the narrator is named one of the guardians of the twins when Cranch commits suicide, he never sees them again and hopes he never will, "certainly I shall not if I can help it . . ." he tells us in the flashback that begins the story (33). He admits that "most men are cowards about calamities of that sort, the irremediable kind that have to be faced anew every morning," while "It takes a woman to shoulder such a lasting tragedy," but he discounts Mrs. Durant's doing just such accepting (72). "Would you have believed it? She wanted it — the horror, the responsibility and all," he recounts incredulously. "I believe she saw Cranch's sons every day. I never went back there" (77). The nonsequitor with which he ends the story, "Women are strange. I am their other guardian; and I have never yet had the courage to go down to Harpleton and see them," emphasizes his obtuseness about his emotional cowardice (78).⁹ He both refuses to integrate emotional demands and "difference" into his life and refuses to credit women for their greater courage in doing so.

The narrator's fear of vulnerability, of the emotional engagement that the house interior elicits, is also a characteristic of Waldo Cranch, the protagonist of "The Young Gentlemen." Descended from a prosperous merchant family, Cranch is now part of the social power structure in his town. As a painter, he is the socially prominent yet controlled artist. Though "hail and hearty and social," the cordiality is "studied" (36, 38). Most apparent are qualities he shares with his house: "aloofness," "isolation," and "remoteness" (41, 42). His sternly self-imposed punctiliousness and self-control suggest that Cranch is keeping his vulnerability suppressed.

Rather than enacting this suppression by holding a woman captive, however, as other men before him have done in Wharton's Gothic stories, Cranch is hiding his dwarf twin sons, "two tiny withered men, with frowning foreheads under their baby curls, and heavy-shouldered middle-aged bodies" (64). Dressed in "old-fashioned round jackets and knickerbockers," they are building a house of blocks that falls to ruins when they are frightened by the appearance of the narrator and Mrs. Durant in the windowless wing of the Cranch house (63).

One of the pervasive motifs of modern Female Gothic is "discovering a truth in 'a dark secret center' and giving it grotesque form," a form that in turn serves as a "monstrous image of self" (Kahane, "Maternal" 244, 245). Wharton's use of hidden dwarf twins in "The Young Gentlemen" complicates both this motif and her evolving consideration of the feminine and masculine in her

Gothic fiction.

Usually such "signifies of negative identity — the freak, the dwarf, the cripple — that abound in the modern Female Gothic" are expressions of women's "disturbed sense of self" and "feeling of lack or estrangement," a sense that they are "cogenitally impaired" (Kahane, "Maternal" 244). In having Cranch blame his Spanish great-grandmother for his sons' deformity, Wharton suggests that he is refusing to claim his own sense of impairment and lack.

His is a classic case of blaming the victim, for his great-grandmother, a rich merchant's daughter who was herself physically deformed, was jilted by one man who had been commissioned, sight unseen, to marry her, and then is essentially sold off to Cranch's great-grandfather, who receives a "big slum" for his shipping business in return. Cranch's maid Catherine tells the narrator and Mrs. Durant the story of the woman's miserable life in America: "the poor misbuilt thing, it seems, couldn't ever rightly get over the hurt to her pride, nor get used to the cold climate, and the snow and the strange faces; she would go about pining for the orange flowers and the sunshine; and though she brought her husband a son, I do believe she hated him, and was glad to die to get out of Harpleton . . ." (HB 74-5).

Significantly, the other person who has told this ancestor's story is the narrator's Aunt Lucilla Selwick, who, the narrator says, always assumes an elegaic tone in talking about the "poor thing" who "never forgot the sunshine and orange blossoms" (37). Rather than being sympathetic like Lucilla, however, Catherine voices her master's misogynist rage about "that old Spanish she-devil" who "brought the curse on us" (71).

Only Lucilla the wise-woman, the purveyor of uncanny knowledge, recognizes the pain and anger of the woman who survives as a painting on Cranch's wall, "very short and thickset, with a huge wig of black ringlets, a long harsh nose, and one shoulder perceptibly above the other," the image of a "swart virago" in the narrator's words (37). Physically "unwomanly," even witch-like, in appearance, she is the ultimate "Other" in the patriarchy of Cranch's family. A foreigner used for her wealth, she is then despised and feared as an Eve-like originator of the family's "curse," their stunted progeny. Although Catherine says that Cranch despises his great-grandfather more than he hated "the Spanish woman," because his great-grandfather married "that twisted stick for her money, and put her poisoned blood in us!" the hatred is expressed in terms of the woman's body, "that twisted stick" and "her poisoned blood" (75).

In this powerful signification, the family history is built on the domination of a woman, treated as a commodity, whose rage, despair and humiliation stunts her

individuality. Such an "unwomanly woman" is considered evil incarnate. Yet ignoring her victimization results in the stunting of the men who carry on such a history. The two frail "little creatures" in their old-fashioned clothing tell us there is no future in such outmoded views of women and men, just as their collapsed house of blocks visualizes the collapsed male self Cranch has tried to maintain by keeping his sons a secret and hating the female body they represent for him (65). The horror of grotesque beings, after all, is not that they are otherworldly but that they are "disturbingly familiar" (Bayer-Berenbaum 62).¹⁰

In keeping the door to the Cranch house bolted and promising to keep Cranch's secret, the servant Catherine upholds the patriarchal tradition, a culture that suppresses emotional reality, feels shame about vulnerability, despises femaleness. Cranch's servant also provides the narrator and Mrs. Durant with the illogical reason for Cranch's suicide after the twins' existence threatens to become public knowledge: "He rushed out and died sooner than have them seen, the poor lambs" (HB 67-8). Of course rather than preventing the twins from being seen, Cranch's suicide only saves him the emotional pain of having to live with the experience.¹¹ Like the narrator, Cranch is unable to face this assault on his sense of a coherent male self and world that the dwarfs represent.¹²

Mrs. Durant, who has been Cranch's close companion and would-be lover, also has, like Catherine, supported him in his accustomed role as unemotional town father. "I'm always sorry to see him lose his self-control," she tells the narrator after Cranch leaves her house furious because the architect who sneaks in to sketch the back of his house, and therefore intrude on his secret life, is the one she originally brought to meet Cranch (53). Still she has the courage and will to enter Cranch's house after she gets a mysterious "good-bye note from him and like Catherine, responds with sympathy to the dwarfs rather than horror, as the narrator does. While he plans to never see them again, admitting with inadvertent irony that "I hadn't the heart to go to that dreadful house again," Mrs. Durant devotes her life to their care (73). Although she seems to have played a traditionally compliant female role in her relationship with Cranch, her immediate sympathy for his deformed children suggests that she has sensed Cranch's vulnerability despite his attempt to hide it. Strong individuals, "The Young Gentlemen" suggests, incorporate their inner life and female heritage into their daily lives while those steeped in the patriarchy turn from both in fear and horror.

"Bewitched" contains a significant breakthrough in the creation of the male character through whose consciousness the story is told. Rather than fearing and dismissing experience and knowledge that fall outside his

restricted sense of what being masculine involves, as the narrator in "The Young Gentlemen" does, Orrin Bosworth in "Bewitched" acknowledges, respects, and accepts feminine power.

Orrin is an imaginative man, the youngest and most communicative of the three who arrive at the Rutledge home to investigate Mrs. Rutledge's charge that her husband has been bewitched into having an affair with a ghost. An entrepreneurial farmer, his success has given him community status as a Selectman of the town. But, as we are told, he had been born "under the icy shadow of Lonetop," the local mountain, and "the roots of the old life were still in him" (HB 103, 104). For Orrin, possessing "the roots of the old life" means believing in "things below the surface of his thoughts, things which stole up anew, making him feel that all the old people he had known, and who 'believed in these things,' might after all be right" (105-6). "These things" include witchcraft and the power of witches, which intrigue Orrin.

His open-mindedness has come, at least in part, the story suggests, from his twice-yearly visits as a child to his great-aunt Cressidora Cheney, "shut up for years in a cold clean room with iron bars in the windows" on a bleak hill farm (104). During one memorable visit to his relative, who is kept imprisoned "like a canary bird" he tells his mother, he brings a canary in a wooden cage to make her happy. "The old woman's motionless face lit up when she saw the bird," we are told, but the shadow of the woman's bony hands startles the bird into frantic fluttering, precipitating an act that the young Orrin remembers afterward with its "deep fringe of mystery, secrecy and rumor" (104-5). At the sight of the frightened bird,

Aunt Cressidora's calm face suddenly became a coil of twitching features. "You she-devil, you!" she cried in a high squealing voice; and thrusting her hand into the cage she dragged out the terrified bird and wrung its neck. She was plucking the hot body, and squealing "she-devil, she-devil!" as they drew little Orrin from the room. On the way down the mountain his mother wept a great deal, and said: "You must never tell anybody that poor Auntie's crazy, or the men would come and take her down to the asylum at Starkfield, and the shame of it would kill us all. Now promise." The child promised. (105)

Much is suggested by this interpolated tale: a woman "shut up for years" in cold isolation, imprisoned, the "iron bars in the windows" tell us, because she is "crazy." In killing the lively bird Aunt Cressidora kills the "witch,"

the natural being, as her own nature has been killed. Her life is a secret kept from men, because, were they to know about it, they would imprison her more cruelly.

The setting and the woman's killing of the bird echo Susan Glaspell's "A Jury of Her Peers," published in 1917, eight years before "Bewitched." In Glaspell's short story Minnie Foster Wright is in jail, accused of strangling her husband with a rope. When the isolated, lonely Wright house is visited by the Sheriff, the county attorney, and their wives, the primary evidence that could indict Mrs. Wright, a strangled bird, is found by the two women. The women continue to piece together Minnie's story: the lively young woman who loves to sing becoming the lonely wife of the taciturn John Wright; Mr. Wright's probable killing of the bird, and, by extension, his wife's life spirit; and Minnie's agitated reaction, reflected in her uneven quilting stitches and her unkempt kitchen. All are clues that the women's husbands ignore as trivial. But the women know they suggest a motive, so they don't share their observations with their husbands, just as Aunt Cressidora's story is kept from "the men."

Reading "Bewitched" in the context of "A Jury of Her Peers" encourages the reader to wonder whether Aunt Cressidora may well have been *made* crazy by the isolation of the "bleak hill farm" in which she is now kept. Just as the clues to Minnie Foster's story in "A Jury of Her Peers" are trivalized by the men but interpreted by their wives, Aunt Cressidora's story is one that only those like Orrin Bosworth, open to mysterious "things below the surface of his thoughts," can understand.

In contrast to Orrin are the other men called to the Rutledge home. Deacon Hibben periodically entones "There are forbidden things" while he is being told the story of Saul Rutledge having the life sucked out of him by his ghostly lover Ora Brand.¹³ Sylvester Brand is the father of the dead Ora and another daughter, Venny, who, Orrin recalls, "ran wild on the slopes of Lonetop" while her sister is away at school and is "too wild and ignorant" to attend Ora's grave when she dies (HB 107, 108). Sylvester Brand is a Gothic villain figure, with a "heavily-hewn countenance," a "bull neck" and a "rough bullying power" (80, 117, 92). There is "something animal and primitive about him," Orrin notices, as he stands "lowering and dumb, a little foam beading the corners of that heavy purplish underlip" while he sullenly agrees to an exploration of the charges against his dead daughter (93). This animalistic quality makes the reader suspect that Brand's brutality is as much to blame as anything else for his wife having "pined away and died," his daughter Ora having "sickened and died" when she returned home from school, and his daughter Venny running "wild on the slopes of Lonetop" and then, by the story's end, dying suddenly of pneumonia (107). Indeed,

the three women's deaths recall the deaths by suicide and madness of the mother and two daughters haunted by incest in the "Beatrice Palmato" fragment.¹⁴

Just as the "Beatrice Palmato" fragment reveals Mr. Palmato's dominance over the women in his family and his control of their sexuality, Wharton uses Gothic elements in "Bewitched" to tell a story of dread and destruction of female sexuality in the form of an accused witch. Because, like traditional religion, the Gothic imagination "reverently acknowledges awesome and terrible spiritual forces operative in the world," Gothic literature draws on both religious symbols and witchcraft (Bayr-Berenbaum 34). At the same time, "the religious censorship of forbidden thoughts and behavior is most repugnant to the Gothic endeavor," as is the Christian separation between the natural and the supernatural, the "real" and the spiritual (34). So the Gothic often deliberately distorts traditional religious images and personages. Such a satirical distortion is at work in the portrayal of Deacon Hibben, with his "long face, queerly blotched and mouldy-looking, with blinking peering eyes," whose repetitive, authoritative response to the story of ghostly intercourse the Rutledges tell is, "these are forbidden things" (HB 80, 101, 102).

Even more distorted is the rigidly sanctimonious Prudence Rutledge, who adamantly believes that her husband Saul is bewitched and that, according to Exodus 22:18, Ora Brand must be destroyed with "a stake through the breast" because "*Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live*" (102, 103). Like Hawthorne's Richard Digby in "The Man of Adamant," whose religious intolerance and bigotry become part of his outward demeanor, making him look "less like a living man than a marble statue, wrought by some dark-imagined sculptor to express the most repulsive mood that human features could assume," Prudence Rutledge has eyes like "the sightless orbs of a marble statue" (Waggoner 232; HB 86). Her white face is "limited" and "fixed," and her "small narrow head," with hair "passed tight and flat over the tips of her ears into a small braided coil at the nape," is "perched on a long hollow neck with cord-like throat muscles" (83). Like Richard Digby's "marble frown," Prudence Rutledge's constricted, phallic features also reflect sexual dread and anger, evident in her barely contained rage at her husband and his spectral partner in infidelity (Waggoner 233). "Ain't I seen 'em?" she almost screams. Like her features, her solution to her rage is phallic as well, "A stake through the breast! That's the old way; and it's the only way" (HB 102).¹⁵

True to Wharton's Gothic, the coldly rigid Prudence and her "haggard wretch" of a husband, who looks like "a drowned man fished out from under the ice," live in a house that is desolate, neglected, and bitterly cold, like

both of them (92, 91). The snow, falling in a "steady unwavering sheet against the window" while the men hear the Rutledge story, is another Gothic indicator, of psychic isolation. It seems to Orrin Bosworth as if "a winding sheet were descending from the sky to envelop them all in a common grave" (96).

Orrin's awareness of death in this situation parallels his sense, as he looks at the wan, hollow-faced Saul, "sucked inward and consumed by some hidden fever," that "they were all at the moment really standing on the edge of some forbidden mystery" (94). That the "forbidden mystery" is the mystery of the feminine becomes clear as Orrin listens to Saul's story of love for Ora, blocked by her father and continued after her death in the abandoned house by the pond. In a stream of consciousness he remembers his mad Aunt Cressidora, the burning of one of Sylvester Brand's ancestors as a witch, the death of the "savage" Sylvester Brand's wife and daughter, and the "wildness" of his remaining daughter (107). These connections suggest his awareness, albeit unacknowledged, that the "forbidden mystery" involves the story of women's lives and the male power that keeps their female power restrained.

When Orrin drives by the "tumble-down house" in the hollow by the pond, where the air was "as soundless and empty as an unswung bell," he again thinks of the "dark mystery, too deep for thought" being enacted in it (113, 114). The phrase "dark mystery" recalls Wharton's reference, in her unpublished autobiography "Life and I," to the "whole dark mystery" of sexuality about which she felt "such a dread" before marriage and yet was "expressly forbidden to ask about, or even think of!" (34-5). Indeed, the female iconography of the hollow, the body of water, the deserted hut, the bell, all suggest the female sexuality embodied in the site. At the same time the "stinging wind barbed with ice flakes" prepares us for the phallic destruction of the female spirit contained in "the crazy house" (HB 113, 117).

Eventually all the men are gathered in the hollow, noticing a woman's footprints in the snow. Not surprisingly, the villain Brand is the one who, "moving on as if to an assault, his head bowed forward on his bull neck," pushes inward on the door of the house (117). When he meets with "an unexpected resistance," he thrusts his shoulder against the door, collapsing it and stumbling into the hut's darkness. As Orrin plunges into the darkness after him he sees "something white and wraithlike surge up out of the darkest corner of the hut" and hears what he soon learns is Brand's revolver going off and a cry (118).¹⁶ Though the female wraith surges, its power is countered by the powerful phallic revolver.

When we learn the next day that Vanessa Brand is dying of pneumonia, we are led to surmise that she was the

one who has been having the affair with Saul Rutledge, left the footprints in the snow, and was shot in the dark hut by her father. As her coffin is lowered into her sister's grave, however, we understand that it doesn't really matter which woman was Saul Rutledge's lover, a live woman or a ghost, nor does it matter how either died, since both girls, "the handsomest girls anywhere round," meet the same fate, their sexuality feared and their lives controlled and ultimately ended by patriarchal power.

Prudence Rutledge, who, with her religious dogmatism and frozen emotions, has internalized a "patriarchal presence," is satisfied that Ora is quieted now that "she don't lay there alone any longer" (Daly 50; *HB* 123). Orrin notes at the funeral, as Prudence's lids again remind him of marble eyeballs, that she "Looks as if the stonemason had carved her to put atop of Venny's grave" (121). But her bony bloodless hands also remind him of Aunt Cressidora's as she strangled the canary bird "because it fluttered" (121). The comparison emphasizes that Prudence, like Cressidora, has sought to kill liveliness and naturalness in another that has died in herself. Cressidora's story is also a reminder that such rigidity and cruelty have roots in suppression, shame, and unhealthy isolation.¹⁷

Orrin Bosworth, the consciousness through which the story is filtered, suggests a merging of female and male selves as Wharton defines them in her Gothic. Successful in the outside world, he also accepts and respects the mysterious inner world, below the surface of the rational mind. The etymology of his name connects him with the ghost Ora, since both names derive from the root *orare*, to speak, pray, beseech, and echo the words "oral," "oracle," and "oracular." The similarity of their names suggests that Ora and Orrin are the joint means by which the mysterious is revealed and woman's story, if not fully told, is at least acknowledged and respected.

