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EDITH WHARTON AT YALE

A Special Issue, Part I

Guest Co-Editors
Clare Colquitt, Susan Goodman, Candace Waid

On April 28 to 30, 1995, Wharton scholars and friends from the United States, Europe, and Japan convened at New Haven for the fourth conference sponsored by the Edith Wharton Society: "Edith Wharton at Yale, A Conference in Honor of R. W. B. Lewis." The conference included presentations by some 70 scholars on such topics as "Wharton and Popular Culture," "Artifice and Aesthetics," "Yrs, Edith: The Correspondence," "Literary Relations," "Encounters with Race and Class," and "Fictions and Fashions."

The site of the conference was fitting. Here, on June 20, 1923, at the Yale University commencement ceremony, Wharton received an honorary Doctorate of Letters, the first woman to be recognized by Yale for her literary accomplishments. In his presentation speech, Professor William Lyon Phelps praised Wharton for both her literary and philanthropic work, observing that she was an "American novelist of international fame" as well as a "Chevalier of the Legion of Honour in France." Focusing on her fiction, Phelps described Wharton as "a master in the creation of original and living characters," and "of ironical description": "Her books are marked by sincerity in art, beauty in construction, distinction in style." In a letter to Bernard Berenson, Wharton referred to this award as "the one sort of honour I have ever imagined that could please me because I have so loved Letters all my days." Given Wharton's pride in this award, her literary executor Gaillard Lapsley's decision to donate Wharton's papers to Yale was a natural choice.

Like Wharton herself, R. W. B. Lewis may rightly be described as having "loved Letters all [his] days." Author of the Pulitzer prize-winning Edith Wharton: A Biography (1975) and editor, with his wife, Nancy Lewis, of The Letters of Edith Wharton (1988), Lewis addressed the conference about his biography in progress on Robert Penn Warren. Joining Lewis at this plenary session on "Problems of Biography," Patricia Bosworth (Diane Arbus: A Biography [1984]) spoke movingly of the problems she now faces writing the life of her father, an eminent lawyer destroyed by McCarthyism; and Charlotte Goodman disclosed how the writing of Jean Stafford: The Savage Heart (1990) caused her to rethink questions of feminist biography.

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CALL FOR PAPERS

American Literature Association (ALA) in Baltimore
May 22-26, 1997

CALL FOR PAPERS

"Edith Wharton's Exoticism"
Session organizer - Abby Werlock
Saint Olaf College, Dept. of English, Northfield, MN 55057

"Edith Wharton and the Anxiety of Authorship"
Session Organizer - Annette Zilversmit
Long Island University, Dept. of English, Brooklyn, NY 11201

Send 1-2 page proposals to respective organizer, due by November 1, 1996.

Edith Wharton at the Mount II
June 12-14, 1997

Co-sponsored by the Edith Wharton Society and The Mount, an all-Wharton conference will be held at The Mount (in Lenox, Massachusetts) celebrating the 100th anniversary of *The Decoration of Houses.* 1-2 page proposals focusing primarily on Edith Wharton and Design and Edith Wharton as Regional Writer should be sent to: Carole Shaffer-Koros by October 31, 1996. Further information will be forthcoming.

Man or Mannequin?: Lawrence Selden in *The House of Mirth*

by Joseph Coulombe

Unlike many recent critics of *The House of Mirth,* contemporary reviewers debated Edith Wharton's depiction of Lawrence Selden. Some called him a "cold prig" and an "egotist"; others thought him "sympathetic and cultivated," "the nearest approach to a hero that the book contains."[1] Early twentieth-century readers viewed Selden as an intriguingly complicated character; while not perfect, he represented a positive alternative to the materialistic and manipulative characters surrounding Lily Bart.

In sharp contrast, much of the recent criticism describes Selden as cowardly and parasitic, a kind of Dracula sucking the life from Lily. Readers today condemn him for not rescuing Lily, for not transcending the societal restrictions which keep him and Lily apart. Some critics go a step further and implicate Selden directly in Lily's decline and death.[2] The disparity between contemporary and modern views of Selden raises interesting questions. Why the shift in perspective from positive to negative? Does Selden deserve censure for his action (or inaction) more than Bertha Dorset or Judy Trenor? When Wharton referred to Selden as a "negative hero," did she intend to label him a villain?[3]

In this essay, I will argue that Wharton created a non-traditional male character who challenges the dominant literary tropes and cultural stereotypes of her time. Wharton's characterization of Selden invites readers to re-see gender constructs for men as well as women. Of all Wharton's male characters, Selden is perhaps the most positive. He is less fearful than Ethan Frome, less self-deluded than Ralph Marvell (*The Custom of the Country*, 1913), less exploitive than lawyer Royall (*Summer,* 1917), and less conventional than Newland Archer (*The Age of Innocence*, 1920). Only Selden allows the female protagonist the necessary freedom to make her own decision, or, as Wharton wrote in her letter to Sara Norton, "to take her own life" (*Letters,* 163:17 October 1908).