Wharton comments, in the "Preface" to her short story collection *Ghosts*, that the ability to be aware of ghosts comes from "the warm darkness of the prenatal fluid far below our conscious reason," rather than from "a conscious act of the intellect" (vii). In his willingness to accept "things below the surface of his thoughts," Orrin faces this feminine/maternal part of himself and is an expanded, enriched male character compared to those in earlier Gothic stories.¹⁸ Wharton, in turn, can create Orrin because her Gothic fiction allows her to probe into experiences "below the surface" of realism and utter the unutterable about what she discovers.

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NOTES

¹ Several critics have seen Wharton's ghost stories as her vehicle for exploring otherwise taboo feelings and experiences. See, for example, Lewis, Joslin, Bendixen, and Gilbert and Gubar.

² Norman Holland and Leona Sherman discuss how the Gothic admits "the projection of universal psychological issues" and that it has a "gender-linked 'appeal.'" In his joint reading

of the form with Sherman, Holland demonstrates his discomfort with the vulnerability the Gothic makes him confront, a response much like that of Wharton's male characters in "The Young Gentlemen" (289, 293).

³ Julie Olin-Ammentorp discusses Wharton's "unstated belief in the fundamental inferiority of women" in her article, "Wharton's View of Women in *French Ways and Their Meaning*" (15).

⁴ Stacey and Samuels (184). Mrs. Gordon Bell in Lubbock (28).

⁵ These views are expressed, respectively, by Malcolm (11), Ammons (15), Donovan (48), and Erlich (15).

⁶ The phrase "coming-to-awareness" is Martha Banta's. In *Henry James and the Occult: The Great Extension*, Banta explains James's "new psychological gothicism," his deliberate interconnection of the supernatural with the everyday as a means of deepening his portrayal of realistic human life (60-61).

⁷ *Here and Beyond* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1926), 38. Subsequent references will be indicated in the text as *HB*.

⁸ Elsa Nettels discusses the narrator of "The Young Gentlemen" as one of many blindly arrogant male narrators in Wharton's fiction (252-3).

⁹ Barbara White points out that, since Harpledon is supposed to be north of Boston, where the narrator now lives, he should have said "up to Harpledon" rather than "down." The slip, she suggests, emphasizes the "non-ghost-seeing self" of Wharton that refuses to "go down" to see the disturbing experience (90).

¹⁰ Northrop Frye discusses dwarfs as "subintelligent and subarticulate" beings that are part of the descent theme in romance, a theme characterized by losing consciousness and descending to a lower world "which is sometimes a world of cruelty and imprisonment" and always involves a "confusion of identity" (129). As part of this theme also, twins suggest a portrayal of a dreamer and the self he is dreaming about (111). That Cranch's dwarf twin sons never leave their windowless room emphasizes their timeless, dream-like existence and Cranch's subconscious realization of his stunted masculinity.

¹¹ The practical housekeeper who relays important information of which she doesn't understand the spiritual significance is a staple in Gothic fiction (MacAndrew 135-36). Wharton makes her servants wielders of the patriarchal power of suppression. That in "The Young Gentlemen" she names the imperious servant Catherine, the first name of her dedicated housekeeper, Gross, suggests that Wharton was ambivalent about the servant's power.

¹² Kahane writes that the grotesque depends on "perceptual distortions" that "assault our sense of a coherent self and world" ("Maternal" 244) and Bayer-Berenbaum that "The grotesque insults our need for order, for classification, matching and grouping; it violates our sense of categories" (29). MacAndrew points out that "Dwarfs and hunchbacked figures, which are traditional grotesques, appear in Gothic tales and are often also doubles figures symbolizing haunting guilt, paranoia, the split personality, and madness" (161-2).

¹³ The "forbidden" echoes the "unspeakable," which is associated with the repressed. As Wolstenholme points out in her reference to Freud's "The Uncanny," the unspeakable expresses itself in uncanny recurrence and repetition (121). In this sense Ora's repeated appearances to Saul speak of the uncanny femaleness to which Freud alludes.

¹⁴ White points out that the Brand family "has been founded on incest or near incest," since Brand had married his cousin (104).

¹⁵ Margaret McDowell calls the stake "undoubtedly a phallic emblem" (84).

¹⁶ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's discussion, in *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, of the barrier created by the unspeakable (in this case Ora's femaleness) being "breached only at the cost of violence," especially violence at the threshold, is particularly relevant here (16, 32).

¹⁷ Jung talks about "Fascination, bewitchment, 'loss of soul,' possession" as "phenomena of the dissociation and suppression of consciousness caused by unconscious contents" (9[1]:281). In this sense Saul's bewitching might be read as a projection of Prudence's intense fear of her own femaleness.

¹⁸ Claire Kahane posits that at the center of the Gothic structure is the heroine's confrontation with the problematical mother/self ("Mirror" 336). Wharton's Gothic encompasses this view, but Wharton is also intrigued with, for reasons I discuss in my longer study, male confrontation with the feminine/maternal. Carol Singley discusses how, in the gothic tale "A Bottle of Perrier," Wharton underwrites the male homoerotic with "the female story of the mother" (287). Josephine Donovan uses the term "feminine-maternal," but she believes that Wharton perceives it more narrowly and hostilely than I believe she does, as a realm of silence, restraint, entrapment, muteness, and stasis (43-83).

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"Unearthly Visitants": Wharton's Ghost Tales, Gothic Form and The Literature of Homosexual Panic

by Richard A. Kaye

In November of 1915, the French writer André Gide was introduced to the novelist Paul Bourget, having been brought to Bourget's home at Hyères by his friend Edith Wharton. According to Gide's account in his journal, while Wharton visited the ailing Madame Bourget, Bourget escorted Gide into the garden of his estate and immediately launched into a discussion concerning the precise sexual tastes of the hero of Gide's notorious 1902 novel, *L'Immoraliste*. "Now that we're alone," began Bourget, "tell me, Monsieur Gide, whether or not your immoralist is a pederast?" Gide stumbled for an answer. "He is more likely an unconscious homosexual," Gide remembered replying with some nervousness, whereupon Bourget elaborated on a theory that all perversions fell into either one of two categories, that of masochism and sadism. In the midst of Bourget's soliloquy, Wharton returned to the room, at which point Bourget abruptly changed the subject. "I never learned," lamented Gide, "whether, according to him, the homosexual fell under the head of sadism or masochism. I was sorry that he turned the conversation into another channel: It would have amused me to have Mrs. Wharton's opinion, if she had one."¹

The question that Gide off-handedly raises, Wharton's view of "homosexuality" (strictly speaking, a category less than fifty years old when Gide and Bourget conducted their conversation), haunts biographical and critical discussions of Wharton's fiction. The novelist Eleanor Clark was the first to comment on the absence of an appreciation of the role of male homosexuality in critical considerations of Wharton. In a 1966 overview of several works of criticism on Wharton in the *New York Review of Books*, Clark observed that a "more curious omission in all these books is of the word homosexual."² Despite the emergence in the last few years of "queer studies" and an intensified focus on the subject of homosexuality as it informs literary works, criticism of Wharton's writing has not moved too far beyond the point it had reached when Clark offered her critique. Partly this is due to Wharton's own rather studied discretion on the subject of same-sex relations, most tactfully in her famously reti-

cent autobiography. Outside of her private letters, Wharton was, in keeping with the period's cautiousness on such matters, notably circumspect concerning her numerous friends who were homosexual, bisexual or, for lack of conclusive biographical evidence, what critics prefer to characterize as "sexually ambiguous."

Yet the pervasiveness of the figure of the erotically indecisive male, frequently described in criticism of Wharton's fiction as a pathologically immature bachelor or the "unsatisfactory male," parallels the ubiquity of homosexually inclined men in Wharton's Paris circle, a group she referred to with evident affection as "The Brotherhood."³ "The Brotherhood" included what we might characterize as the period's usual suspects: among others, Gide, Walter Berry, Howard Sturgis, Henry James, Jean Cocteau, the Bostonian Cambridge don Gaillard Lapsley, and Robert d'Humières. Under this coy rubric Wharton might have included her friend and lover Morton Fullerton, bisexual dynamo and cad, whom the novelist first met in the spring of 1908. In his 1975 biography, R.W.B. Lewis observed that Wharton's view of homosexual men, on whom she casts a "generally knowing and tolerant eye," demonstrated a "predictable inconsistency."⁴ On the one hand, Wharton's friendship with men such as Sturgis, who lived until his death with his life-long companion William Haynes Smith, was devoted and enduring. Yet she remarked to John Hugh Smith that a new friend looked rather like "a homo" and that the man "was certainly swamped in sex, and will probably *untergehen* to that."⁵ It is likely that Wharton's ambivalence was entangled with her feelings during and after her intense if attenuated affair with Morton Fullerton.⁶ Of the author's five ghost tales probing homosexual relations, at least two, "Afterward" (1910) and "The Eyes" (1910), were published in the period immediately following Wharton's romantic break-up with Fullerton. A key figure in "The Eyes" is "Phil Frenham," a name phonetically close to Fullerton's, who is drawn into an older gentleman's circle of bachelor "recruits" and who is haunted by a "strange personal visitation."

Edith Wharton's attitude towards sexually ambiguous

men was bifurcated according to literary game. Her novels depict masculine erotic ambiguity as an artfully managed, often flirtatious indecision, most notably in *The House of Mirth* (1905) and *The Age of Innocence* (1920) but also, in *The Reef* (1912), through an attempt, altogether original in a literary epoch still largely devoted to the social effects of female sexual transgression, to assemble an entire plot pivoting on the *donnée* of a man's guilt over an embarrassing erotic past. As Lewis has argued, through the figures of Anna Leath and George Darrow of *The Reef* Wharton was able to express her ambivalence concerning the changeable Fullerton, whom Darrow so resembles in a number of details.⁷ It was through her ghost tales, however, that the author most thoroughly dealt with the subject of homoerotic carnality. Wharton, who once decried what she termed a "now-that-it-can-be-told-school" of literature of the post-Victorian era confronting sexual issues with excessive explicitness, chose gothic fiction as usefully evasive.⁸ In the aftermath of the landmark 1885 Labouchère amendment outlawing homosexual activity between men in Britain, same-sex relations took on new literary interest for a number of authors. As we shall see, such preoccupations held for Edith Wharton, perhaps more than for any other female writer of the period, notable personal reverberations. In addition, Wharton chose the structure of her favorite myth from antiquity, that of Persephone, to underpin her gothic narratives of men sequestered from their heterosexual marriages to a hidden netherworld.

A considerable body of criticism devoted to gothic texts in the last several years has argued that gothic is a transhistorically "transgressive" mode, radically destabilizing of the coherent subject. In his recent *Gothic Writing, 1750-1820: A Genealogy*, Robert Miles refers to the "broad agreement that the Gothic represents the subject in a state of deracination, of the self finding itself dispossessed in its own house, in a condition of rupture, disjunction, fragmentation."⁹ Yet if gothic has an "an ideology of form" (to borrow Frederic Jameson's familiar term), it more accurately might be characterized as an inherently conservative mode, or at least one that, while undermining the coherence of the individual subject, ultimately retreats from a full engagement with the disjunctive condition it initially seeks to expose. Highly ambivalent in its social attitudes, gothic texts typically exhibit, as Elizabeth Napier asserts in her study of the eighteenth-century gothic novel, a collective failure of nerve.¹⁰ More specifically, *fin-de-siècle* "homosexual gothic" coincided with, and tacitly reacted against, the emerging scientific conceptualization of homosexual desire as it was being formulated by late-Victorian sexologists such as Havelock Ellis and Richard Kraft-Ebing.¹¹

Drawn to the newly salient thematics of homosexuality, the gothic fictions of Wilde, Stevenson, and Wharton express a profound anxiety of a historical reversion. Contained within gothic is a continual fear, as Chris Baldick notes, before "the nagging possibility that the despotisms buried by the modern age may prove to be yet undead."¹² If sexual modernists such as Kraft-Ebing, Ellis and Freud were determined to elucidate homosexual "neurosis" within the intensified scope of scientific inquiry, texts such as Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* obliquely intimated that an older, religious, supernatural law prevails on such questions. In a paradox one continually finds in Wharton's ghost tales, gothic tropes at once substantiate the claims of psychological modernism in destabilizing a coherent subject and undermine any claim of elucidating a final, empirically verifiable psychological truth. Whereas late-Victorian aestheticism tended to displace the subject of homosexuality historically and geographically (in, for example, Pater's idealization of the Rome of Marcus Aurelius in *Marius the Epicurean* or John Addington Symonds' Christian-Apollonian aesthetic as outlined in *The Renaissance in Italy*), Stevenson and Wilde unsentimentally insinuated that homosexuality might violently invade the present, emerging from a man's unresolved, insufficiently buried sexual past.¹³

While not all ghost stories may be classified as gothic and not all gothic texts have a ghostly dimension, the ghost tales of Stevenson, Wilde, and Wharton all borrow substantially from the storehouse of traditional gothic. Steeped in the preoccupations of *fin-de-siècle* writing, Wharton's tales are also situated within the tradition of female gothic explored by feminist critics such as Ellen Moers, Sandra Gilbert, Susan Guber and Margaret Anne Doody.¹⁴ Wharton employs the imagery of enclosure and escape typical of female gothic made familiar by, among other novelists, Radcliffe, Mary Shelley, and Emily Brontë, which characteristically represents distinctly female problems of constricted social, sexual and authorial roles. Mary Boyne of Wharton's "Afterward" and Charlotte Asby of "Pomegranate Seed" frantically defend a domestic sphere from the threat of an alien desire that takes human form, "an unearthly visitant" who disturbs both the husband's identity as a heterosexual spouse and his wife's domestic haven, figured in both tales as pre-modern. Whereas Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* situate the theme of repressed same-sex desire in homosocial urban contexts in which female characters are given subsidiary roles (the abandoned fiancé Sybil Vane in *Dorian Gray*, the housekeeper Mary Reilly in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*), Wharton's gothic tales position the female at the center of narrative consciousness as

Wharton focuses on heterosexual marital relations "defiled" by same-sex desire. In doing so, Wharton updated gothic fiction's traditional emphasis on what Ian Duncan had termed "contaminated genealogies, in plots that turn upon usurped patrimony, incest, lost relations; in characterizations of psychological repression."¹⁵ Recasting gothic conventions for an era of intensified male homosexual panic, Wharton's stories additionally assimilate late-Victorian anxiety that middle-class husbands might visit lower-class prostitutes and thereby infect their wives with venereal disease. Wharton's tales of interrupted heterosexual domesticity were thus innovative revisions not only of female gothic and the gothic of *fin-de-siècle* "homosexual panic." They also revised narratives of late-Victorian "sexual danger" recently explored by the historian Judith Walkowitz.¹⁶

In all of Wharton's ghost stories obliquely taking up homosexual subject matter, same-sex desire is either geographically located in "primitive" Africa or displaced spatially in an indirectly evoked occult subterranean realm. Eschewing a direct representation of homosexual eros, these ghost tales favor a deliberate evasiveness. As Allen Gardner Smith notes of Wharton's ghost stories generally, the tales achieve what the critic Tzvetan Todorov's defines as a necessary component of the "uncanny": a continual transition from supernatural to natural events. As such, the ghost tales are "able to penetrate into the realm of the *unseen*, that is, into the area that her society preferred to be unable to see, or to construe defensively as super (i.e.) not natural." Curiously, given this statement, Smith does not discuss any of Wharton's ghost tales in terms of their homosexual subtexts.¹⁷ With a direct attention to homosexual themes, Carol J. Singley persuasively claims that "A Bottle of Perrier," (1926) "The Triumph of the Night" (1914) and "The Eyes" (1910), all equate homosexuality with "selfishness, with decadence, and with a vampirish tendency in the older man to prey on the younger." According to Singley, in their depiction of male homosexual panic through the use of female gothic conventions, these tales suggest that homosexual relations "correspond to the unequal power relations that exist between men and women — one member aggressive and controlling, the other passive and vulnerable." Singley contends that these stories demonstrate that "male power is dominating; homosexual or homoerotic relations reflect that imbalance of power and the necessary subjection of one individual to the other." Singley's analysis only addresses those of Wharton's homosexually thematized ghost tales set in all-male environs.¹⁸

Wharton's five "homosexual" ghost tales fall into two distinct categories; The first group includes "The Eyes," and "The Triumph of the Night," situated in the smoke-

filled drawing rooms of London and New England homes, as well as "A Bottle of Perrier," set in the desert of North Africa. Despite their wide-ranging geographical locales, these stories all take place in a what might be characterized as male clubland, where women are absent and male rivals malevolently vie for attention. This first class of stories borrow much of their spirit from Henry James' tales of implied "perverse" sexuality, most obviously "The Turn of the Screw" (1898) but also James' seldom-discussed fable of two men competing for the favors of an affluent patron, "The Light Man" (1869). The second group of Wharton stories encompasses those that explore marriages seemingly threatened by the possibility of a male outsider beckoning superficially upright husbands.

To the best of my knowledge, these last stories, specifically "Afterward" and "Pomegranate Seed" (1931), have never been closely examined in criticism of Wharton's fiction in terms of their homoerotic subtextual meaning. While, as Singley notes, ghost stories such as "A Bottle of Perrier," "The Triumph of the Night" and "The Eyes" undoubtedly draw a connection between homosexual eros and death, the dynamics animating "Afterward" and "Pomegranate Seed," whereby homosexual eros emerges from within heterosexual marriage, suggest a rather more ambivalent attitude towards same-sex desire on the author's part. In these last two tales, homosexuality is equated not so much with vampirish male power as with homoerotic "influence," a popular nineteenth-century conception of homosexual desire with origins as far back as the classical myths of Damon and Pythias and the story of Ganymede.¹⁹ Moreover, while male paramours do summon husbands to a deadly underground in these narratives, the strong connections to the myth of Persephone suggest that such summonings are at once fearful and voluntary, a psychological torture for men and for their bewildered spouses but also an otherworldly seduction. Indeed, much of the tension in "Afterward" and "Pomegranate Seed" stems from the way in which supernatural events intrude on domestic situations so banal they border on the suffocating. In one sense, then, supernatural "homosexual" incidents, rendered as opaque gothic actuality, derail the conventions of realism which Wharton embraced in her major fiction.

Wharton's depiction of homosexual desire as horrifyingly invading otherwise ordinary middle-class marriages was preceded by several literary works in other genres addressing similar themes. The first novel published in the United States or Britain that directly confronted the question of homosexuality as a distinctly social dilemma, Alfred J. Cohen's *A Marriage Below Zero* (1889), published in the United States under the pseudonym

"Alan Dale," was a first-person narrative of a wife's distressed point of view as she observes her husband succumb to the influences of a male companion.²⁰ Wharton's close friend, Howard Sturgis, anonymously published one of the earliest novels in English pointedly taking up homosexual subject matter. Sturgis's *Tim* (1891), told of a school-boy infatuation at Eton and Cambridge which is thwarted by a marriage-driven, female rival. Once acknowledged, the delicate Tim's amorous devotion to the athlete Carol goes unreciprocated and Tim dies.²¹ Sturgis's lachrymose narrative, part homosexual protest novel and autobiographical tear-jerker, is as indebted to the conventions of sentimental fiction as Cohen's work is steeped in the protocols of Victorian melodrama; just as the revelation of homosexual desire in *Tim* is followed by its hero's death, *A Marriage Below Zero* has as its finale the suicide of the errant husband, whose love of men (described as the passion of "Damon and Pythias") has been exposed in a public scandal. The husbands of "Afterward" and "Pomegranate Seed," however, are never granted a homosexual "identity" but instead are allowed a fortuitous retreat that only gothic affords: guilty of a murkily-defined crime of implied homosexual dimensions, they simply vanish.

If *Tim* and *A Marriage Below Zero* transform the suspicion of same-sex desire into same-sex spectacle, Wharton's gothic tales convert same-sex suspicion into supernatural "events." In defining homosexuality in terms of confrontations and polarizations rather than discrete identities, "Afterward" and "Pomegranate Seed" recall a pre-nineteenth-century conceptualization of homosexual desire as unconstitutive of identity. While Sturgis's and Cohen's novels both seek out a blunt representation of homosexuality in staged moments, thereby externalizing conflict, Wharton's gothic fictions constantly avoid such a forthright rendition as they continually psychologize struggle, interiorizing secrecy architecturally, as in the classic gothic texts of Walpole and Radcliffe. The manor-like houses in "Afterward," "The Eyes" and "The Triumph of the Night" present a series of interlocking interior rooms and gardens denoting a hidden reality that never can be fully construed or confronted. In "Afterward," the hidden but retrievable nature of the husband's "buried past" is encapsulated in the name of his scandal-ridden business, the "Blue Star Mine."

The twenty-year span dividing the 1910 "Afterward" and the 1931 "Pomegranate Seed" suggests the enduring interest that the subject of homosexuality as a threat to modern marriage held for Wharton. While same-sex desire between men here stands in opposition to notably female interests and is linked to a deadly fate, homosexuality also indicates an enviably sensual universe that has been denied women: patriarchy's forbidden fruit.

"Afterward" and "Pomegranate Seed" both situate the "problem" of homosexuality at the center of traditional domestic arrangements where intimations of homosexual desire have interrupted a plot of nature; significantly, both of these tales concern childless couples beholden to Old World values. In "Afterward," two Americans, Mary and Ned Boyne (his "boyish" name suggests that he is a cousin of the fortyish bachelor Martin Boyne of Wharton's 1928 novel *The Children*) arrive in Dorsetshire from a Middle Western town where Mary has dreamed of gardening and painting while Ned has planned a book on the "Economic Basis of Culture." "No existence could be too sequestered: they could not get far enough from the world, or plunge deep enough into the past." The Boynes rent a home which appeals to them because it has the "charm of having been for centuries a deep dim reservoir of life." Immediately they are warned that the house is haunted by an "unearthly visitant." The "elusive specter had apparently never had sufficient identity for a legend to crystallize about it." From the beginning of their occupancy, the ghost proves divisive, as each spouse questions whether the other has spotted the phantom. Ned Boyne sometimes flies off in pursuit without informing his wife of what he is after: "At the moment there could have nothing more natural than that Ned should dash himself from the roof in the pursuit of dilatory tradesmen. It was the period when they were always on the watch for one or the other of the specialists employed about the place." When Mary reads a newspaper story revealing that Ned has been at the center of a scandal in which he has cheated a younger man in a business deal, she aggressively interrogates her husband:

She stood before him with her undefinable terror subsiding slowly under the reassurance of his tone.

"You knew about this, then — it's all right?"

"Certainly I knew about it, and it's all right."

"But what *is* it? I don't understand. What does this man accuse you of?"

"Pretty nearly every crime in the calendar."²²

"Afterward" repeatedly implies that Ned has committed unspeakable wrongs that are at once easily identifiable and undefinable in their depravity; in the English setting of Wharton's story, "pretty nearly every crime in the calendar" would encompass the crime of same-sex activity. Although on one level Boyne's trespass is fairly explicit (he has cheated another man in a business deal), and although nothing more terrifying than a newspaper article mentioning the dispute threatens the Boynes' marriage, Mary is frightened by a terror described as "nameless." After Ned's disappearance, Mary "ransacks

her husband's papers for any trace of antecedent complications, of entanglements or complications unknown to her . . ." She gradually suspects a mysterious gentleman whom she has seen visiting Ned on the grounds of their home: "But who was he, and why had Boyne obeyed him?" Before Mary realizes that Ned has been supernaturally summoned to another realm, she chooses to rely on the police to locate him.

A confoundedly hard place to get lost in! That had been her husband's phrase. And now, with the whole machinery of official investigation sweeping its flashlights from shore to shore, and across the dividing straits; now, with Boyne's name blazing from the walls of every town and village, his portrait (how that wrung her!) hawked up and down the country like the image of a criminal; now, the little compact populous island, so policed, surveyed and administered, revealed itself as a Spinxlike guardian of abysmal mysteries, staring back into his wife's anguished eyes as if with wicked joy of knowing something they would never know!²³

The passage suggests the pervasive effects of the aggressively deployed British police network inaugurated on behalf of the Labouchère initiative, a law that branded men of same-sex preferences criminals and renders them in the popular imagination as surreptitiously, joyfully "wicked." Mary eventually learns that the young man of the business deal, Elwell, an apparent suicide, has returned in ghost form to take Ned to the underworld. "I see now." she informs one of her husband's colleagues. "[Elwell] tried to come then; but he wasn't dead enough — he couldn't reach us. He had to wait for two months to die; and then he came back again — and Ned went with him." Ned's illicit dealings with his partner have led to his disappearance; Business relations, homosocially structured, allow for the erotic procurement of Boyne by his wronged colleague. In "Afterward," the financial "cheating" of Ned Boyne's colleague leads to — and also serves as a cover for — the "cheating" of Ned Boyne's wife in supernaturalized homosexual adultery.

Significantly, when Ewell makes his single appearance in recognizably human form at the Boyne home inquiring as to Ned's whereabouts (causing Mary to direct him to her husband's study, thus inadvertently facilitating in Ned's abduction), the wronged Ewell is depicted in neutral terms. A man with a simple mission, motivated by the righting of an injustice, he has the quality of an unconscious force: "The newcomer, on seeing her, lifted his hat, and paused with the air of a gentleman — perhaps a traveler — who wishes to make it known that his intrusion is not voluntary."²⁴ Wharton continually suggests

that an involuntary influence, an external stimulus sparking a corresponding internal reactant, is the cause of Ned's disappearance. In the early days of her ghost-spotting before Ned has disappeared, Mary actually confuses her husband with the ghost who has been haunting the house.

"Did you think you'd see in?" he asked, after an appreciable interval.

"Why, I actually took you for it, my dear, in my mad determination to spot it!"

"Me — just now?" His arm dropped away, and he turned from her with a faint echo of her laugh.

"Really, dearest, you'd better give it up, if that's the best you can do."

"Oh, yes, I give it up. Have you?" she asked, turning around on him abruptly.

The parlormaid had entered with letters and a lamp, and the light struck up into Boyne's face as he bent above the tray she presented.

"Have you?" Mary perversely insisted, when the servant had disappeared on her errand of illumination.

"Have I what?" he rejoined absently, the light bringing out the sharp stamp of worry between his brows as he turned over the letters.

"Given up trying to see the ghost." Her heart beat a little at the experiment she was making.

Her husband, laying his letters aside, moved away into the shadow of the hearth.

"I never tried," he said, tearing open the wrapper of a newspaper.²⁵

This tense spousal tiff makes considerable sense in terms of a reading of "homosexual adultery" since there is no logic, even in the tale's supernatural terms, for Mary to question her husband in this fashion. The heart-speeding panic Mary experiences is inexplicable unless it is a fear that her husband is secretly pondering an illicit association. Thus the question of whether Ned has "given up seeing the ghost" that Mary "perversely" insists on in her interrogatory "experiment" is the question of whether Ned has "given up trying to see" his young friend Elwell. That Mary has confused Ned with the ghost points to an anxiety that her husband may have indeed "become" the other man, that he is linked to him through the other man's possibly erotic "influence." Interestingly, one detail in the scene above strikingly resembles an analogous moment elsewhere in Wharton's fiction in which a charge of adultery is subtly intimated. In *The Age of Innocence* (1920), Newland Archer, informed by his wife May that she has gone to speak to Ellen Olenska, moves "out of the radius" of the light from an illuminating lamp that functions as an agent of Mary's suspicions concerning her

rival Ellen.²⁶

If "Afterward" concerns, as I have been arguing, a woman's emerging realization that her husband has been "homoerotically abducted," then the title of this tale has special meaning. The warning that Mary receives from her friend Alida Stair early in "Afterward" concerning the ghosts that haunt the house — "Not til long afterward," Alida instructs Mary, will she realize that she has spotted a phantom — comes back to trouble Mary in the story's concluding lines. It is only *afterwards* that Mary Boyne realizes that her husband's real allegiance is to another man, only *afterwards* that a devoted wife grasps the "secret" of her husband's hidden sexual inclinations. The "event" antecedent to Mary's realization is not the sighting of the ghost but the marital tie itself.

The title of "Pomegranate Seed" is an obvious, never explicit reference to the Persephone myth but perhaps also to the "seed" of doubt that comes to haunt the story's heroine. The character of Charlotte Ashby becomes increasingly desperate because her husband Kenneth is receiving mysterious letters and is unaccountably absent from his office. Wharton repeatedly introduces the possibility of a homosexual paramour into what initially seems a pedestrian tale of adultery; the unknown correspondents's letters are penned in a hand whose sex for Charlotte at first remains maddeningly mysterious. The handwriting is faint, but, "inspite of its masculine curves, the writing was so visibly feminine. Some hands are sexless, some masculine." Concluding that the letters must be in a woman's hand, Charlotte confronts her husband:

"I had to find out who was writing to you, at regular intervals, in those gray envelopes."

He weighed this for a moment, then: "The intervals have not been regular," he said.

"Oh, I dare say you've kept account of the dates than I have," she retorted, her magnanimity vanishing at his tone. "All I know is that every time that woman writes to you — "

"Why do you assume it's a woman?"

"It's a woman's writing. Do you deny it?"

He smiled. "No, I don't deny it. I asked only because the writing is generally supposed to look more like a man's."²⁷

Kenneth's coy interruption of his wife's too-assumptive inquiry is a cruel red-herring, for, as we learn at the story's conclusion, the correspondent *is* a woman, Kenneth's deceased wife, Elsie Corder. Kenneth's mischievous question is a knowing boast of the new opportunities for homoerotic relations for a modern married man. By protracting the revelation indicating the sex of Kenneth's correspondent, Wharton continually teases her reader with

intimidation that the "Pomegranate Seed"'s love triangle may include two men. "Kenneth never looked at another woman since he first saw Elsie Corder," Charlotte's friends tell her in assuring her that Kenneth is a devoted husband. "Someone is trying to separate us, and I don't care what it costs me to find out who it is," Charlotte tells her husband, for the while the sex of that "someone" notably left unclear.²⁸

In "Pomegranate Seed," the woman stands as the defender of a naturalized domestic order threatened by a sexual secret whose exposure is connected to the larger forces of modern urban life. "'Outside there,' [Charlotte] thought, 'sky-scrapers, advertisements, telephones, wireless, aeroplanes, movies, motors, and all the rest of the twentieth century; and on the other side of the door something I can't explain, can't relate to them. Something as old as the world, as mysterious as life . . .'" Before the tale reveals itself as turning on an occult premise, Kenneth is gripped visibly by a painful psychological burden that is articulated in the vocabularly of secrecy, psychic torment, and confession arrestingly comparable to that usually employed for the articulation of a "homosexual truth":

She was beginning now to think of the mystery as something conscious, malevolent: a secret persecution before which he quailed, yet from which he could not free himself. Once or twice in his evasive eyes she thought she had detected a desire for help, an impulse of confession, instantly restrained and suppressed. It was as if he felt she could have helped him if she had known, and yet had been unable to tell her!²⁹

With the help of her mother-in-law, Charlotte eventually learns that the first Mrs. Ashby has been summoning Kenneth to the underworld. Wharton playfully introduces the possibility of a non-supernatural explanation for the letters — a male lover — but then allows an otherworldly reason to explain away the mystery, thus foreclosing the chance for a direct representation of homosexual desire. In effect, Wharton plants the "seed" of homosexual doubt in her narrative but then saves Kenneth from an "unnatural" destiny through an *in medias res* introduction of a supernatural explanation. Yet the concluding lines of "Pomegranate Seed" reintroduce the possibility that Kenneth's disappearance has a homosexual basis, that (to expand further on the possible significance of Wharton's title) the "seed" of same-sex desire has seen fruition. Charlotte and her mother-in-law choose to telephone the police *even after* they realize that there is an occult basis for Kenneth's absence. The police, however, have authority not over supernatural matters but over legally-prohibited activities deemed "unnatural";

they are telephoned so they might rectify what may be the perpetration of an illegal transgression. As in "Afterward," Wharton heightens narrative tension through the protracted insinuation that the husband's wrong-doing is identifiable in conventional ethical and legal terms — shady business practices, adultery — and yet shamefully unmentionable. It is likely that Wharton's editors at the *Saturday Evening Post*, where the story first appeared, grasped a sexual ambiguity at the heart of "Pomegranate Seed," for Wharton was required to revise her story in answer to the editor's request that the "surprise" ending be more explicit.³⁰

There are several sources for Wharton's interest in homosexual crisis in modern marriage and her treatment of this theme in suggestively gothic terms. One lies in Wharton's relation to the so-called "Brotherhood" of her Paris circle, which included not only "confirmed homosexuals" such as Sturgis but several married men with homosexual tastes. Gothic fiction, with its apparatus of evasion and indirection, allowed Wharton to allude to marital arrangements whose bisexual character remained open secrets in the *haute-bourgeois* and aristocratic artistic cenacles of Paris where Wharton resided for some three decades. What might have comprised an unkind indiscretion in realistic fiction became in the gothic short story a distinct artistic advantage. Thus Wharton may have been alluding in "Afterward" and "Pomegranate Seed" to Gide's *mariage blanc* with Madeleine Rondeaux, a marital tie that had endured for many years while Gide maintained an affair with his long-time lover, Marc Allégret. Wharton certainly would have been well aware of Gide's status as a married "invert" by 1924, the year Gide published *Corydon*, first printed anonymously in 1911. In 1924, the French novelist also published his autobiographical *Si le grain ne meurt* (published in America in 1935 as *If It Die . . .*). If Wharton had not gleaned the autobiographical dimension of *L'Immoraliste* on its initial appearance in 1902, *Si le grain ne meurt* would have so informed her.