Although both men and women are expected to behave according to the prescribed roles of old New York, Selden defies easy categorization. Wharton writes in her autobiography, *A Backward Glance*, that "great novelists" do not create characters of either one extreme or another: "Authentic human nature lies somewhere between the two . . ." (127). In many respects, Selden embodies what Wharton saw as authentic human nature and clearly has his faults, yet, in light of the society Wharton condemns in *The House of Mirth*, he remains the most sympathetic. Rather than help Lily gain access to a materialistic and reductive society, as Simon Rosedale and Carry Fisher do, Selden offers her the opportunity to escape from many of the restrictions which fashionable society dictates to its members, particularly women. And unlike Archer, or George Darrow in *The Reef* (1912), Selden does not superficially accept unconventional ideas regarding gender roles to rationalize his affections.

Wharton's well-known description of Selden as a "negative hero" in her letter to Sara Norton should not cause us to view Selden as wholly unsympathetic or destructive. Wharton used the term in connection with a poorly produced dramatization of her novel rather than the novel itself, as Julie Olin-Ammentorp shows.[4] Thus, the term "negative hero" should not be used synonymously with "villain." Wharton created an original character antithetical to the

traditional male hero of romance who rejects many of society's stereotypical assumptions about masculinity. In this sense only is Selden "negative." On the other hand, in light of his good intentions and unaffected concern for Lily, he is anything but negative. Alone among the characters, he repeatedly offers Lily the chance to escape from the materialism and pettiness of society, and she consciously refuses his offers. Wharton's characterization of Selden reveals her view of masculinity: men face societal stereotypes and restrictions as well as women and often lack the power to realize the traditional expectations of their gender.

In reality, Selden has very little power. Expected to act but restricted by his place in society, he belongs to a group which Martha Banta, in her study of gender images in America, calls "threshold men." She explains that "threshold men" fit no precise classification, enjoy no special space, and remain on the margins of society in a transitional state (433-35). Wharton's friends, Henry James and Henry Adams, fall into this group, as does Selden. He rejects many traditional male roles and accepts other roles stereotypically viewed as female. Wharton's characterization of Selden was perhaps influenced by her friend Howard Sturgis's novel *Belchamber* (1904). She wrote, "Mr. Sturgis has evidently said to himself: 'I am tired of the so-called manly hero, the brawny and beautiful being who has pervaded English fiction for the last fifty years, always brilliant, victorious, and irresistible'" (*Bookman* 308). Very likely, Wharton also was tired of one-dimensional renderings of "supermen" able to transcend societal restrictions and solve all problems. Selden, according to the narrator, "was, as much as Lily, the victim of his environment" (146). Social reserve and discrimination determine the course of his life no less than Lily's. By failing to save Lily, Selden does not satisfy the formidable standards set by the traditional romance hero. In *The House of Mirth*, Wharton reveals the limitations of stereotypical gender roles through the artful manipulation and blurring of gender distinctions.

Selden does not fit neatly into the category of "maleness" dominant in the early twentieth century. If men are distinguished by machinery, money, industry, and progress, and women by art, domestic crafts, and educational aspirations (Banta 523), then Selden fails to fulfill the gender role assigned by society. Gail Bederman, in her study of manhood at the turn of the century, equates "middle-class manly identity" with "the persona of the successful self-made man" (8). Selden eschews the popular persona. He pursues ideals, art, and self-education; money and material progress are secondary to him. In 1896, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. labelled man "the breadwinner and the fighter," thus emphasizing the functions expected of men (from Rotundo 226). Again, Selden embraces neither stereotype. At the turn of the century men like Selden were denigrated as unproductive and therefore un-male; society had little patience with men who refused to embody "masculine" traits.

Today, we tend to label non-traditional characters as either "feminized males" or "masculinized females." Both admectives reinforce reductive stereotypes which impede our understanding of complex characters such as Selden. Labelling him a "feminized male" suggests that men cannot naturally be idealistic, sensitive, nurturing, or artistic; the term "masculinized female" suggests that women cannot naturally be worldly, strong, independent, or practical. Some of Wharton's other characters, including Charity and lawyer Royall in *Summer*, Ralph Marvell and Undine Spragg in *The Custom of the Country*, and Ellen Olenska and Catherine Spicer Mingott in *The Age of Innocence*, reveal the author's belief that these constructions are unrealistic simplifications. Each of these characters embodies a unique combination of so-called masculine and feminine traits. The labels imply that non-traditional characters can only appropriate roles from the other gender, rather than possess them inherently within themselves. Wharton's characterization of Selden, as well as her other characters, undermines the gender distinctions which bisect society and ultimately contribute to Lily's demise.

Unlike the typical hero of romance, Selden distances himself from the center of action. He refuses to waste all his energy either making money on Wall Street or courting wealthy society women, his two choices for gaining complete acceptance by society. Lily recognizes Selden as separate from the fashionable society she hopes to join: "he had preserved a certain social detachment, a happy air of viewing the show objectively, of having points of contact outside the great gilt cage. . . . It was Selden's distinction that he had never forgotten the way out" (51). Wharton portrays Selden's detachment and his dilettantism as positive, not unlike that of her friends Henry James, Percy Lubbock, and Bernard Berenson. Selden is satisfied with less--his old books, his faded rug, and his "shabby leather chairs" (5). He laughs outright when Lily asks if he would marry to avoid work; marriage to him evidently means more than simply gaining money or social status. Wharton admired those who sacrificed material comforts for art and literature, writing in her autobiography, "In our hurried world too little value is attached to the part of the connoisseur and dilettante" (150). Selden's rejection of materialism makes him unusual, even radical, in a society which values and defines men largely by their wealth. To maintain his personal integrity, Selden steps out of the "hurried world" to pursue the artistic and literary interests which prevent him from gaining complete societal

approbation.