Another key player in Wharton's social orbit and a possible prototype for the husbands of either "Afterward" or "Pomegranate Seed" was Vicomte Robert d'Humières, linguist, aesthete, the much acclaimed French translator of Kipling and Conrad who also served as Proust's guide for the novelist's writing on Ruskin. A frequent visitor in the rue de Varenne, Humières was called "my best friend in France" by Wharton after his death, a comment which should alert us to the significance of this neglected figure in Wharton's circle.³¹ Although Humières was married, he was widely known to be partial to young men; Robert de Montesquiou, the model for Proust's Baron de Charlus and a man with whom Humières was sometimes compared, composed a malicious couplet which mocked Humières' reputation as a married homosexual: "With Humières you've left your son? Better make sure the light's still on." The writer Ferdinand Bac reported visiting Humières at his villa near Grasse

in Provence where Bac observed a portrait which depicted Humières as a young cavalry officer in a plumed helmet and a bare, epicene chest. Bac met Humières' infant daughter and his quiet, self-effacing wife, whom Bac described as a woman who appeared "to submit nobly to her own pride" and "to carry in secret the burden of a vast disappointed illusion." In the estate's garden stood an antique statue of Narcissus, "pointing with an unequivocal gesture to the part of his body which he most loved."³² Overwhelmed by an imminent scandal, Humières asked to be posted to a regiment on the front line in Zoave and, according to Proust's biographer George Painter, took the first opportunity of suicidally charging to his death in May 1915. Painter suggests that Proust may have had Humières among others in mind when the novelist referred to those men for whom "love of men brought virility, and virility brought glory," whose deaths "differ from the picture-postcard manner in which they are represented."³³ Wharton was probably closest to Humières in 1914, when the two began collaboration on a never-completed translation of Wharton's *The Custom of the Country*.³⁴

Another important component underlying these two tales is Wharton's displacement of homosexual eros into an invisible occult netherworld. This is related to the novelist's much-noted fascination with the myth of the beautiful goddess Persephone, the daughter of Zeus and Demeter, who, while picking flowers was carried off by Hades. Taken to the underworld, Persephone is kept prisoner because she breaks her vow of abstinence by eating prisoner because she breaks her vow of abstinence by eating pomegranate seeds. She is later condemned to spend half a year on earth and half in the underground. In her autobiographical fragment, "Life and I," Wharton recalled the myth as having "lured me from the wholesome noonday air of childhood into some strange supernatural region, where the normal pleasures of my age seemed as insipid as the fruits of the earth to Persephone after she had eaten of the Pomegranate seed."³⁵ Josephine Donovan and Candace Waid have argued that Persephone's visit to the patriarchally structured underworld is an archetypal myth for Wharton, who responded to the figure of Persephone as a "half-willing victim, lured by promises of wider knowledge, of expanding horizons beyond the limited sphere of mothers." Both critics suggest that for Wharton Persephone's story is one of transition from the world of mothers — Demeter's realm — to the world of the fathers — patriarchal captivity.³⁶

The Persephone myth was also an appropriate narrative to invoke in conjuring up an imagined underground permeated by homosexual obsession. It was not uncommon to think of those enclaves frequented by homosexual men as comprising a distinct "underground," a socially separate *demi-monde*, a term with obvious metaphorical links to the split world of Persephone. Gide invoked the myth in *L'Immoraliste* when his hero Michel ends his

spiritual-erotic journey in a garden with "three crooked pomegranate trees," near a shore "as blue through its reeds now as when it wept for Persephone."³⁷ In *Greek Studies* (1910), Walter Pater had written that "a duality, an inherent opposition in the very conception of Persephone, runs all through her story, and is part of her ghostly power."³⁸ In *A Backward Glance*, Wharton recalled a "strangely beautiful story" told to her by Cocteau, an anecdote which harbored Persephone-like details. According to Wharton, Cocteau's story concerned a lovely Damascus youth who arrives at his Sultan's quarters demanding his Majesty's swiftest horse. The youth had met Death reaching out to him in the Sultan's garden and wishes to escape Death's clutches. The Sultan thereupon approaches Death and demands, "How dare you make threatening gestures at my favourite?" Whereupon Death, astonished, answers: "I assure your Magesty I did not threaten him. I only threw up my arms in surprise at seeing him here, because I have a tryst with him tonight in Baghdad."³⁹

The story as relayed by Wharton perfectly encapsulates Wharton's complex response to the expression of homosexual desire. Her delight in this joke suggests that she could be knowing and accepting of homosexual relations. Yet the tale of a boy summoned to the underworld from his pastoral wanderings held an enchantment for Wharton which stemmed from her associations of "perverse" sexuality with a lethal underworld. Cocteau's anecdote constitutes a homosexual variation on the myth of Persephone, its camp humor contained in its insinuation that the beautiful youth has, despite his reluctance to meet Death, previously planned a romantic tryst with him. In this homosexual hedonist's unique interpretation of the Persephone myth, death is a risk of experiencing sublime sensual gratification. Cocteau was fascinated by the idea of an underworld of perilous marvels; One of his most successful works for the theater, *Orphée*, produced in Paris in 1926 when Wharton was a resident there, and later made into a 1950 film, was a contemporary version of the Orpheus myth in which Orpheus and Eurydice are an up-scale Greek couple, inhabitants of a Chanel-designed country house, who enter the underworld through a mirror. ("Look in a mirror and you will see death working like bees in a hive.") There the couple is tormented by a gang of wild women, the Bacchantes. Captivate by the tale's linking of themes of desire and mortality, Cocteau no doubt was aware of the mythic tradition which represented Orpheus as a leader of a homosexual cult.⁴⁰ The idea of a mirror as a means of viewing a forbidden underworld may have had its origin in Cocteau's fond memory of his youthful trips to a Paris bathhouse, where the young Cocteau voyeuristically observed a roomful of semi-clad and nude men through a "transparent mirror."⁴¹

In "Afterward" and "Pomegranate Seed," the supernatural is fictionally less unspeakable than the erotically "unnatural". The uneasy husbands of these tales lie in a

shadowy territory where neither homosexuality nor heterosexuality is granted a satisfying permanence. Although it is tempting to see Wharton as adopting the nerve-racked perspectives of the wives in these tales, we should be cautious about doing so. The conventions of gothic fiction, by definition hospitable to ambivalence, allow Wharton to express at once the confining terrors of the "feminine" home, the unstable state of modern marital relations, and the anguish of homosexual self-denial. Just as Mary Boyne and Charlotte Ashby ultimately are helpless at maintaining stasis in their marriages, Ned Boyne and Kenneth Ashby are not portrayed in the demonic terms in which Wharton depicted the bachelors of "The Eyes" and "The Triumph of the Night." For Wharton, the causes of these marital "break-ups," whether natural or supernatural, are as ineluctably beyond human control as unchecked (homo)erotic inclination. Like the youth of Cocteau's parable, these husbands simultaneously deny and respond to a tempting counter-universe. Yet over these marriages hovers an image of a woeful wife with her "vast disappointed illusion." The contradictory gothic realm of "Afterward" and "Pomegranate Seed" articulates Wharton's conflicting fears and fantasies of homosexual dissolution along with the emotional damage she imagined male homosexuality left in its wake.

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1. André Gide, *The Journals of André Gide*, Volume I: 1889-1923 Translated and edited by Justin O'Brien. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1987), 211-212.
2. Eleanor Clark, "Angel of Devastation," *The New York Review of Books*, January 6, 1966. Clark found the absence of attention to homosexual issues perplexing since the "anrogynous element is what is being discussed, under no name, in many passages, and it plays through her work." While Clark's confusion of androgyny with homosexuality dates her observations, she accurately pointed to Wharton's "lurid" 1910 short story "The Eyes" as a work "which goes on being described as a ghost story but is in fact a violent male homosexual fantasy." Clark claimed that a better understanding of a figure such as Walter Berry might help to illuminate the "cultivated love-renouncing hero, the Archers and Seldens of her fiction world." Clark did not say exactly what would be revealed by such a consideration, but she noted that the "answer" would not necessarily be a "crude" one.
3. For a strident critical condemnation of bachelor figures in Wharton's life and writing, see David Holbrook, *Edith Wharton and the Unsatisfactory Male* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991); R.W.B. Lewis mentions Wharton's allusions to "The Brotherhood," Lewis, *Edith Wharton* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 43.
4. Lewis, *Edith Wharton*, 443.
5. Lewis, *Edith Wharton*, 443.
6. A full account of the extent of Wharton's understanding of Fullerton's bisexual disposition may have to wait until the publication of Marion Mainwaring's forthcoming biography of Fullerton.
7. Lewis, *Edith Wharton*, 326.
8. Edith Wharton, *The Art of Fiction* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), 65.
9. Robert Miles, *Gothic Writing, 1780-1820: A Genealogy* (New

ork: Routledge, 1993), 3. Miles himself accepts this critical consensus, further arguing that gothic texts are not only recycled but revise one another, forming a mode of debate.

10. Elizabeth Napier, *The Failure of Gothic: Problems of Disjunction in an Eighteenth-Century Literary Form*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

11. The work of sexologists such as Ellis and Krafft-Ebing often competed in interest with literary works of the period. Upon the publication of Proust's *Cities of the Plain*, Walter Berry told Wharton that he found the volume "terrific" and claimed that there was "nothing quite like it outside of Krafft-Ebing." Berry predicted that Wharton would later explore the sexual aberrations of "the ladies." Quoted in Lewis, *Edith Wharton*, 443.

12. Chris Baldick, Introduction, *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), xxi.

13. For an analysis of *fin de siècle* gothic and homosexuality, see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: Male Homosocial Desire and English Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985) and Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (New York: Viking, 1990); For a discussion of nineteenth-century aestheticism and homosexual relations, see Richard Dellamora, *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

14. Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (New York: Doubleday, 1977); Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979); Margaret Doody, "Deserts, Ruins and Troubled Waters: Female Dreams in Fiction and the Development of the Gothic Novel," *Genre*, x (1977).

15. Ian Duncan, *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel: The Gothic, Scott, Dickens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 23.

16. Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late Victorian London* (London: Virago, 1992).

17. Allan Gardner Smith, "Edith Wharton and the Ghost Story," *Gender and Literary Voice*. Janet Todd, ed. (New York and London: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1980).

18. Carol J. Singley, "Gothic Borrowings and Innovations in Edith Wharton's 'A Bottle of Perrier'" in *Edith Wharton's New Critical Essays* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1992), 271-287.

19. In a remarkable instance of pairing as indicative of homoerotic influence in Tolstói's *Anna Karenina* (1877), Anna's lover Vronski visits his military regiment's mess room and it teased by two officers, a man with grotesque features, a bracelet, and an effeminate, thin-faced companion. Leo Tolstói, *Anna Karenina*, Trans. Louise and Aylmer Maude (New York: Oxford University Press, 1918), 174-6. The evidently widespread conception of homosexuality as dependent on erotic leverage paradoxically resisted the view of same-sex desire as expounded by the prevailing Victorian medical model, which viewed homosexual behavior as physiological in origin.

20. Alfred J. Cohen (pseud. "Alan Dale"), *A Marriage Below Zero: A Novel* (New York: G.W. Dillingham, 1889).

21. Howard Sturgis (Anonymous), *Tim* (London: Macmillan, 1891). Sturgis's novel evidently had some popular appeal, going into a second printing only one month after it was published. For a critical appraisal of *Tim* in the context of Sturgis's life and work, see E.M. Forster, "Howard Overing Sturgis" in *A Binger Harvest* (New York: Meridian books, 1955).

In his introduction to the reprint of Sturgis's *Belchamber* (1904), Noel Annan reveals that at Eton Sturgis fell in love with Percy Lubbock, his house captain and later one of Wharton's

closest acquaintances. It is thus likely that Lubbock was the model for the figure of the older Etonian Carol with whom the hero of *Tim* falls in love. Noel Annan, "Introduction," *Belchamber* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), vi.

22. Wharton, "Afterward," in *The Muse's Tragedy and Other Stories*, ed., Candace Waid (New York: New American Library, 1990), 352-3.

23. Wharton, "Afterward," 364.

24. Wharton, "Afterward," 356.

25. Wharton, "Afterward," 350-1.

26. Wharton, *The Age of Innocence* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), 315.

27. Edith Wharton, "Pomegranate Seed," *The Short Stories of Edith Wharton*, edited and with an introduction by R.W.B. Lewis (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1968), 770.

28. In her novella *The Touchstone* (1900), Wharton offered an early version of "Pomegranate Seed" in a realistic narrative of a marriage threatened by correspondence from a previous lover. Stephen Glennard, a young lawyer, sells a packet of love letters written to him by the celebrated novelist Margaret Aubyn in order to raise money for his forthcoming wedding to another woman. But when he confesses his actions to his new wife, she is wounded and the marriage irreversibly damaged.

29. Wharton, "Pomegranate Seed," 774.

30. Wharton noted that five of her friends had objected that "Of course it is obvious from the first paragraph that the dead wife wrote the letters." Wharton, letter of Rutger B. Jewett (January 31, 1931), *The Letters of Edith Wharton*, 532.

31. Quoted in Lewis, *Edith Wharton*, 382.

32. Ferdinand Bac, *Intimités de la III République, Vol. III* (Paris: Hachette, 1935), 91-3.

33. George D. Painter, *Proust: The Later Years* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1965) 226-27.

34. Wharton, *A Backward Glimpse* (New York: Charles Scribner's sons, [1934] 1964), 288-9. Wharton mistakenly states in her autobiography that d'Humières died in 1916.

35. Wharton, "Life and I," 1075-76.

36. Judith Donovan, *After the Fall: The Demeter-Persephone Myth in Wharton, Cather, and Glasgow* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), 4; Candace Waid, *Edith Wharton's Letters from the Underground* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

37. André Gide, *The Immoralist*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), 5, 50.

38. Walter Pater, *Greek Studies* (New York: Johnson Reprint, Co., 1967), 100. Richard Dellamora discusses the role of the Persephone myth in Pater's work in terms of Pater's project of endorsing homosexual desire through a veiled recuperation of classical mythology. Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*, 176.

39. Edith Wharton, *A Backward Glimpse*, 285-86.

40. For a history of the Orpheus myth as a homosexual allegory, see Dorothy M. Kosinski, *Orpheus in Nineteenth-Century Symbolism* (Ann Arbor: U.M.I. Research Press, 19889).

41. Cocteau chose to give this powerful early erotic experience a classical resonance: "I remember one Narcissus who lovingly brought his mouth to the mirror, pressed his lips against it, and carried to its frenzied conclusion his adventure with himself. Invisible as the Greek gods, I glued my lips to his and imitated his gestures. He never knew that, instead of reflecting, the mirror had acted, had lived, had loved him." Cocteau, *Professional Secrets: An Autobiography*, Trans. Richard Howard, ed., Robert Phelps (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970), 123-24.

T.S. Eliot and Wharton's Modernist Gothic

by *Monika Elbert*

It seems to me that Wharton's "Bottle of Perrier" (1930 1937), or even "A Bottle of Evian" (1926), which her story was called earlier, might have quenched T.S. Eliot's *Waste Land* (1922) thirst. I do not mean to suggest that thirst is either the dilemma of Modernists or the cause of Gothic horror, but there are definitely parallels to be found in Wharton's Gothic "Bottle of Perrier" and Eliot's *Waste Land* — both works which I view as Modernist-Gothic in describing the fragmentation of the modern mind and the possible solutions for healing and integration in some distant past.

Wharton might have protested too much when she denied any affinity with Eliot; indeed, she applies her harsh indictment of Joyce's *Ulysses* to Eliot's *Waste Land*: "I shall never believe that the raw material of sensation & thought can make a work of art without the cook's intervening. The same applies to Eliot" (To Bernard Berenson, 6 January 1923). It is fascinating that what she perceives at the heart of the modernist sensibility — the inability to reconcile the binary oppositions of feeling and thinking, sensation and abstraction — is exactly the modernist's lament, and ironically, it is also the underlying conflict of her ghost stories, as she articulates it in her preface to the ghost stories and which she repeats in the plot of every ghost story! She condemns Eliot and "all this new stuff" because it's all "a thèse: the theory comes first & dominates it. And it will go the way of 'unanisme' & all the other isms. — *Grau ist alle Theorie*" (To Bernard Berenson, 6 January 1923). At the risk of sounding presumptuous, I feel that Wharton was either being too impatient with the Modernists (though she argues that it is not because she's "getting older" that she is "unresponsive") or finding herself too closely allied with them in the looking-glass of her soul (as her narrator-protagonist in her ghost story, "The Eyes"), so that she feels compelled to detach herself from them. What could be "grayer" than Eliot's *Waste Land*, where theory certainly cannot compensate for lack of feeling, and, what can be more blasé and gray than Wharton's drawing room scenarios (the old New York scene), or partake more of the twilight realm of Eliot's *Waste Land* than her New

England Gothic (*Ethan Frome*) or Old World ghost stories (which seek to find meaning in Eliot's Old World roots, to find some connection between an anarchic present and a coherent but mythologized past)? Moreover, the same impulse which she condemns in Eliot, she applauds in Huxley, "*Brave New World* . . . is a masterpiece of tragic indictment of our ghastly age of Fordian culture" (To Margaret Terry Chanler, 25 March 1932).

With their implicit attack upon urban sprawl and technology, Wharton's ghost stories fit into the Modernist tradition and place her alongside of contemporary questers, like T.S. Eliot, who try to resist the burden of modern history by recreating Western mythology or finding the sources of an older mythology.¹ Both question contemporary culture as they nostalgically long for some mythological past. Behind Wharton's Gothic mode is the same impulse which lurks behind Eliot's Modernist: in an attempt to ward off the modern sense of chaos or fragmentation, both writers attempt to articulate a fleeting image of knowledge or reality, and both find their source in the supernatural, or some non-traditional, non-accepted form of reality — often in the realm of the marginalized, dispossessed, and unspeakable (or feminine).² In her last story, "All Souls," Wharton is able to evoke a pagan setting which very much coincides with Eliot's evocation of a primeval atmosphere, whose secret could be uncovered in the locating of the lost Grail — nuances of which appear in Wharton in the shape of a lost country, a lost mother (hence her obsession with the Persephone myth, e.g. in her ghost story, "Pomegranate Seed," published 1931), a lost language, a lost past. Or, as Wharton describes the Gothic mode, "pushed to its logical conclusion [it] strove for: the utterance of the Unutterable" (*Motor-Flight* 17). In mytho-historical terms, this would coincide with an irretrievable past, of pre-civilization, in psychological terms (Kristeva's, Lacan's), with the moment before knowing, the pre-natal life in the womb.