By rejecting society's narrow definition of men, Selden also rejects the traditional view of courtship and marriage which reduces men to mere money-makers. Men may control the commercial world in *The House of Mirth*, but women control the social world.[5] Women like Bertha Dorset and Judy Trenor set the standard for other women to try to follow; men simply provide the money. At the end of the nineteenth century, according to E. Anthony Rotundo, "a man's ability to support a family remained the central requirement for marriage" (114). Selden is not rich, and therefore Lily regards him only as "one of the pleasant accessories of life" (51). Her belittling attitude is paralleled by Bertha Dorset, who steps between Lily and Selden with a "gesture of appropriation" and then speaks with an "air of proprietorship not lost on its object [Selden]" (56). Like Lily, he becomes an accessory or piece of property to be enjoyed and then cast off by the wealthy.

As a relatively poor man, Selden cannot court society women in a serious manner; he can only enter illicit relationships with married women, such as Bertha Dorset, who prey on men like Ned Silverton. To Selden, a traditional marriage could hold little interest. The marriages he knows are dominated by women who care more about their husbands' wealth than the men themselves. Bertha Dorset, Judy Trenor, and Lily's mother are three cases in point. To Lily's mother, her husband "had become extinct when he ceased to fulfill his purpose" (30); he exists only to make money for the conspicuous consumption of his wife, as do Gus Trenor and George Dorset for their wives. Given the reductive nature of marriage and Lily's admitted need for money, Selden's ultimate caution should not be a surprise. His openness regarding his monetary situation, however, is at odds with the "custom of the country." In the later novel, men do not discuss money matters with women because men "don't take enough interest in *them* [women]" (*CoC* 131). On the contrary, Selden is interested enough, and honest enough, to make his finances clear to Lily. His break with custom reveals a love based upon equality and understanding. Wharton's characterization of Selden inverts typical constructions of maleness; he views courtship and ultimately marriage, an institution society sees as positive, with suspicion, thus underscoring his own "negativity."

Like other society women, Lily thinks of marriage as a means to gain money, and she makes it clear to Selden that he is not marriage material. Almost disdainfully, she says, "[Y]ou can't possibly think I want to marry you" (7), and then, "I must have a great deal of money" (8). Rejecting Gerty's example out of hand, Lily feels compelled to marry, telling Selden, "a girl must -- a man may if he chooses" (10). Lily refuses to admit her own desire to climb into the wealthy social spheres of New York society. Never forced to marry, she wants to keep up with women such as Judy Trenor and Bertha Dorset, forgetting how such social games destroyed her mother and father. Lily conforms too easily to society's injunction to marry and, more specifically, to marry chiefly for money. In this respect, she resembles Undine Spragg in *The Custom of the Country*, who also sees marriage as a way to rise in social rank. Wharton's characterization of Lily inverts the stereotypical construct of women (as defined by Banta); Lily's desire for money and her inability to trim hats are decidedly "unfeminine." Women are supposed to be idealistic and domestic, and she does not fit neatly into the gender role prescribed by society. Like Selden, Lily is also "negative" in some ways.

Despite the lure of wealth, Lily has choices which she fails to recognize; she is never condemned by fate, although sometimes she mistakenly ascribes her misfortunes to it. Wharton did not believe in such fatalism and evidently intends Lily's embrace of it as criticism.[6] The flaw appears more obviously in Lily's mother; despite her outlandish spending, she "was not above the inconsistency of charging fate, rather than herself, with her own misfortunes" (32). Lily shares her mother's inconsistency and tries to avoid personal responsibility by blaming fate. While deciding whether to marry Percy Gryce, she thinks, "It was a hateful fate--but how escape from it? What choice had she? To be herself, or a Gerty Farish" (24). Simultaneously accusing fate and listing choices reveals a certain amount of confusion on Lily's part. Not only are fate and choice incompatible, but Gerty's independence clearly seems better than a lifetime of boredom with Gryce. Choices exist for Lily; she simply chooses to pursue money rather than possible escape from a restrictive society.

Early in the novel, Selden also blames fate, simplifying Lily's situation by seeing her as trapped. He thinks, "She was so evidently the victim of the civilization which had produced her, that the links of her bracelet seemed like manacles chaining her to her fate" (6). What initially looks like fate to Selden, later emerges as Lily's own free will. She deliberately chooses society and possible wealth instead of her admitted love for him. Fate has little to do with it.