In her ghost stories, Wharton often returns to a moment of fear she experienced as a child, when the two worlds of body and spirit seemed to collide. In her

autobiographical sketch, "Life and I" Wharton recounts the story of her childhood encounter with death and the underworld: sick with typhoid fever, she "lay for weeks at the point of death"; in her feverish state, she read some ghost stories, which, with her "intense Celtic sense of the supernatural," put her into a state of terror, and for many years after, she lived in "a world haunted by formless horrors" (1079). Later Wharton would prefer the "ghost-feeler," "the person sensible of invisible currents of being in certain places and at certain hours" over the rational "ghost-seer" ("Preface" 1). Though she believes that "deep within us . . . the ghost instinct lurks" (2), she feels that science and technology are robbing us of this instinct; indeed, she chastises those who need scientific or rational data to "believe" in ghosts and complains that "the wireless and the cinema" are detracting from our imagination. For her, "To 'believe' . . . is a conscious act of the intellect," but superior to this is the subconscious, which she allies with the amniotic state within the mother, or as Kristeva and Lacan would have it, the pre-verbal, unrepresentable memory of the maternal realm or the semiotic, pre-Oedipal state: "it is in the warm darkness of the prenatal fluid far below our conscious reason that the faculty dwells with which we apprehend the ghosts we may not be endowed with the gift of seeing" ("Preface" 1). T.S. Eliot, similarly, re-creates the world of infancy in his *Wasteland*; as Jewel Spears Booker and Joseph Bentley have recently argued, his poem "implies a partial retrieval of infantile states of mind" (209) and Eliot's chaotic world can be understood in its relationship to infancy, as it is "a world where there is no space, time, self, or continuity" (218).

Wharton felt the ache of modernism as much as T.S. Eliot did, and in her ghost stories, she describes a Philistine civilization that is undone by scientific materialism, empirical methodology, or business realism. The categories of Gothic and Modernist are not necessarily exclusive or distinct: the earlier nineteenth-century Gothic genre showed the uneasy split between spirit and body, between female and male, as much as Wharton's Gothic or Eliot's Modernist modes.³ Ironically, when Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick describes the conventions of the Gothic novel, she is unwittingly describing many characteristics of Modernism, as they apply to both Wharton and Eliot: the Gothic form is "likely to be discontinuous and involuted, perhaps incorporating tales within tales" (9); the Gothic preoccupations include "sleeplike and deathlike states; . . . doubles . . . possibilities of incest; unnatural echoes or silences, unintelligible writings, and the unspeakable; garrulous retainers; the poisonous effects of guilt and shame; nocturnal landscapes and dreams; apparitions from the past; Faust-and Wandering Jew-like figures" (9-10). Moreover,

the Gothic mansion becomes the abyss of the mind — the locus of the subconscious — in the Modernist Gothic.

If one were to undertake, for example, a comparison between Wharton's "A Bottle of Perrier" (1926)⁴ and Eliot's *Waste Land* (1922), one would find many of the same Gothic-Modernist elements of setting, and certainly, thematically, the quester/pilgrim in search of a home. Thus, for example, the narrator in "A Bottle of Perrier" finds the same parched desert landscape as Eliot in his last section of *The Waste Land* ("Here is not water but only rock/Rock and no water and the sandy road/The road winding above among the mountains/Which are mountains of rock without water). The narrator in "A Bottle" finds himself in a desert wasteland: on every side of the archaeologist Almodham's "half Christian fortress/half Arab palace" "stretched away the mystery of the sands, all golden with promise, all livid with menace, as the sun alternately touched or abandoned them" (511). Wharton's ambivalence towards this "crusader's stronghold" is obvious from the start: she would like to capture the meaning between ancient/medieval and modern and so erode boundaries between binary oppositions of spirit and body, but she finds herself in the Modernist dilemma of privileging Western culture. In this context, one might understand Eliot's *Waste Land* recollection of the height of Western culture, when there was a sense of continuity, in his description of Elizabeth and Leicester sailing peacefully on the Thames. However, now "The river's tent is broken" (174) and "The nymphs are departed" (179), as the world of the imagination is destroyed by such realities as a fat rat "Dragging its slimy belly on the bank" (186).

Wharton is somewhat elitist as she describes Almodham's medieval castle, the patriarchal "Crusaders' stronghold" which, ironically enough, has "a dash of Victorian romance" about it (in the center of Arab culture!), but she also, like Eliot, shows the need to go back to the origins of civilization (the Fertile Crescent) to escape contemporary Western culture: "To anyone sick of the Western fret and fever the very walls of this desert fortress exuded peace" (512). Moreover, Almodham, the scholar of ancient ruins and the product of western academia, is described as a tired "misogynist," and the end of his archaeological journey takes him to this "remote place" where he discovers "several early Christian ruins of great interest" (512); yet, he knows not the meaning of the symbols he analyzes, for he denies his servant vacation year after year, and with that, a time to go home to renew his family bonds, so finally the frustrated servant murders the master. Moreover, he is seen as an effete master of his own destiny: in the "dreaming look" of Almodham's face, the narrator had "detected an inertia, mental and moral, which life in this castle of

romance must have fostered and excused." Meanwhile, the visiting Medford, Almodham's student, is impressed by "the silence, the remoteness, the illimitable air" of the place (the servant Gosling reminds him, "There's no wireless in the desert . . . not like London" [516]), but increasingly, he finds his mission to be the search for water. This recalls Eliot's motif of the Quest for the Holy Grail, which ends with "empty cisterns and exhausted wells" and "the empty chapel" and "Dry bones" (also indicative of Almodham's fate). Initially, Medford is impressed by the ancient fig tree, which "writhed over a whitewashed wellhead, sucking life for what appeared to be the only source of moisture within the walls" (511); after several days, the atmosphere becomes too "vaporous and insubstantial" and the narrator becomes obsessed with finding clean bath water and clear drinking water, in the form of Western Perrier, just as Eliot's narrator notes, "If there were only water amongst the rock/Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit/Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit/There is not even silence in the mountains/But dry thunder without rain" (42).

Similarly, Wharton's character Medford feels that insubstantial nature of his existence in the desert: the "otherwhereness" and timelessness; he finds the land "full of spells" and the countryside "A land of dreams" (512): he notes the inefficacy of Western values:

There were no time measures in a place like this. The silly face of his watch told its daily tale to emptiness. The wheeling of the constellations over those ruined walls marked only the revolutions of the earth; the spasmodic motions of man meant nothing. (516)

The narrator finally loses his equilibrium and self-possession as he is forced to deal with Almodham's disappearance and the clash between East and West; like one of Conrad's naive Western explorers, he blames it on the "hallucinating fancies of the East" (527). Medford is overwhelmed by the "imprenetrableness of the mystery" but swears to "find out the truth"; since he works in terms of binary oppositions, at least early on, he believes in an arbitrary truth, but soon he feels the Modernist's dilemma as all reality becomes suspect and knowledge is fragmentary. Early on, Medford is disturbed by the servant's "watchful eyes" (513), but later, he is haunted by Almodham's ghost: he toys with the idea that his host Almodham is playing games and watching him from afar, "Behind which window was his host concealed, spying, it might be, at this very moment on the movements of his lingering quest?" (527) and actually feels his ghoulish presence, "he could almost feel Almodham reaching out

long ghostly arms from somewhere above him in the darkness" (529). Medford says more truthfully than he knows, as he stands next to the well in which Almodham's corpse has been thrown: "I believe the whole place is unhealthy."

Obviously, Eliot's *Waste Land* shares this sense of ghoulishness and fragmentation: one can hear it in Eliot's own reading of his poem, where he comes across in grave, somber tones as the disembodied, ghostlike speaker of the past. Moreover, there are many allusions to the world of spirits: from the clairvoyants with their Tarot card readings (who are really cheap/modern imitations of spiritual advisors to the chanting fragmentary voices and watching ghoulish eyes at the end of *The Waste Land* ("There is not even solitude in the mountains/But red sullen faces sneer and snarl/From doors of mudcracked houses" 42-43). In fact, Eliot's speaker embodies the liminal state between life and death which characterizes so many of Wharton's Gothic protagonists: "I was neither/Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,/Looking into the heart of light, the silence" (30); "He who was living is now dead/We who were living are now dying" (42). Obviously, the demise of Western culture, as Wharton and Eliot perceived it, was terrifying. The narrators/speakers appear to be alchemists, who have lost touch with the lifegiving source, the maternal landscape.

More specifically, for both Wharton and Eliot, the sterility of the modern world is intrinsically linked with the thwarted maternal drive and the lack of maternal salvation. Thus, for example, Eliot's parched *Waste Land* landscape is very much allied with the episode he recounts early in the poem of a woman who aborts her child: "It's them pills I took, to bring it off, she said./ (She's had five already, and nearly died of young George.)/The chemist said it would be all right, but I've never been the same" (159-161). The sterility of the landscape is reflected in the emptiness of the sexual act, as a woman complains, "Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over" (252). However, the poem ends with a hopeful tribute to the mother, with the allusion to a strong mother figure (and the possible revivification of a "broken Coriolanus"): one critic suggests the parallels between Eliot's writing of the poem and Coriolanus's battle spirit in their connection to filial devotion: Coriolanus's "energies sufficed in wartime (Eliot's poem was written three years after the close of the Great War), but in peacetime it becomes clear that 'he did it to please his mother, and to be partly proud'" (Kenner 27). The lyrics of the nursery rhyme in the last stanza of *The Waste Land* are a repetition of the earlier lines which started this dark excursion into the mother's desolate land, "London Bridge is falling down . . ." (427). Though the fragmentary language may not express any logical redemption in the very real world of London, the nursery

song brings us back to the mother's lap, if not womb. Indeed, one recalls the earlier allusion to the speaker as a cross-gendered Tiresias: "I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,/Old man with *wrinkled female breasts*" (61, emphasis mine; just as the landscape is parched, the source of maternal milk seems dried up); this androgynous speaker could have warned Oedipus of the riddle of his life — his attachment to the elusive mother.

In "A Bottle of Perrier," also, the male narrator must loosen his hold on Western culture, and his dependence upon his mentor, Almodham, by bonding with the disempowered (and feminized) Maltese servant, Goslin, who has become literally imprisoned in Almodham's patriarchal castle. As Carol Singley points out, Medford, "like a child," "eats, drinks, bathes, sleeps, and is cared for by the attendant 'mothering' Gosling" (283).⁵ On his part, Medford becomes increasingly sympathetic to the maternally deprived, paternally overpowered Gosling. And finally, Medford becomes an accomplice to Gosling in the death of the overbearing father by keeping his silence, another maternal disempowered language. Moreover, symbolically, they are joined together in mutual nurturance at the site of the father's murder, the well (the water which has been lacking throughout the story), which becomes the possibility for maternal redemption, as the men "stare at each other without speaking" (531). Moreover, the moon, always a symbol of the dark feminine realm, is eclipsed throughout most of the story (e.g., "the moon was not yet high enough to light those depths [of well water], and he peered down into blackness"); in the concluding scene, though, the moon suddenly illuminates the sky and reveals the secret of the male bonding: "The moon, swinging high about the battlements, [part of the jagged patriarchal landscape] sent a searching spear of light down into the guilty darkness of the well" (531). Similarly, in *The Waste Land*, "the faint moonlight" in the last stanza foreshadows a spark of hope in the otherwise desolate landscape.

Both Wharton and Eliot are perplexed by the modern, as they are haunted by an elusive past. Eliot's *Waste Land* is just as barren as Wharton's parlor life (whether it be New York or Parisian), and both try to return to some supernatural meaning in an effort to escape the ennui — Eliot through the Grail myth, Wharton's characters (in her ghost stories) in their search for and obsession with haunted mansions and isolated countrysides: Eliot's Perilous Chapel, Wharton's haunted rooms, are a manifestation of this sequestered self in search of meaning. Indeed, at the end of *The Waste Land*, Eliot speaks of being locked into "our empty rooms" without having access to the key. Though Eliot and Wharton are responding to the same stimulus, a deadening sense of rationalism and materialism, their reactions are different

as a result of their different temperaments: Eliot reaches out to culture in the broadest sense, not in its limited historical sense, but to mythology, a broader category than history, whereas Wharton explores individual pre-conscious states in a psychological and personal way. Thus, for Eliot, the way is Frazer, with his fertility myths, as well as Christianity, with its emphasis on Mary. Indeed, at the end of "Ash-Wednesday," Eliot invokes the aid of a paganized Mary for a sense of wholeness, "Blessed sister, holy mother, spirit of the fountain, spirit of the garden . . . And spirit of the river, spirit of the sea" (66). For Wharton, the way is Freud, especially with his ideas of Oedipal longings for the lost mother. In the context of her ghost stories, this translates into Freud's notion of the "Unheimliche," where the unusual and the mundane collide, and where the protagonist finds a sense of the uncanny in the new home he discovers. Or, as Julia Kristeva explains Freud's concept of the "Unheimliche," "in the very word 'heimlich,' the familiar and intimate are reversed into their opposites, brought together with the contrary meaning of 'uncanny strangeness' harbored in 'unheimlich'" (182); the "unheimlich" or the unmotherly then is the repressed, that which "ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light," or in Kristeva's translation of Freud, "the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (Kristeva, *Strangers* 183). And with that, we are back to the character Charlotte Ashby's notion of the inexplicable, the amorphous shape which stands on the other side of the threshold, which we are afraid to cross, but which offers us the way back to a primitive past: "Outside there,' she thought, 'skyscrapers, advertisements, telephones, wireless, airplanes, movies, motors, and all the rest of the twentieth century; and on the other side of the door something I can't explain, can't relate to them. Something as old as the world, as mysterious as life . . ." ("Pomegranate Seed" 205).

And it is life itself or the promise of life which Eliot and Wharton celebrate in their evocation of ghosts. Actually, *The Waste Land* and "A Bottle of Perrier" end with the discovery of the Holy Grail, figuratively speaking. Certain modern critics have suggested the Grail represents the feminine realm of thinking or being: ". . . the Grail represents all that is fertile, liquid, hopeful. It is a totally feminine symbol of God's love which, apart from that of Christ, is noticeably absent from exoteric Christianity" ("Matthews 56). Such readings view Shekinah, the feminine deity who willingly accompanied Adam and Eve from Paradise into exile, as "the compassionate Presence of God" or as "a feminine element of the Godhead" (Matthews 55). And, as "the Veil of God," Shekinah may be viewed as "a paradigm for the Grail — the vessel of honor which stands as a covenant for all

of God's mercy and richness" and as "a love which prompts mystics to journey in perpetual quest until union or realisation is achieved and the world redeemed at last" (Matthews 55-56). If, as one critic notes, the source of Eliot's Gothic and "the marrow" of *The Waste Land* deal "with the relation of humanity to a terrifying God" (Fowler 128), then the solution to the problem is suggested by the ending of *The Waste Land* which alludes to a maternal vision of life or a feminine Divinity: the Grail quest must end with Shekinah.

Almodham in Wharton's "A Bottle of Perrier" is too much the anthropological scholar/rationalist and too much the patriarch to ever find the bond of fellowship with Gosling, which would have been his redemption. Instead, it takes Medford, a different kind of spiritual quester for knowledge, to release Gosling from his captivity. Similarly, in Eliot's *Waste Land*, we find a rather effete Fisher King who has lost his fertile powers: he needs to be rejuvenated. Surprisingly, the potential redemption comes from the rather androgynous figure of Christ: "Who is the third who walks beside you? / . . . There is always another one walking beside you/Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded/I do not know whether a man or a woman" (361-367).⁶ It is this collapse or erosion of gender boundaries which finally would liberate Almodham and the Fisher King from patriarchal, hierarchal relationships of power. The ending of the *Waste Land*, with its allusion to the Ganges, suggests that we must turn to the East for our source of Water, not to la Source Perrier, with its elitist connotations. In the roar of the thunder, sign of approaching rain/nourishment, one hears the answer to the Parzival quester and the Oedipus/Coriolanus mother's sons: "Datta, Dayadhvam, Damyata" (or, as Eliot explains in his notes about the *Upanishad*, "give, sympathize, control." Both Wharton (in her Gothic) and T.S. Eliot attempt to eradicate a now bygone patriarchal myth, built upon an abortive and destructive technology, through an evocation of an even older myth — the maternal myth of fertility. The Grail quest ends with the recovery of the mother tongue: At the end of "A Bottle of Perrier," some hope is restored, not by the anticipated delivery of Perrier water, which, after all, is an icon of modern decadence and unnaturalness (bottled water, bottled life), but by the tears of the criminal who has murdered his employer — as he huddles together with a new friend under the moon-lit sky, a feminine landscape which mirrors their maternal/nurturing bonding. At the end of *The Waste Land*, the quester seems to find the answer to the Grail Legend: the secret, too, for the maimed Fisher King is allied with the lost maternal realm — to give, to nurture, and finally to find peace in the realm of the maternal non-verbal realm.⁷

One might recall the words of a doubter turned believer in ghosts, as the narrator of Wharton's Gothic story, "Kerfol," states: "I was beginning to want to know more; not to see more — I was by now so sure it was not a question of seeing — but to feel more: feel all the place had to communicate" (81). In the post-Darwinian, post-Freudian milieu of Wharton's Gothic settings, all objective reality becomes suspect, as feeling takes precedence over knowing: one cannot know, and there is no particular way to read the ghost. In the preface to her ghost stories, Wharton attacks the type of person/reader who wants to "validate" or "authenticate" the appearance of a particular ghost in a particular mansion. For her, the "ghost instinct" is "being gradually atrophied by those two world-wide enemies of the imagination, the wireless and the cinema" (2). Thus, the encounter with a ghost is not the worst of Sara Clayburn's experiences in "All Souls"; for her it is the encounter with a disembodied voice, coming from the radio, when the electrical current, her tie to civilization, is ostensibly cut, which is so horrifying: not a ghost, but the blasting of the radio — the voice of an "invisible stranger" who is "passionately earnest, almost threatening" and is incomprehensible to her (he was speaking a "language unknown to her") causes her to lose consciousness. Wharton herself experiences a similar amount of fragmentation after a sojourn in New York: "The fact is, my wonderful New York fortnight reduced me to absolute inarticulateness — of a tongue and pen . . . moreover, I had acquired a proficiency in telephoning and telegraphing which seemed to have done away with my ability to express myself in any less lapidary style" (Letter to Corinne Robinson, 2 March 1914). In her Gothic fiction, Wharton forces the skeptic to believe and to move within the realm of the subconscious: she forces us to suspend disbelief momentarily and seduces us into the realm of ghosts, to a higher understanding of self — removed from the white noise and static of civilization. Wharton makes us confront "two conditions" which she says are "abhorrent to the modern mind" — "silence and continuity" — through her evocation of ghosts. And thus, she invites us to move from the "soulless roar" of the city ("Pomegranate Seed" 200) to the "soulful" existence within the home one creates, even if that requires some painful psychic experiences — or an encounter with a ghost. Though Wharton resisted her Modernist inclinations, she was far more the Modernist than she knew; her attraction to the Gothic forced her into connection with the elements of Modernism that reside within it and thus into relation with Eliot, foremost among American Modernists.

Notes

¹ No critic actually associates Wharton's Gothic mode with the Modernist tradition, though Judith Sensibar analyzes the Prufrockian self-consciousness of the Modernist bachelor type which Wharton created in Martin Boyne (*The Children*); this latter reading is somewhat problematic as the Wharton female protagonists, at least in her Gothic, have this same proclivity towards an isolating self-consciousness.

For a differing view — on Wharton's incompatibility with modernism, see Amy Kaplan, who feels that "Wharton's place in American literary history" should not just be as "an anti-modernist" or as a "woman writer," "but as a professional author who wrote at the intersection of the mass market of popular fiction, the tradition of women's literature, and a realistic movement that developed in an uneasy dialogue with twentieth-century modernism" (454). My piece tries to bridge the gap between the sexes by showing that Eliot's and Wharton's sense of modernist isolation was not gender-specific, though it does rely on configurations of the maternal.

Similarly, not many critics have dealt with Eliot's Gothic mode; see Douglas Fowler, who views Gothic horror in the relationship Eliot establishes between man and God; see also Randy Malamud, who, in his comparison between *Frankenstein* and *The Waste Land*, reads *The Waste Land* as "a Gothic spectacle of monstrously horrific thrills" (44).

² In another context, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar suggest that "impulses" which are "associated with the alienated, the dispossessed, and the marginalized . . . can be represented by 'the feminine'" (145); moreover, inadvertently, they describe the Romantic concept of the feminine in terms of the Gothic, as "a fatal seductress and a ferociously 'Undead' figure who haunts the nightwood of the collective unconscious" (145).

³ Stephen Bernstein believes that the Gothic was a "pure form only during the primary period of its inception, from its beginning with *The Castle of Otronto* (1764) to its conclusion with *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820)" (151). I think this question of "purity" is problematic and that Gothic should be defined more broadly.

⁴ "A Bottle of Perrier" first appeared in 1926 as "A Bottle of Evian" in *The Saturday Evening Post* and then again in 1930 as "A Bottle of Perrier" in Wharton's collection of stories, *Certain People* (Singly 271); and finally, it appeared as "A Bottle of Perrier" in Wharton's 1937 collection, *Ghosts* (McDowell 313).

The Ghost Stories of Edith Wharton (Scribner's, 1973) is somewhat different from the original Appleton-Century edition of Wharton's *Ghosts* (1937). Among other changes in the reprint are the inclusion of "An Autobiographical Postscript" from "Life and I" and the substitution of "The Looking-Glass" for "A Bottle of Perrier" (McDowell 313).

⁵ For other feminist readings of the psychological maternal theme in Wharton's Gothic, or, as Singly puts it, "the missing or longed-for mother" (273), see Gloria Erlich, who discusses the effect of "multiple mothering" (the biological mother versus the nanny) in Wharton's life and fiction; see also Annette Zilversmit, who perceives in "All Souls" "woman's terror of maternal rejection and female desire" (319). In a similar vein, see also Susan Goodman: "Wharton was not able to achieve peace with her mother, except the peace established by distance, and her work is in part a record of her own efforts to hammer

out an equitable truce" (84), and finally, Candace Waid, who notes that many stories in *Ghosts* "are concerned with the abandonment and/or imprisonment of a 'female' figure" (178); moreover, she places this in the context of Wharton's fear of "being trapped in her mother's house" and being reminded of her mother's concern with the trivial (178). Speaking of the Gothic in general, Claire Kahane focuses on "dead or displaced mothers" (335), as she finds at "the forbidden center of the Gothic . . . the spectral presence of a dead-undead mother, archaic and all-encompassing" (336) who needs to be confronted.

For readings of the Persephone myth in Wharton, see Waid (195-203), who analyzes mother-daughter relationships using the myth of Persephone as well as the position of the woman writer ("the woman writer stripped of her flowers and virginal innocence is Persephone trying to speak from the dead" [202]). See also Josephine Donovan for a discussion of the Demeter-Persephone myth in terms of the mother-daughter dynamics in Wharton's fiction (43-83) and Erlich (42-45).

The absence of the mother seems to haunt both Wharton and Eliot in their Gothic fiction. Recently, critical assessments of Wharton point to the lack of maternal affection in her life. One recent psychoanalytic study points out that "Motherly comfort came only from Doyley, her nanny" (Erlich 22), but that even though she received some security from a surrogate mother, it was not enough, because the nanny was disempowered in Wharton's social milieu: "Nanny Doyley ameliorated the child's sense of maternal deprivation, but as a domestic servant without power in Wharton's destined social world, she lacked authority" (Erlich 25). But, later on, too, Wharton grew closer to her devoted housekeeper, Catherine Grosse, than to "almost anyone else in her life" (Lewis 54). Similarly, Eliot "adored his warm-hearted but uneducated Catholic nursemaid, Annie Dunne, but soon learned that warmth and sensitivity were not important traits of the man he was expected to be" (Bush 7). He suffered under the disciplinary, rational rule of his mother, who had adopted the forefather's severity: "The model his earnest, devoutly Unitarian and self-improving mother held up to him was his Moses-like paternal grandfather, William Greenleaf Eliot" (Bush 7), a descendant of the New England Puritans. The result of such maternal withholding was Eliot's quest to come to terms with feeling; as biographer Ronald Bush states, "Caught between the conflicting paths to self-esteem represented by the life of feeling and the life of thought, he turns from trying to reconcile the two to dramatizing their struggle" (8). Wharton's Gothic also re-enacts this struggle between thinking and feeling.

⁶ Eliot, in his notes, relates the anecdote of the hallucinating explorers on an Antarctic expedition to explain *rationality* the appearance of the hooded third member: "at the extremity of their strength," they "had the constant delusion that there was *one more member* than could actually be counted." However, just as the party of explorers could no longer rely on the earthly or rational strength, Eliot, too, finds himself suspended between the realm of logic and the realm of disbelief in logic; there are far too many biblical allusions to explain away the spiritual significance of the veiled voyager, and Eliot's feelings belie the words. The death-like state certainly shows the inefficacy of words.

Kristeva, who allies the nonrepresentable, the unnameable with death and with the maternal realm (*Black Sun* 25-42), would view the explorer's lapsing into blank spaces as the exploration of the elusive mother.

⁷ Cf. Jewel Spears Brooker and Joseph Bentley, who come

up with a similar conclusion about Eliot; they unwittingly describe it in Kristevan terms: "The Waste Land evokes a perfect, wordless love that existed before all language and all meaning" (222). Though Brooker and Bentley do not focus on the maternal dynamics of the poem, they do read it in terms compatible with my analysis: using Piaget and F.H. Bradley, they show how Eliot recreated the world of infancy in his *Waste Land* and how Eliot "was involved in retrieving infantile modes" (214).

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Is This Indeed "Attractive"? Another Look at the "Beatrice Palmato" Fragment

by Kristin O. Lauer

In 1975, in the back of the definitive biography of Edith Wharton, Yale Professor R.W.B. Lewis published an extraordinary document from her notebooks, a pornographic incestuous scene between father and daughter. It accompanied the outline of a short story of madness and incest, "Beatrice Palmato."

I would like to suggest that this fragment has been seriously misinterpreted by biographers and feminists, that it is neither startling, in terms of Wharton's work and themes, nor attractive, and that a close reading reveals the same rescue scenario ubiquitous in male-female relationships in Wharton's fiction.¹ The fragment helps explain why psychoanalytic writer Virginia Blum came to the conclusion: "Ultimately, we confront Wharton's conviction that men and women in society cannot help but destroy each other" (Blum 26).

Analysis of the rich psychological meaning of the fragment in terms of Karen Horney's theories of neurotic disturbances in human relationships emphasizes the sharp difference between Freud and Horney, and the value of Horney's concepts for literary analysis. Critics who stop with Freud in a case like this are bound by rigid biographical (and necessarily speculative) boundaries, whereas Horney's work illuminates the famous fragment itself in new ways and allows us to uncover the neurotic patterns embedded in it that recur throughout Wharton's work. It was Karen Horney who argued, in her refutation of Freud's libido theory, that all is not sexuality that looks like it — an immensely important point in terms of the "Beatrice Palmato" fragment.² She also outlines the three basic neurotic strategies that disturb human relationships: self-effacing and expansive drives and detachment, moves toward, against and away from people.³

This fragment, certainly neither jolting nor unique, in itself, to such weathered scholars as Professor Lewis and Cynthia Griffin Wolff, who found it at the Beinecke Library while researching her psychological biography, *A Feast of Words*, nevertheless was thought so remarkable, both biographers printed it and the plot outline accompanying it, and both devote a long appendix to it. Professor Lewis called it "the most startling piece

of fiction Edith Wharton ever wrote" (Lewis 524).

It is couched in Wharton's crystalline, classical style, but there is nothing particularly out of the ordinary in the sexual act as described, except, of course, that it is between father and daughter. There are no gymnastics, no little grace notes of humor or individuality, no fetching poetic metaphors. Even as an exercise in pornography, it is curiously pedestrian. It seems it would hardly be of note at all except that: 1) a woman wrote it from a woman's point of view; 2) it was written probably in 1918 or 1919; 3) that woman was Edith Wharton.

Or, is there, perhaps, something — a great deal more — here?

The most obvious conclusion was immediately voiced by Professor Lewis, who dated the fragment much later, in the 1930's: "She had arrived at a deep harmony with her own life history and was able, unperturbed, to confront the whole truth about herself . . ." He, very naturally, speculates: "She could finally acknowledge and give fantasy form to the strong physical attraction she had once felt for her own father . . ." (Lewis 525). Professor Wolff draws much the same classically Freudian meaning from the fragment: "The longing from which the girl [Edith Wharton] had run — against which she had employed regression as a defense — is a flaming, consuming love for her father . . ." (Wolff 307).

Such conclusions seem eminently sensible if we employ Freud. However, there *is* something disturbing in Professor Lewis's *focus* in his discussion of the fragment. The "overwhelming intensity of pleasure experienced by young Beatrice" he equates with the "bliss" Edith Wharton found in "recapturing her first enjoyment of the varieties of sexual love in the relationship with Morton Fullerton, [her distant, rejecting lover in her midforties] discovering again a beauty and fulfillment . . ." (Lewis 526). Even more unsettling to the psychologically-oriented critic is Professor Wolff's contention that

the most striking thing of all is that this "horror" is in *no way* abhorrent. It is a glowing, glorious, satisfying experience. Not sadistic, not shaming: a delightful erotic fantasy . . . Incest,

as Edith Wharton renders it, is irresistibly attractive . . . [T]he scene between Beatrice and her father becomes repellant only when society's customs and injunctions are invoked . . . (Wolff 307).

The feminists, as we would expect, are appalled. Elizabeth Ammons, for example, finds the scene sinister. Beatrice Palmato's father makes love to her in a room fitted out like one in a commercial bordello (black fur rug, purple velvet pillows, pink-shaded lamps) and the lovemaking, though it is ecstatic for the daughter, is a cool exercise in sexual expertise, a display of power, for the father. He leads, she follows; he is in control, she is not (Ammons 141).

Ammons and other feminists find the disturbances in sexual relationships in Wharton's work a result of an oppressive patriarchal culture.

Nevertheless, the Freudian summation, the feminist response, are quite predictable. However, I suggest we look at what is *not* to be expected in the fragment, what is out of the ordinary, the metaphoric aspects of the scene, to uncover the neurotic strategies operating here. This is rightly, as Ammons suggests, a scene dramatizing power, full of pride. In fact, it has all the marks of what Karen Horney terms the goal of neurotic development: It is a vindictive triumph. If we read carefully what is actually *said* we find that Mr. Palmato prides himself, like some old Don, coming for his bloodmoney, on being up to now "so perfectly patient." At last, however, he asserts his neurotic claim: "[L]et me show you what only you and I have the right to show each other." He speaks in the stylized rhythms of an antique stage villain, and his gestures are no more original: "He caught her wrists" and then he repeats (to his married daughter) in a "penetrating whisper": "only you and I" (Lewis 547). There is little that is attractive to the healthy female in such bloated egotism. Mr. Palmato is an example of Karen Horney's expansive drives incarnate, whose "pride is invested in being the ideal lover and in being irresistible" (Horney 1950, 305).

At one point, Beatrice "shudders," remembering her husband's rough deflowering, but Mr. Palmato sees her pain as his advantage: "[I]t has to come once in all women's lives. Now we shall reap its fruit." There are the usual verbs — thrusting, plunging — but the last line again draws us up sharply: "Was it . . . like this . . . last week?" (Lewis 548).

This triumphant, adolescent (underneath it all, compulsive) quality of Mr. Palmato's question is the most repellant aspect of the fragment, as if the object of the sexual act is not physical pleasure at all, but a proof of superiority, the outcome of a competition: a score. As

if, without some defeated rival, the sexual act would lose color and meaning.

But what of Beatrice's touted "bliss"? Are there dark elements here in Wharton's conceptualization of sexual love? (I agree with Professor Wolff that this scene *is* such for Wharton, but we come to different conclusions.)

In the first place, Beatrice is desperately unhappy in her marriage and finds herself in this pink-shaded, bear-rugged room in the position of countless other Wharton characters in what is the dominant pattern of male-female relationships in her work: She has come, not primarily for pleasure, but essentially for rescue from the "dull misery of her marriage." Thus, sexual pleasure is to be in the nature of a narcotic, a drug, to lift her out of her emotional lethargy and depression: to free her from herself. This same desire for freedom from emotional pain is at the core of almost every important male-female relationship in Wharton's fiction. The rescues are psychological rescues, but there are grave questions about the freedom desired. Since inadequate, often even malevolent rescuers, are invariably chosen, and the rescues *never* work, we must wonder what inner forces compel miserable characters to choose such flawed saviors, of whom Mr. Palmato is only the most patently absurd, tragic example. The most horrifying rescue pattern emerges in *Ethan Frome* where Ethan's egocentric use and destruction of Mattie Silver, masquerading as a rescue, is so sympathetically rendered it takes a very independent reader to remember that Mattie was once a popular young girl of many alternatives courted by an eligible young man in Starkfield. Ethan's totally egocentric world view and compelling emotional distress, *his* need for rescue, overwhelm Mattie and lift her far from reality where the glories of an exclusive, anti-social relationship seem preferable to life itself.

The basic passivity of the one to be rescued in Wharton often materializes as an eagerness to surrender the self. We have a moment-by-moment account of Beatrice's sensations, but we must read attentively, and carefully divorce ourselves from our conditioned responses to pornography, to notice that she does nothing but "let herself sink backward among the pillows." Mr. Palmato, on the other hand, is "never idle." Her first independent response is the shudder as "she remembered Austin's rough embrace." It is intriguing that she, too, has the absent husband at the forefront of her mind — enough to make her, at this moment of great sexual excitement — still judge and compare, and justify her own behavior, as we would expect from Horney's self-effacing type. When she does lose herself and gasp "Ah!" and fling her legs apart, Mr. Palmato is quick to regain the lead. At the end, she is "sinking backward into new abysses of bliss" and her father is penetrating into her "thirsting" body (Lewis

547-548). Beatrice herself has to contribute nothing. We see the similarity in this rescue and Horney's description of the self-effacing person whose

need for help actually amounts to the expectation that everything will be done for him.

Others should supply the initiative, do his work, take the responsibility, give meaning to his life, or take over his life so that he can live through them (Horney 1950, 228).

Another thread in the fragment informs us that Beatrice and her father are repeating an old ritual, although it has never before led to actual intercourse, which gives Beatrice the aspect of a puppet when he murmurs "my little girl" (important phrasing in Wharton's work in which women — of all ages — to be rescued are invariably addressed as children), and she "instantly understood the reminder that his words conveyed, letting herself downward along the divan till her head was in line with his middle she flung herself upon the swelling member . . ."

Beatrice does, we must admit, find her "bliss," and achieve at least a momentary rescue in her surrender. She also, we must infer, although it is not explicitly stated, assures herself that it is not *she* who is at fault in the sexual unhappiness of the marriage, but the unseen, although palpably present, defeated husband. Beatrice, then, is Horney's self-effacing type, incarnate, seeking to lose her hated self in merging with a partner in oblivion. Still: is it irresistibly attractive?