Although Selden has been criticized for his passivity, he repeatedly offers an escape for Lily who repeatedly chooses to rebuff him. In their first meeting, after Lily upbraids Selden for not visiting her, he says, "'The fact that you don't want to marry me. Perhaps I don't regard it as such a strong inducement to go and see you'" (7). If his words show some self-pity, they also reveal his feelings for Lily. Selden is excluded as a suitor because he lacks the money of a Gryce,

and it hurts him. Her retort shows no pity: "It's stupid of you to make love to me, and it isn't like you to be stupid" (7). His "stupidity" is his disregard for, that is, his "negative" attitude toward, the societal rules which Lily accepts. He has crossed a line only rich men should cross; his love, unacceptable in a money-based society, becomes illicit and must remain on the margins. To Lily, marriage has less to do with love than financial arrangements. Before leaving, however, she gives him a teasing smile "which seemed at once designed to admit him to her familiarity, and to remind him of the restrictions it imposed" (10). The smile invites his affection, but the restrictions cause his later reticence. She plays with his emotions, using him like Bertha Dorset uses Ned Silverton. Apparently, interesting men--poets, artists, dilettantes--exist merely as romantic intrigues for society women who become bored with their wealth and husbands. Their "negative" stature makes them companionable playthings on the periphery of the "positive" social order.

In their second meeting, Lily reveals her love for Selden. The narrator states, "Miss Bart was a keen reader of her own heart, and she saw that her sudden preoccupation with Selden was due to the fact that his presence shed a new light on her surroundings" (51). Compared to him, the other guests at Bellomont appear shallow and uninteresting. They may have money, but Selden clearly interests her more. He offers a "republic of the spirit," an intellectual freedom "from money, from poverty, from ease and anxiety, from all the material accidents" (64). Selden's vision represents a happiness which transcends mere material wealth and societal obligation. The republic also epitomizes a stereotypically female ideal, if we assume that men were recognized for deeds, and women representative of ideals. Such turn-of-the-century sexism caused some "American males who felt out of it" to leave the country: "But many stayed on at home to fight and also to encourage the life of the mind and spirit" (Banta 438). The republic represents a distinct rejection of what David Leverenz calls the "middle class male norms of practicality and competitiveness" (16). It is an idealistic manifestation of the "negative hero" Selden embodies. The republic also offers Lily her best chance to distance herself from a reductive culture. Granted, Lily's freedom would be realized within marriage, but Wharton did not portray all marriages as bad. Nettie Struther, for one, provides a positive example. Moreover, marriage to Selden would lack the confines a society marriage necessarily includes. Men such as Gryce and Rosedale view marriage only as a means to improve their social standings. Male characters in other Wharton novels also pursue marriage for self-serving purposes. Lucius Harney in *Summer* abandons Charity Royall for a profitable society marriage; Marvell in *The Custom of the Country* marries Undine only after imagining himself romantically saving her from the Philistines; and Frome marries Zeena to escape loneliness after his mother's death. Selden, on the other hand, wants to marry for love.

In Selden's republic, love, art, and intellectual freedom are more important than money. Since money defines gender and class in *The House of Mirth*, Selden believes that these restrictive distinctions will blur when money's significance is lessened. Ideally, social constructions of "masculinity" and "femininity" will dissolve in a republic concerned primarily with ideas and art. Intellectual women, theoretically, will be accepted as women, not as masculinized females. To Selden, money represents false happiness and polarizes people into potentially antagonistic groups. Sensing this, Lily admits: "often and often" she has known "that after struggling to get them [riches] I probably shan't like them" (67). She knows that wealth would only limit her to a restricted gender role in which women spend money to alleviate their boredom and to maintain a social hierarchy. As a result, the republic must necessarily be a "close corporation," as Lily proclaims it. Allowing the money-driven into the republic would only re-establish social distinctions, whereas the very value of the republic depends upon their removal. Once again, Selden's "negativity" emerges as he defies societal convention by excluding the rich and powerful from his vision of happiness.

Lily, for a brief moment at Bellomont, considers a possible future with Selden. Both of them know that Selden stands to lose more than Lily by marrying. While she would escape from many social restrictions, he would lose much of his freedom. Selden tells her, "I am not making experiments, . . . [o]r if I am, it is not on you but on myself. I don't know what effect they are going to have on me--but if marrying you is one of them, I will take the risk." Lily answers, "It would be a great risk certainly" (69). Temporarily, Lily chooses the republic by accepting a less expensive lifestyle, stating "'I shall look hideous in dowdy clothes; but I can trim my own hats'" (69). While ironically foreshadowing her future, her statement also clearly indicates a rejection of wealth and society and an acceptance of Selden. Wharton portrays them as happy, innocent, and courageous, "smiling at each other like adventurous children who have climed to a forbidden height from which they discover a new world" (69). However the sound of a motor beyond the "open ledge of rock" (61) recalls Lily to the values of old New York she had momentarily forsaken. Her descent to the world of money represents a distinct rejection of Selden, made more bitter by her apparent acceptance.

Selden's republic invites suspicion by its vagueness; he never defines it specifically. Considering the social context of

the novel, however, the republic can only be vague. Selden's vision breaks from the rigid society in *The House of Mirth;* rather than a positive, concrete fact, it is "negative," a rejection of the status quo. By having Selden share his vision with Lily, Wharton redefines masculinity to embrace the hopeful idealism which Selden and his republic embody. Significantly, Lily admits her belief in the republic, exclaiming, "'I have known. I have known!'" (65). Although briefly envisioning happiness with Selden, Lily ultimately lacks the boldness necessary to undertake the radical social experiment. Her timidity resembles that of Archer in *The Age of Innocence*, who also reverts to a conventional life to avoid the unknown. The republic requires its members to define it. Lily, rather than accept that responsibility, chooses to remain within the traditional and clearly delineated world she already knows.