Even if we overlook all the incest apparatus: the picture of a miserable woman driven to find one moment of rescue in surrender to an obviously controlling, utterly egotistical man is — feminist or not — terribly sad, terribly hopeless, unfortunately replayed every day.

If we turn to the plot outline of the story, "Beatrice Palmato," we find other intriguing parallels with Wharton's recurring characters. In the story, Beatrice's mother goes mad and dies in an insane asylum after realizing that her husband has seduced her elder daughter, Beatrice's sister; the sister commits suicide. Mr. Palato is left to raise his other daughter, Beatrice, who is

a musical and artistic child, full of intellectual curiosity, and at the same time very tender and emotional . . . [A]t 18 Beatrice meets [and marries] a young man of good family, a good-looking rather simple-minded country squire with a large property and no artistic or intellectual tastes . . . Beatrice seems to her friends changed, depressed, overclouded. Her animation and brilliancy have vanished, and she gives up all her artistic interests, and appears to absorb herself in her husband's country tastes. The Palmato group of friends all deplore her having married such a dull man, but admit that he is very kind to her and that she seems happy (Lewis 545-546).

This dull, kind man is to be found throughout Whar-

ton's fiction, and is almost certainly modelled on her own husband, Edward Wharton. In fact, the plot outline as it concerns the marriage seems a recital of Edith Wharton's own marital strategies and woes. In terms of the "Beatrice Palmato" fragment, if we stay on a literal level, it seems obvious that Beatrice would choose an unsuitable husband and adopt a strategy of "moral masochism" as Freud defined it to cope with her paralyzing guilt.⁴ Yet if we look at the proliferation of stodgy, incompatible mates that plod through Wharton's fiction from her very first short stories in 1899 to her very last, incomplete novel, *The Buccaneers*, we are tempted to read the fragment as another example of self-effacement (in both male and female characters) in marriage which leads to the shrunken life from which the character seeks relief. We can also, through Horney, see that neurotic claims render these "dull" men and women repulsive to the neurotic. The expectation that the partner will give meaning and purpose to life and save the "victim" from her own self-contempt is totally unrealistic.

But who or what, metaphorically, *is* this nice, unintellectual country squire? What is it that the neurotic wars against and must obstinately defeat to confirm either his or her power, like Mr. Palmato, or attain an oblivious bliss, like Beatrice? It is nothing more nor less than reality in its broadest sense. This reality that the search for freedom — usually meaning the glory of an ideal relationship in Wharton — thwarts, is not only an external reality like a husband or a social convention, but the neurotic reality of the two participants in the rescue as well. The incest situation is instructive because incest is blatantly an unreal solution and leads to a spurious glory, although it is a powerful opiate, but the wars Wharton's characters fight against their own psychic realities are legion, and become particularly poignant when passionate emotions *do* break through in characters like Anna Leath in *The Reef*, Rose Sellars in *The Children* and Kate Clephane in *The Mother's Recompense*. Each of these women who *thought* she wanted rescue into a freer life is appalled at the emergence of a powerful sexual jealousy beyond her characteristic methods of control, and each scoots back into self-effacing shrinking from the demands of emotional honesty.

Actually, all of these characters are seeking relief from their own neurotic strategies. Horney enumerates many disturbances in human relationships that result from the self-alienation of pride and self-hatred at war in the individual, but the ones most instructive in terms of Wharton, and that illuminate the "Beatrice Palmato" fragment and the rescue pattern in Wharton most clearly, are the expectation that a partner can give more than in reality one person can give to another — hence the extreme hostility when the needs are thwarted — and the neurotic externalizations that make the victims blind to the true nature and motivations of their rescuers. Why do critics, for example, so roundly condemn Lawrence Selden for failing to "rescue" Lily Bart, who has made it quite clear

that he is too poor to satisfy her? The subtle rhetoric of the book inflicts the rescue scenario upon us simply because Lily's need is so great.

The drive for emotional liberation through relationship in Wharton looks, on the surface, so understandable and so healthy, that it is puzzling in its failure until we realize that she is — quite unconsciously at times — simply dramatizing an old truth: Personal liberation can never come from without. If we read the "Beatrice Palmato" fragment only in terms of Freud, we miss the rich meaning it has for Wharton's work as a whole. It was Karen Horney, in her last books, who came to the conclusion that changes in personal relationships and political structures were not so efficacious in healing the disturbed individual as previously thought. The neurotic's incompatible drives to escape and annihilate the self and at the same time to liberate the self can never be realized, no matter how powerful the rescuer, and cultural changes in the status of women — although helpful to some extent — are not the panacea in terms of Horney that they are to the feminists.⁵ Psychological freedom can only come from a new inner orientation — the abandonment of claims for exclusiveness and glory and relinquishment of both passivity and demands for rescue from ordinary life — something Wharton's characters never attempt.

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1. Blake Nevius, in *Edith Wharton: A Study of Her Fiction*, was the first critic to expound a general theory of male-female relationships in Wharton's fiction, and his conclusion that disturbances result from a larger nature trapped by a smaller, meaner one has been widely adopted. My theory that the rescue scenario lies at the root of the relationship problems takes issue with Nevius in that I see the rhetoric of Wharton's fiction subtly supporting the claims of the victims — the larger natures to Nevius — and discouraging close analysis of the psychological entrapment. See my analysis of *Ethan Frome* later in the paper.

2. Horney argued that neurotic conflicts are not primarily sexual in origin, but "are determined ultimately by disturbances in human relationships." She discarded Freud's theory of instincts for her own explanation that neurosis evolves from a need for a feeling of safety generated by a basic anxiety. See especially her arguments against Freud's libido theory in *New Ways in Psychoanalysis*.

3. See Horney's *Neurosis and Human Growth* for detailed examination of these neurotic strategies; she devotes a chapter to each. Her theories of neurotic claims, the search for glory and the need for vindictive triumphs are also explained in the work.

4. In connection with Freud's "moral masochism" in Wharton's characters, probably the most influential, detailed psychoanalytical study of her work is "The Masochistic Character in the Work of Edith Wharton" by Henry J. Friedman. Unfortunately, Friedman's paper was published before the Lewis biography so his biographical material is dated. What he interprets as moral masochism stemming from repressed feelings of rage and guilt in Wharton's characters Horney would describe as masochism arising from needs for oblivion and failures to realize an ideal self. Her position as distinguished from Freud's is also set forth clearly in *New Ways in Psychoanalysis*. She finds the nature of guilt feelings in the

neurotic, particularly the self-effacing type, often in service of an ideal image — generated by failure to live up to one's "shoulds." It is interesting that both Theodor Reik in *Masochism in Sex and Society* and Horney point out the triumphant aspects of masochistic suffering — the glory involved. Horney explained masochistic suffering as a way to express repressed expansive drives. Although Reik argues that one cannot be a masochist and a narcissist at the same time, Horney's theories of contradictory trends operating explain why Lily Bart, for example, can be seen by Joan Lidoff as a narcissist in "Another Sleeping Beauty: Narcissism in the *House of Mirth*" and as a masochist by Friedman. Again, Horney emerges as invaluable because her insights illuminate contradictions in both characters and critical responses: Thus Ethan Frome is argued to be a hero, a masochist and the destroyer of women, but Horney would say the categories stem from the complexities of his neurotic structure.

5. Horney's closing remarks in her chapter "Neurotic Disturbances in Human Relationships" in *Neurosis and Human Growth* are, I believe, her answer to feminist expectations: ". . . a suitable human environment may allow him [the neurotic] to feel comparatively at ease even though his neurosis has not changed at all. The same viewpoints apply to expectation (of a more impersonal kind) based on changes in institutions, economic conditions, forms of political regimes . . . [E]ven the best changes in the external situation do not in themselves bring about personal growth" p. 308. She explains the dilemma in many modern "liberated" women: "Women for instance may put the conflict between love and work on the basis of cultural conditions . . . To make a long story short: in their love life they may tend toward a morbid dependency while in their career they may show all the earmarks of neurotic ambition and a need for triumph . . . In theoretical terms they have tried to relegate their self-effacing trends to their love life and their expansive drives to their work. In actual fact so neat a division is not feasible. And it will become apparent in analysis that, roughly, a drive for mastery also operates in their love relations, as do self-abnegating trends in their careers . . ." (p. 354).

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BOOK REVIEWS

Wretched Exotic: Essays on Edith Wharton in Europe. Eds. Katherine Joslin and Alan Price. New York: Peter Lang, 1993. 418 pp. \$48.95

by James W. Tuttleton

Wretched Exotic is a splendid collection of nineteen essays by diverse hands on Edith Wharton's life and work after 1907, when she permanently moved to Europe. Many of the essays were originally lectures presented at the international literary conference "Edith Wharton in Paris," which was organized by the Edith Wharton Society in 1991. But these have been revised and expanded and other material has been added to round out a wonderfully comprehensive picture of the novelist abroad.

The title of the book derives from Mrs. Wharton's remark to Sara Norton in 1903, that, after returning from one of her many trips to Europe, she was miserable because "the tastes I am cursed with are all of a kind that cannot be gratified here." She said that she liked her New York and New England friends: "One's friends are delightful; but we are none of us Americans, we don't think or feel as the Americans do, we are the wretched exotics produced in a European glass-house, the most *déplacé* & useless class on earth!" Of course the experience of expatriation — for shorter or longer periods — has been a constant with our writers; and social and aesthetic discontent is as American as apple pie. But few of our writers have gone as far as Mrs. Wharton in remarking (in "Life and I") that "I have never . . . thought otherwise, or felt otherwise than as an exile in America." And few indeed have claimed Europe as a permanent home. In any event, this feeling made her a "hybrid," according to our editors, whose cultural allegiances were "divided" between her homeland and Europe.

In exploring the European Edith Wharton, the editors have grouped the essays thematically. The first section, **Resident of Europe**, contains biographical treatments of Mrs. Wharton's discovery in Europe of those cultural forms that could gratify her tastes. Shari Benstock's "Landscapes of Desire: Edith Abroad," Susan Goodman's "Edith Wharton's Inner Circle," and Millicent Bell's "Edith Wharton in France" provide the biographical background necessary to grasp Mrs. Wharton's affection for Europe. Then, in a section called **American Expatriate**, Kristin Olson Lauer examines the contemporary American reaction to Mrs. Wharton's expatriation; Robert A. Martin and Linda Wagner-Martin consider her in relation to Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Faulkner, and Stein; and Carol Wershoven points to Mrs. Wharton's distinction between the cultural treasures of Europe and the emergent "Eurotrash" satirically treated in the postwar novels.

It might be supposed that France is the focus of this volume; and there is no doubt that Paris was Mrs. Wharton's spiritual as well as physical home. But the third section of the book, **European Traveler**, suggests that she did indeed try to become that European that T.S. Eliot said no European could become. Shirley Foster's "Making It Her Own: Edith Wharton's Europe," Mary Suzanne Schriber's analysis of the difference between Mrs. Wharton's travel writing and ordinary travel books, Maureen E. St. Laurent's study of Mrs. Wharton's travels in Italy and France, Brigitte Bailey's elucidation of "Aesthetics and Ideology in *Italian Backgrounds*," and Teresa Gómez Reus's mapping of Edith Wharton's response to Spain are immensely helpful

in understanding the depth of Mrs. Wharton's grasp of European culture. World War I was of course a turning point in her European experience, and the section **War Observer and Participant** offers Alan Price's "Wharton Mobilizes Artists to Aid the War Homeless" and Judith L. Sensibar's analysis of *A Son at the Front* as the re-writing of a "masculinist tradition."

The final two sections contain both more radical and more conventional types of literary criticism. **New Ways to Read Her Fiction** offers a reconsideration of *The House of Mirth* by Cynthia Griffin Wolff; Julie Olin-Ammentorp's analysis of Halo in *The Gods Arrive* (in the light of Julia Kristeva's notions of motherhood); and Susan Elizabeth Sweeney's ruminations on "Roman Fever." And **International Reader and Writer** directs us to the range and depth of Mrs. Wharton's reading in other literatures. In this section, Katherine Joslin reflects on Mrs. Wharton's bristling response to international literary modernism and its implications for contemporary feminism. Roger Asselineau demonstrates by exact analysis her idiomatic command of French, her wide reading in French literature, and her complete integration into the literary life of the French writers she knew. And, finally, Helen Killoran gives us a splendid account of Mrs. Wharton's reading in foreign languages, together with checklists of German, Italian, and French books she is known to have owned and read.

In sum, then, *Wretched Exotic* offers a diverse and plentiful compendium of fact and information about Mrs. Wharton as a European traveler, resident, reader, and writer; and every serious student of Mrs. Wharton's fiction will want to own this book. Having said that, I must remark that, in every such collection, there are of course some essays that are better or worse than others. I had a high opinion of most of them but especially valued those that presented new facts (at least to me) or that organized dispersed bits of information so as to make new and revealing wholes: Wershoven on Wharton's "Eurotrash," Lauer on American reactions to the expatriation; Reus, especially, on Spain's Dionysian appeal; Asselineau on Wharton's command of French and its literary culture; and Killoran's census of Wharton's reading.

On the other hand, I noted a great many latent disturbances in the book, as critics got radical and tried to claim the conservative Mrs. Wharton for one ideological agenda or another. Her insistence on Nettie Struther's central truth of existence, and her postwar treatment of selfish mothers and neglected children seemed to induce great anxiety in a few feminist critics; and Sensibar, Wolff, Olin-Ammentorp, and Sweeney produced some rather surprising readings to me. For Sweeney, "Roman Fever" is "an account of the curse of patriarchy, which turns women against each other and themselves." Sensibar doesn't like "masculinist, homophobic gender classifications" (whatever they may be); and taking (of all people) Paul Fussell as a guide to masculinity, transmogrifies the war novel *A Son at the Front* into an incestuous fantasy of a homosexual father hankering for his son. (And maybe the boy's stepfather too.) Shirley Foster has spent some time in the land of Third World grievances and

makes out Wharton in Europe to be crypto-imperialist, "the aggressor/coloniser seeking to appropriate the desired territory," which Foster inversely eroticizes, so that a sort of Male Wharton "personally becomes the agent of penetration, inserting herself into a sometimes reluctant external environment." One flees from such trendy discourse to the solid scholarship of Katherine Joslin and the critical wisdom of Millicent Bell.

Far from the rapist of European culture, Edith Wharton was a deep admirer and advocate of its social and aesthetic forms. And for all of our Yank revolutionary palaver, nothing could

have been more American than an admiration for Europe such as hers. Was she American, French, Italian, or a European? All four as a matter of fact and more besides. Once she discovered her vocation as a writer, as she put it in *A Backward Glance*, she "finally acquired a nationality. The Land of Letters was henceforth to be my country and I gloried in my new citizenship." The essays in *Wretched Exotic* will wonderfully illuminate how she became its naturalized citizen.

New York University

***Edith Wharton: An Extraordinary Life*, by Eleanor Dwight. New York: Henry A. Abrams, Inc. 1994
296 pp. \$39.95**

by **Kathy A. Fedorko**

Edith Wharton: An Extraordinary Life by Eleanor Dwight is an affectionate and richly evocative portrait of Edith Wharton. This beautifully written and produced book provides a feast of visual and verbal detail about a woman whose achievements, courage, energy, and love of life were indeed extraordinary.

Dwight organizes her "illustrated biography" around the key places in Wharton's life — New York City, Newport, Italy, Lenox, Paris, Pavillon Colombe, and Hyères — and a key event in her life, World War I. Using 335 illustrations — including photographs, postcards, garden plans, letters, and drawings, many of which have never been published — and a clear, amiable prose style, Dwight immerses the reader in Wharton's world. Yet because of the book's focus on the importance of "place" in Wharton's response to life, the reader isn't overwhelmed by the material.

The evocative detail about the places Wharton lived in and loved and the sharply reproduced photographs of these places and the people who shared her life in them make *Edith Wharton: An Extraordinary Life* a rich complement to existing biographies about Wharton, such as R.W.B. Lewis's *Edith Wharton: A Biography* and Louis Auchincloss's *Edith Wharton: A Woman in Her Time*. Dwight's background as a writer of articles on gardens, travel, and literature makes her particularly suited to discuss how these essential aspects of Wharton's life interrelate, but she also makes judicious use of Wharton's writing and scholarship on Wharton to supplement her observations.

Dwight's description of Wharton's first trip to Europe with her family captures the four-year old girl's delight with spectacle, such as that in Rome of "cardinals resplendent in red-and-gold robes with heavy coaches rumbling through narrow streets at twilight," a delight that would remain with her as an adult and would serve her well as a writer (14). Just as "She watched, listened, and remembered, her writer's capital accruing," while in New York and Newport society, so abroad she soaked up impressions (25). Her favorite companion through Europe's wonders was her father, George Frederick Jones, who "lived through his eyes, as his daughter would later" (14). The description of his visual memory, his sensitiveness to the atmosphere of places, his love of gardens, art galleries, and spectacles, brings Jones to life as an influence in his daughter's life beyond that of stifled poet and financially-strapped gentleman with a difficult wife.

The detailed descriptions, accompanied by engaging photographs and drawings, of Lenox and the surrounding area, of the building of the Mount, and especially of Wharton's gardens, impress on the reader anew how significant to Wharton her life at the Mount was. Dwight deftly explains the influence of Wharton's travels in Italy on the design of the grounds and, through Wharton's letters, communicates how "besotted" (as Wharton herself put it) she was about gardening (115). *The House of Mirth*, written in Lenox, is clearly influenced by Wharton's immersion in nature while living there. The Mount will be "one of the most interesting places in the world in 1907" she enthuses, apparently without irony, to a friend who is in the process of creating Arcadia National Park in Maine.