Lily's temporary acceptance of Selden may seem impulsive, but she had admitted the shallowness of greed long before. As a young woman, "she was secretly ashamed of her mother's crude passion for money" (32). Rather than react against her mother's negative example, she consciously chooses the "great gilt cage" (51). Although societal pressure certainly exists, she is never forced: "In reality, as she knew, the door never clanged; it stood always open" (51). The image recalls May Bartram's words to Marcher in Henry James's *The Beast in the Jungle* (1903). Trying to persuade Marcher to embrace love and passion, May says, "The door isn't shut. The door's open . . . . It's never too late" (300). Marcher's failure to use the door leads to his tragic realization of lost opportunity and lost life. In *The House of Mirth*, Selden shows Lily to the door, where he finds himself caught in the same social bind as May. He cannot force the issue but must speak cautiously and then stand back to let her choose. Unlike the stereotypically masculine hero, he respects her choice and leaves her to live her own life. His handling of the situation also invites comparison to Royall in *Summer*. Both men extend offers of love relatively early in the novels and then wait almost passively for the decision of the women. Neither wants to force a woman into a situation which she would not choose herself.

Selden and Lily's third private meeting occurs at the *tableaux vivants*. In the artistic simplicity of Lily's self-depiction, Selden sees her beauty as "detached from all that cheapened and vulgarized it" (130). Even Gerty exclaims, "It makes her look like the real Lily -- the Lily I know" (130). Detached from the materialism of society, Lily resembles the ideal epitomized by the republic. Once again, Selden expresses his love, but Lily's social ambitions dominate: she feels "an intoxicating sense of recovered power" (131). Ignoring "the quicker beat of life that his nearness always produced" (131), she tells Selden, "'Ah, love me, love me--but don't tell me so!'" (132). Lily's request re-emphasizes her decision to marry for money and power, and she puts him off once again, knowing "he was not the man to mistake such a hint" (134). Indeed, he has already shown himself to be extremely sensitive to such "hints."

Selden's later reticence seems unsurprising in light of Lily's hints, or, more accurately, her repeated and blunt rebuffs, and should not be considered an abandonment of Lily. He distances himself from Lily like he distances himself from the society she strives to join. Nevertheless, after Bertha double-crosses Lily, Selden tries to help her and instead finds himself restricted by social rules: "whichever way he sought a free outlet for sympathy, it was blocked by the fear of committing a blunder" (208). Usually, Selden's detachment permits freedom from such fears; in this case, Lily and her problems pull him into the society which "parenthesizes" both of them. Not only do her previous "hints" cause Selden's circumspection, but she wants him to maneuver within a dangerous society which he consciously forsook long ago. She expects him to assume the part of the traditional male hero and finds fault with him for failing to fulfill the role. Among Wharton's male protagonists, only Royall actively intercedes to help a woman in distress, and his action is tainted (from a modern viewpoint, at least) by his previous role as Charity's foster father. The romantic convention proves largely unsuitable in the real world.

At Mrs. Hatch's, the feelings of Selden and Lily have hardened into a mutual defiance, which only "a sudden explosion of feeling" could dissolve; however, "their whole training and habit of mind were against the chances of such an explosion" (265). Yet Lily watches Selden for sympathy. Considering their history, it seems unlikely that Selden will once again make himself vulnerable to her. He has been rejected too many times. In addition, Lily's perverted priorities become apparent as she watches "for any sign of recovered power over him" (269). She values the power his love will give her--not his love; she continues to choose society and money over him. As she says, "I may still do credit to my training" (270).

Lily's training would have her blackmail Bertha, regain her position in society, and marry Rosedale, a man she does not love. With this intent, she visits Selden and admits her earlier mistakes: "Once--twice--you gave me the chance to escape from my life, and I refused it: refused because I was a coward" (296). Although moved, Selden in a sense has been trained to keep his emotions from her. His inaction saves him from further emotional pain, as Lily intends only to say goodbye to him before bringing his letters to Bertha. Something happens though. Standing silently in Selden's

apartment, Lily undergoes a change of heart. Her love for Selden again emerges, and "[i]n its light everything else dwindled and fell away from her. She understood now that she could not go forth and leave her old self with him" (297). By burning the letters, Lily chooses love over money and rejects the society which controlled her life too long. After her decision, she departs quickly, leaving Selden no time to react to her unstated transformation. Despite critical condemnation of Selden for not saving her, he knows that he need not. He tells her, "nothing I have said has really made the difference. The difference is in yourself" (295). The choice was Lily's long ago, and he respects her ability to make it.

Selden would deserve condemnation if he had forced Lily to conform to his wishes, if he had played what Wharton herself considered the false role of the brawny, always triumphant male hero. Instead, he remains on the threshold of society and rejects many stereotypical, and unrealizable, expectations for men. He purposefully "negates" himself in a culture which values "positive" men and their ability to make money. Wharton, in her characterization of Selden, redefines what it means to be a man in a competitive, money-driven society. More honest with himself than Archer, more likeable than Frome or Royall, and more sensible than Marvell, Selden refuses to fulfill an outmoded gender role and instead lets Lily live the life she chooses. Her death is tragic, but by burning the letters Lily also rejects the values of old New York and passes through the open door of the "gilt cage" empowered, thus freeing herself from the house of mirth.

University of Delaware

Notes

1. From "The House of Mirth, and Other Novels." Nation. 81 (30 Nov. 1905): 447-48, and "Fiction: The House of Mirth." Times Literary Supplement [England]. (1 Dec. 1905): 421. Ford, Mary K. "Two Studies in Luxury." Critic. 48 (March 1906): 249-50. [In Edith Wharton: The Contemporary Reviews. Ed. Tuttleton, James W., et al. Cambridge UP, 1992. 114, 116, 130.] E. E. Hale, Jr. called him "that wondrous combination, an intelligent worldling" and "one of the [novel's] two good people" (Gerty being the other). "Mrs. Wharton's The House of Mirth." Bookman. 22 (Dec. 1905): 364-66. [In Tuttleton, 123.]

2. Cynthia Griffin Wolff writes that Selden is "nothing more than the unthinking, self-satisfied mouthpiece for the worst of society's prejudices." [In A Feast of Words: The Triumph of Edith Wharton. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977. 111.] Annette Larson Benert argues that Selden's "republic of the spirit" lures Lily "to debasement, decline, and death" (33). [From "The Geography of Gender in The House of Mirth." Studies in the Novel. 22.1 (1990): 26-42.] Elaine Showalter compares Selden to Dracula. [In Sister's Choice: Tradition and Change in American Women's Writing. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991. 89.] Carol Baker Sapora states that Selden fails to understand "the complexity of [Lily's] double personality" (378) and "ignores the halting words of her real self" (388). [In "Female Doubling: The Other Lily Bart in Edith Wharton's The House of Mirth." Papers on Language and Literature. 29.4 (1993): 371-94.]

3. Wharton used the phrase "negative hero" in a letter to Sara Norton.

4. Julie Olin-Ammentorp explains that Wharton herself "does not clearly attach any stigma to the term 'negative hero,' but rather, by coupling it with 'sad ending,' suggests that it is more a technical description than a value judgement" (6). [In "Wharton's 'Negative Hero' Revisited." Edith Wharton Newsletter. 6.1 (1989): 6+.]

5. James Tuttleton writes, "[I]t is not the men who dictate the constraining forms and terms and conditions of social propriety in New York society; it is the women" (11). [In "The Feminist Takeover of Edith Wharton." The New Criterion. 7(7) March, 1989.]

6. Cynthia Griffin Wolff writes, "Edith Wharton had little patience with fatalism: she believed that men and women were largely responsible for their own happiness or despair" (239). [In "Cold Ethan and 'Hot Ethan.'" College Literature. 14.3 (1987): 230-45.]

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Louis Auchincloss's Four "Edith" Tales: *Some Rearrangements and Reinventions of Her Life*

by Adeline Tintner

Edith Wharton appeared as a character in short stories at the turn of the century in the work of her two friends, Paul Bourget and Henry James. In 1905 she was brought into *L'Indicatrice (The Informer)*, a story by Paul Bourget, as the heroine named Edith (Edith Risley).[1] Then in *The Finer Grain* (1910) Henry James introduced in each one of a series of five tales a character with some recognizable trait of Edith Wharton.[2] These were internal jokes to be enjoyed by Edith's friends and Edith herself. But if she did know that she was the woman of "coarser grain" in James's tales, she never made any public announcement of it except for one reference to "The Velvet Glove" as having been stimulated by James's ride in her motor car.[3] To Bourget and James the biographical details were not important, just Edith's personality traits.

Today this tendency has changed. It is the life of the artist that writers are interested in, and creative writers now depend heavily on biographical material from well-known writers' lives for their fiction. And dead writers no longer enjoy privacy. Carol Hill's novel, *Henry James's Midnight Song*, 1993, is a case in point. Here Edith Wharton appears named as herself.

But there is a different kind of appropriation of Wharton's life which can be seen in the four "Edith" stories by Louis Auchincloss, the recorder of upper class WASP life in New York City, the novelist who admits his dependency on James, Bourget, and Wharton. These tales were published in 1976, 1987, 1994, and 1995. They are separated not only by years but by different degrees of knowledge about Edith's life. Except for the fourth, we see a hidden Edith in the first three of these stories, and every one is different. In each she is shown as a greatly gifted writer at different stages of her life and at different points in her relationships with those persons important to her, even though they are all disguised and given different names, except for the fourth. We find reinventions of Teddy Wharton and her friend Egerton Winthrop in the first story, "The Arbiter,"[4] Walter Berry in the second story, "The 'Fulfillment' of Grace Eliot,"[5] and finally, in the third, "They That Have Power To Hurt," Morton Fullerton and Henry James.[6] More than names have been changed. This is not only my theory, for when I asked Mr. Auchincloss in 1987 whether the first tale, "The Arbiter," an independent story in *The Winthrop Covenant*, 1976 (a book centering on the Winthrop family), was based on Edith's life, he answered that it was and added that he had just published another "Edith" tale in his *Skinny Island*, 1987, a collection of stories, called "The 'Fulfillment' of Grace Eliot." Then in 1994 his *Tales of Yesteryear* was published. I wrote to him about the, to me, obvious Edith and Fullerton content in the tale "They That Have Power To Hurt," and he answered that it was there too.