As skillfully as Dwight captures a sense of the Mount and Wharton's life there, she shows us, through letters, diary entries, and the reminiscences and letters of friends, the inevitability of Wharton's move to Europe. Her homes and life on the Rue de Varenne in Paris, at Pavillon Colombe, and at Hyères are described with the same kind of evocative detail as the homes and life in New York, Newport and Lenox are, enriched by a wealth of photographs. Dwight includes Wharton's extensive lists of flower types organized by color in her gardens at Pavillon Colombe and Hyères, and the names wash over the reader, conveying the effusion of texture, scent, size, color, and shape in a Whartonian garden: orange calendula, heliopsis, yellow calceolaria, white and yellow snapdragons, anchusas, delphiniums, mauve dwarf asters, heliotrope, violet petunias, violet china asters, bachelor buttons, blue browallia, Cape marigolds, Siberian wall flowers, straw and orange nasturtiums, scabiosas, penstemons, orange California poppies (219). Dwight notes that *Summer, The Children, The Mother's Recompense*, and, most interestingly, the "Beatrice Palmato" fragment, are all informed by "images of light and sea" and blooming that characterized Wharton's life in the south of France (257).

The intensity of Wharton's attachment to places was enhanced by her propensity for leaving them. Dwight tells us that Wharton crossed the Atlantic by ship almost yearly between 1885 and 1914, making between sixty and seventy crossings in her lifetime. On land she adored the automobile, which she praised as "a fantastically efficient way to collect mental pictures" (212). Her several cars were named after the lovers of George Sand, prompting Henry James to ask Wharton to take him with her to Nohant for a second visit, if she has "the proper Vehicle of Pas-

sion" (137).

Wharton's predilection for going ways other than those in guidebooks and wanting to see other than what tourists wanted to see led to the discovery of a della Robbia in Italy, several scrupulously researched and distinctively original travel books, and numerous adventures, such as having her car lowered by ropes from the Monastery of La Verna when it couldn't negotiate the narrow road on the side of the cliff (230). "One of the rarest and most delicate pleasures of the continental tourists," Wharton writes impishly, "is to circumvent the compiler of his guide book . . ." (72).

Nowhere in Wharton's sense of adventure more apparent than in the accounts of her World War I travels into the military zones of France and Belgium. Wharton and Walter Berry, her traveling companion, were allowed to travel unescorted while entering and leaving the zones, so as usual Wharton took advantage of one "adventurous shortcut" after another. Accompanied by members of the French High Command, Wharton and Berry were also able to get close to artillery fire at frontline positions and in trenches.

Dwight posits that this unique VIP treatment was probably based in part on the calculation that Wharton would "produce effective propaganda for the French cause" (201). They were right. With a magnificent array of photographs and detail from Wharton's fiction, letters, and newspapers accounts, as well as the letters and writings of others, *Edith Wharton: An Extraordinary Life* illustrates how Wharton took on the war effort in France with CEO power, dedication, and mastery. As her friend Jacques-Emile Blanche wrote of her, "one could picture her at the head of a convent, of a hospital, of a factory, or bank" (183).

Dwight reminds us that Wharton's impetus for her war work comes in part from her emotional connection to place: "That each person have a home was one of Wharton's most profound concerns; and she had a deep impulse to create good working and pleasant living conditions in other lives" (183). The common theme to her activities was that "if someone was in distress, she would respond" (188). What is also clear, however, from Wharton's reference to "the silly idiot women" who are themselves making shirts for the wounded, rather than creating work opportunities for the destitute women war victims as she had done, was that she could also be haughtily self-righteous about her successful war relief work (183).

Throughout the war experience, as in all those that Dwight recounts in *Edith Wharton: An Extraordinary Life*, are verbal and visual portraits of the people Wharton considered her friends and "soul mates," among them, Egerton Winthrop, Ogden Codman, Henry James, Beatrix Farrand, Walter Berry, Sally Norton, Morton Fullerton, and Mary and Bernard Berenson. Especially interesting are the stories about Wharton's conflicted relationship with Ogden Codman, her friendship with Daisy Chanler, beginning with their experiences as playmates in Rome as children, and her friendship with Ethel Cram. Dwight concentrates on how these many friends complicated but also significantly enriched Wharton's life. This is particularly clear in her inclusion of Wharton's long and moving diary entry that, no matter what the cost of her relationship with Fullerton, Wharton felt triumphant satisfaction that she had "drunk the wine of life at last," had "known the thing best worth knowing," had been "warmed through & through, never to grow quite cold again till the end . . ." (148).

Supplementing *Edith Wharton: An Extraordinary Life* are

notes, a chronology, a selected bibliography, including a list of unpublished material, and the photograph credits, which give a good sense of the research involved in this project and will be useful to scholars. The notes are good reading in themselves, especially for those who can never know enough about Wharton. They tell us, for instance, the amount Wharton earned from each of her publications, the contemporary equivalents of the plant names Wharton used, and gossip about the battle between Royall Tyler and Beatrix Farrand over Wharton's will.

The format of the notes is also one of my few complaints about his stunning book. There are no note numbers on the pages. Rather, note entries are listed by page number at the end of the book. The entries may give the source of the information quoted in the text but they do not include page numbers. Often no source information for quoted material is provided at all. No doubt this documentation method was chosen because the book is intended for the general reader than for scholars. (It is a "Dividend Selection" of the Book-of-the-Month Club and an "Alternate Selection" of the Reader's Subscription Book Service.) However, because one of the strengths of *Edith Wharton: An Extraordinary Life* is that Dwight weaves together Wharton's story from so many disparate sources, including those not previously published, scholars *will* want to read it. Yet trying to use the information from it could be frustrating.

Another minor demurrer concerns Dwight's references to Wharton's rage. At the beginning of the book she indicates that this is one of the emotions that gave places "personalities far beyond reality" for Wharton (19). At the end, in her discussion of "Roman Fever," Dwight again refers to Wharton's rage, as "this new kind of Roman fever," and she comments that Italy was the place "she could best associate with the honest feelings of rage she had harbored for so long" (279). Though the initial references are prefaced by mention of Wharton's unexpressed hatred for her mother, which might help explain the rage, the second references go entirely unexplained. One would need to have read other books about Wharton to understand what this rage is about, since Dwight's portrait of Wharton is primarily of her as an "incorrigible lover," of travel, of flowers, of friends, of literature, of culture, of the power and beauty of life.

Wharton writes in *A Backward Glance* that "if one is unafraid of change, insatiable in intellectual curiosity, interested in big things, and happy in small ways," one "*can* remain alive long past the usual date of disintegration." Eleanor Dwight's *Edith Wharton: An Extraordinary Life* shows how triumphantly Wharton followed her own advice.

Middlesex County College

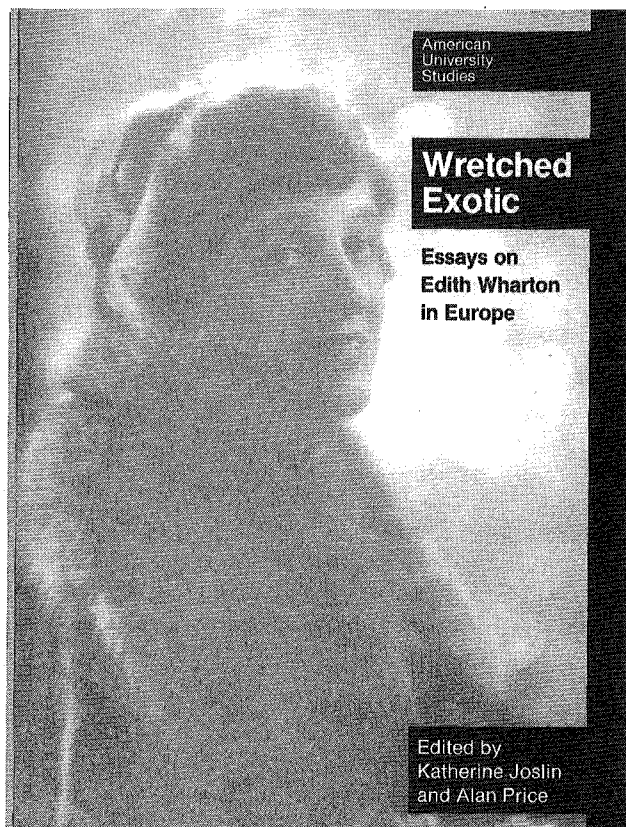
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LANG

WRETCHED EXOTIC

Essays on Edith Wharton in Europe

Edited by Katherine Joslin and Alan Price



The elegant and perceptive essays in this collection show us the European Wharton—her life, her opinions, and, most important, her literary achievements. It is indispensable to any Wharton scholar.”

—Cathy N. Davidson, Duke University

“A remarkably rich assembly of essays. They explore with notable grace and perception Edith Wharton’s bi-cultural world and her interaction with it—not only its role in the shaping of her as a person and a writer, but her (often resounding) impact upon its American and European components.”

—R.W.B. Lewis, Yale University

“Appropriately elegant and chic, these often brilliant, charming and witty essays from the unforgettable Paris Edith Wharton Conference have been admirably edited into a volume which reflects the joys of the occasion and the sheer intellectual power of the contributors.”

—Jane Marcus, CUNY Graduate Center and The City College of New York

Marking a new direction in Edith Wharton studies, this collection of provocative essays considers her as a cross-cultural writer. A resident of France for the last thirty years of her life, Wharton described herself as a “wretched exotic,” an American by birth, but a European by inclination and, in fundamental ways, a true citizen of neither. In six sections, the volume discusses Wharton as a resident of Europe, American expatriate, European traveler, war observer and participant, and international reader and writer. It also presents new ways of reading her fiction.

1993, 418 pages, hardcover, \$48.95

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Viola Hopkins Winner, ed. *Fast and Loose & The Buccaneers* by Edith Wharton. Charlottesville: U P of Virginia, 1993. 514 pp.

The Buccaneers: A Novel by Edith Wharton completed by Marion Mainwaring. New York: Viking Penquin, 1993. 406 pp. \$22.00.

At least some of the time, most modern readers want to reverse Cinderella's midnight return to "the ashes and rags of reality," as Edith Wharton puts it in *Fast and Loose* (36), or dream of King Arthur's knights, Tintagel castle and Camelot. Some of us are inextricably captivated by the accepting tone, the nostalgic aura, the calm atmosphere of beauty and hope, the art and essence, that was to have been *The Buccaneers*: we crave more. Viola Winner and Marion Mainwaring have provided it, the first for the scholar, the second for the romantics among us.

Winner has meticulously, thoughtfully, thoroughly — demonstrated how Wharton had "come full circle" in the sixty years between *East and Loose* and *The Buccaneers*:

The heroine is sixteen when the novel opens in the mid-1870s. There are other similarities. Both novels depict the manners and customs of the English aristocracy; the country house, the London season, the mating rituals. Both of the heroines are trapped in miserable marriages. Even the names of the principle lovers in the late work echo those in the earlier: Georgina ("Georgie") Rivers and Nan St. George, Guy Hastings and Guy Thwarte. (vii)

Winner reproduces the extant texts of the two novels as nearly as possible as Wharton intended them. *Fast and Loose* (and "Three Reviews") is followed by *The Buccaneers*, Edith Wharton's scenario for *The Buccaneers*, thorough notes for both novels, Winner's textual emendations, notes on allusions, and careful commentary on Lapsley's revisions to *The Buccaneers*. The work is exactly what she claims, the "first corrected edition" of Edith Wharton's posthumously published novel" (ix).

Wharton's juvenalia, *Fast and Loose*, is prepared with the clichés and sentiment that often accompany youthful fancy, but here demonstrate an already well developed ironic mind even as it exhibits an occasional Austenian turn of phrase that suggests a recent perusal of *Lady Susan*. Yet as Winner points out, Edith Wharton had found her own voice long before meeting, or even reading, Henry James.

Remarkably, because it is astounding that anyone's juvenalia should *dip*, let alone *delve* philosophically, *Fast and Loose* seems to take the position that there can be no heavenly paradise, beginning as it does with the chess game of fate drawn from Seneca's *Phaedra*, and hinting at a *deus es machina* when "the inscrutable, often punitive, force governing human lives is manifest in Mrs. Graham's accident: 'It is certain that in this world the smallest wires work the largest machinery in a wonderful way'" (xvi). As if she had a photographic memory for her intentions, Wharton later turned both literary allusions to mature advantage in *The Reef*.

Sixty years after *Fast and Loose* Wharton invented the *The Earthly Paradise* of the Corregio paintings in *The Buccaneers*. Winner notes, and my brief checking seems to confirm, that these Corregio paintings are fictional. Their creation and allusions to poems like Rossetti's "The Blessed Damosel," Petrarch's poems for Laura, and Dante's *Paradisio* seem to ask whether

there might be a heavenly paradise after all — a matter of interest to those intrigued by Wharton's religious feelings. This theme may account for the joyful peace with which many readers leave this novel, unfinished as it is. Or was.

While Winner's edition of *Fast and Loose* and *The Buccaneers* is an impeccable work of textual scholarship, Mainwaring's completion of Wharton's *The Buccaneers* is intended to entertain. Still, it was disappointing that Mainwaring did not provide what would have been so fascinating, a detailed "Preface" explaining her concepts and methods, or failing that, in her one-paragraph "Afterward" at least a clarification about whether she worked from Lapsley's 1938 edition or one or all of Wharton's three extant manuscripts. (Winner's work would not yet have been available.) Of course, such detail hardly matters to the audience for which Mainwaring wrote, but scholars studying *The Buccaneers* must be cautioned to refer, if at all possible, to Wharton's manuscripts, or secondarily, to Winner, because of the many textual variants between Lapsley's and Mainwaring's versions. Some differences, such as changing "St George" to "St. George" are consistent throughout the Viking text, but others are not.

Normally, for instance, Wharton insisted on three dot ellipses. Mainwaring has conformed to modern practice by replacing three dots with four when the preceding line constitutes a complete sentence. Sometimes she changes ellipses to a dash or vice versa. Often she inserts page breaks in her chapters where none occur in Lapsley's (72) (page references are to Mainwaring) or omits them where they exist in Lapsley (133). Occasionally a word like "duke" is capitalized in Lapsley (140), but not in Mainwaring, or the reverse, such as a capitalization of "Oh" in Mainwaring (43) for "oh" in Lapsley. From time to time words change, as when "room" is substituted for "hotel" (66). Lines in plain type in Lapsley are converted to capitals in Mainwaring (73) and lines in plain type in Mainwaring are italicized in Lapsley. Chapter nine is entirely Mainwaring's own — clearly an attempt to ease the abrupt gap between the girls' decision to try a London season and the following scene featuring Guy and Sir Helmsley at Honourslove. Other changes of words or phrases seem meant to clarify Wharton or prepare for Mainwaring's version of Wharton's conclusion.

The completion of the novel follows Wharton's scenario except that Miss Testvalley gives up Sir Helmsley rather than the reverse, and the American girls provide the governess with references rather than allow her to "go back alone to old age and poverty." Mainwaring demonstrates a close familiarity with Wharton's style by successfully mimicking her prose, inserting lines and stanzas from poetry, details of English place names and architecture, and nineteenth-century life, alluding to painters, and inserting French, German and Italian phrases. Her capacity to retain the personality of the characters, and sometimes even elaborate on them, is superb but occasionally overdone. Ushant, who does not quite distinguish women from clocks, is later colorfully rounded (unlike the clockmaker of the *Brunner Sisters*), shown for the first time as imaginative:

continued on page 36

EDITH WHARTON - An Extraordinary Life

An Illustrated Biography
by Eleanor Dwight



" . . . an affectionate and richly evocative portrait of Edith Wharton . . . beautifully written and produced . . . a feast of visual and verbal detail about a woman whose achievements, courage, energy, and love of life were indeed extraordinary.

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Supplementing [the book] are notes, chronology, a selected bibliography, including a list of unpublished material and the photography credits, which give a good sense of the research involved in this project and will be useful to scholars. The notes are good reading in themselves, especially for those who can never know enough about Wharton."

— Kathy Fedorko
Middlesex County College



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"That clock in Munich with its mechanically gesticulating figures of a king and queen and musicians had, almost, tempted him to travel, as the Colosseum and the Alps had not . . ." He imagines an especially wonderful clock:

At the first stroke of noon, doors would open on a platform onto which a throng of wooden figures, shining with gilt and the brightest possible, red, green, orange and violet, would step in order. A king and queen would bow to each other, a mitred bishop would raise his crook, a soldier aim a gun, a blacksmith strike an anvil . . . [but] the Dutchess failed to curtsey to the Duke, or turned up in the slot belonging to the milkmaid . . . or the key in her back unwound crazily and her springs flew apart. (351-52).

Mainwaring balances the Corregio paradise hanging in An-nabel's sitting room with her nightmares of falling into the pit of Proserpina's hell, the important background to "Pomegranate

Seed" that again demonstrates Mainwaring's thorough knowledge of Wharton's work. Perhaps she explains more than Wharton might, especially the genesis of *The Buccaneers'* odd title (that Winner — and Adeline Tintner before her — trace to Wharton's c. 1925 copy of John Esquemeling's *The Buccaneers of America* (1678) (xxi). "What a gang of buccaneers you are!" . . . American pirates!" (404)

On the other hand, Mainwaring's technique of adding paragraphs, then gradually increasing their number as the story evolves before finally picking up where Wharton left off, is an exceptionally clever, effective method of creating a seamless collaboration far more satisfactory than, for instance, Jane Austen's *Sanditon* completed by A Lady. Does *The Buccaneers: a Novel by Edith Wharton* completed by Marion Mainwaring fulfill its promise of satisfying entertainment? Absolutely.

Ohio University - Lancaster