So we have the author's word that this trio of stories is Edith dominated. Since I have already published analyses of the first two tales,[7] I won't spend time on them except in the instance of "The Arbiter," because when I detected the Edith material in that story, I wasn't aware that there were going to be more stories about Edith, and it wasn't until I read all three that I realized how important certain masterpieces of art were to that first story as well as to the others. He is following Edith's example of using art as part of a narrative technique, which she may have learned from James and Bourget.

From these three Edith stories one learns about Auchincloss's skill as a short story writer; if anyone was ever prepared to write about Edith it is he. He has been totally saturated in the Wharton material and has a very complex relation to Edith herself. He wrote the first of the biographies in 1971,[8] four years before Lewis's, and he is in a way her heir as a writer of fiction. He was the one definite literary link with Edith's past that carries back into her generation; he knew her good friend Margaret Chanler,[9] so it is a natural development that he should manipulate her life. What is unusual is that he has done it in as many as four variations, which places him within the postmodern category of writers.

The first "Edith" tale, published in 1976, is written in the aftermath of Lewis's biography and its revelations, but in it Auchincloss concentrates on the Edith-Teddy relationship. He justifies Teddy and makes him a much more insightful and perceptive character than the known biographical details reveal him to be. The figure based on Egerton Winthrop, Edith's mentor, who is Adam Winthrop in the story, is the person from whose point of view the story is told, and is a symbol of reason. He criticizes Edith's egotistical behavior in putting stress on Teddy. Yet he also understands that she is a writer who has to obey the impulses of her genius. Edith is clearly recognizable in the novelist, Ada Guest. As a brilliant writer, she is always seen through the judgment of Adam. Like Egerton Winthrop, passionately devoted to the French eighteenth century and to its great painters, Adam lives with a collection of paintings of the period as Egerton had. But first he is introduced in the story looking at his own portrait at his club, supposedly by James J. Shannon, but actually based on the real portrait by Sargent of Egerton which hangs today in The Knickerbocker Club in New York City.[10] The picture is described as being very close to the Sargent picture: "Against a background of gleaming crimson folds . . . a silk opera hat rested at his feet; one hand grasped the ivory top of the cane" (WC, 130). The only deviation from the original can be seen in the crimson curtains described in the fictive picture, curtains which, according to Eleanor Dwight, might have come from the ones in Egerton's own house displayed in Walter Gay's watercolor of it.[11] The portrait sets the stage for the judgmental role Adam plays.

Since Adam's mind and his vision were filled by eighteenth-century paintings, we are told in the story that he had a collection of *Fêtes Champêtres:* "Watteau, Boucher, Lancret, Chardin, Vanloo" (WC, 134). It is one of these, the Lancret, which is used as an analogue for Adam's wife Violet's dinner parties, which he finds boring and stupid. Adam looks at his Lancret: "Was it possible that all those charming forms, all those gallants and ladies, some sitting, some standing, some lying, some half embracing, listening to a lutist, two dancing, one playing with a monkey, one glancing up at two doves in a cage, that all that tender pink of the marble columns with the Temple of Love in the background were only disguises for a party as vapid and turgid as the one Violet would be giving that night?"[12] All that cannot possibly be in one picture by Lancret, so Auchincloss clearly has put together elements from a series of Lancrets and creates his own Lancret. When I asked him about which one he was thinking of, he said that he had seen a number of Lancrets in the 1991 Frick Museum Lancret show plus some Lancrets that belonged to a friend of his; it is also obviously a compendium not only of Lancret pictures, but, as he suggests, of Watteau's fêtes. In his communication to me, he said, "I allow myself to roam in these matters." Perhaps he is mimicking James's use of Veronese's *Marriage at Cana* in *The Wings of the Dove.*

And then, with a sense of contrast, Auchincloss introduces us to Ada Guest's house on West 12th Street, a converted coach house, and Adam is a bit superior about her interior. He claims it was mixed, containing "the good and the less good." Also "There were bright chintzes everywhere, for Ada had been an early client of Elsie DeWolf" (WC, 137-38). One can see that the covered panels of her Park Avenue *bonbonnière*,[13] as James called it, still echo her mother's rooms, only lightened up. She never completely emancipated herself from her mother's kind of interior.[14] We can see this in Walter Gay's picture of the Salon Pavillon Colombe, St. Brice-sous-Forêt).[15] There is no place for masterpieces on the walls. The Piraneses on the library walls of her Land's End house have disappeared.

Adam, a person of reasonable control, here criticizes Ada-Edith for sacrificing Bob-Teddy to her omnivorous genius. When Ada explains to Adam that she needs refreshment from the aridity of her New York life to create, he censors her for dragging Bob off to Paris where he will only drink himself to death. "Where was the discipline of the Age of Reason?" Then he looks at a small Hubert Robert that showed "the courtyard of an old convent with a fountain in the noonday, Provençal sun" (WC, 143).[16] "Could Ada do anything like that?" He then hopes that "Paris, like a fountain spray, should douse some of the fires of Yankee genius" (WC, 143).

The second tale, written eleven years later, reverts now to a different triangle. It is told from the point of view of Grace's agent, Bertie, who after her death finds five of her love letters to Leonard Esher and he recapitulates their affair. Edith has become Grace Eliot, a brilliant novelist, and the story takes place in the nineteen forties. She is married to a rich and supportive husband, unlike Teddy, and the relation here is on the connection between her and Walter Berry, who

is given the role of her lover, even though in 1987 Auchincloss knew that Fullerton had been her lover. But clearly the figure in this story is described as an unappreciative and cold man, based on certain of Berry's characteristics. Auchincloss wanted to use Berry, and the physical type for Esher is very much like Walter Berry's physical type.[17] At a party, Bertie, her agent, who tells the tale, is approached by "the tall, elegant figure of Leonard Esher, like a peer in a Sargent portrait. At least he always struck me as having just changed from a scarlet huntsman's jacket" (SI, 188). Here Auchincloss invokes the well-known John Singer Sargent portrait of Lord Ribblesdale in the Tate Gallery in his hunting clothes.[18] (Edith was a friend of the Ribblesdales.)

Esher, a snob and usually inattentive to the lower-born agent, is quite ingratiating since he wants the loan of Bertie's flat for the affair he is about to conduct with Grace. Before this Grace, as if to emphasize the histrionic content of her letters, is shown trying "perhaps to emulate a Mucha poster of Sarah Bernhardt as Hamlet."[19] These two actual images from the world of art are this time from the late nineteenth century and give life to the two participants in the love affair, which is soon over because of the cold lover. He tells Bertie, "never get involved with a middle-aged virgin. They have too much to make up for. . . . My God, was I ever tossed about! There were moments when I actually considered setting off your fire alarm!" at which Bertie explodes: "You great clown, don't you know you have no existence except what Grace has given you?" (SI, 192). By this time the Texas archive of Edith's letters to Fullerton had been published, and Auchincloss imitates them to a certain extent in his fictional Grace's letters.

The victim of Berry's coldness in this tale, she is the victim of a cad and sexual acrobat in the next. We recognize on the first page of the third tale, "They That Have Power To Hurt" (a line from Shakespeare's Sonnet Number 94), a fictional portrait of Morton Fullerton in the character of Martin Babcock, the first-person narrator. Now aged seventy-five and living in Paris, "a small antique American gentleman . . . nattily attired," he sits thinking of his "undistinguished but amusing past." We see here a verbal replica of a well-known photograph of Fullerton.[20] That past seems to be like that of the journalist Morton Fullerton, for he too is distinguished for "a little record of my encounters with some of the major artists and writers of my time" (TY, 56). His name, Martin, seems to be the only variant on "Morton" that has been left over since Henry James called him "Merton" in *The Wings of the Dove*. He speaks about how academic scholars have reacted to the "uncovering of Arlina Randolph's letters." Academia reveled in Arlina's "sexual 'fulfillment' at the ripe age of forty-three in an adulterous affair! Great news!" (TY, 56). Martin condemns the belief of scholars that Edith's affair with Fullerton made her art better, something both character and author believe is not true.

Martin is annoyed because he has not been given "any credit for my share in Arlina's renaissance" (TY, 67), and he is angry with "that grand old ham Hiram Scudder" (Henry James in many of his characteristics) who points out in a letter now in a university archive that Martin's "soul, like his personal stature, was small; he was a busy little animal who played below the belt with both sexes and had no real concept of what went on in their minds or hearts" (TY, 58). Martin responds, "certainly not beneath *your* belt, horrid old man, embracing young men in homoerotic hugs," (TY, 58). Therefore, Martin tells us that he will "provide my own lens in the form of this memorandum which may one day be found among my papers . . . by a graduate student" (TY, 58). So here we find Auchincloss's attempt to do justice to Morton Fullerton (but with all his warts) just as in 1976 he had rendered justice to Teddy Wharton and in 1987 had given Berry's unpleasant and insulting view of the affair he might have had with Edith in "The 'Fulfillment' of Grace Eliot." When Arlina says to Martin, "Youth, youth . . . you are so cruel" (TY, 70), she is echoing the line which Edel tells us that James underlined in his English translation of the novel *First Love* by Turgeniev.[21] Auchincloss meshes in all the information he can. The publication of Edith Wharton's letters to Fullerton obviously gave Auchincloss further material for his story.[22] As Arlina says, "It would have been better for me if we'd never met" (TY, 82), so Edith Wharton had written to Fullerton, "My life was better before I knew you" (*Letters,* 47).

Auchincloss has also gone to Fullerton's *Diary* and his correspondence with Margaret Brooke, the Ranee of Sarawak (both quoted by Lewis).[23] Auchincloss makes use of the few letters from that correspondence for their classical allusions. In courting Arlina, Martin Babcock tells her that he has "been as pure as Hippolytus since the day we met" (TY, 76). He also in his candid manner attributes his attraction to Arlina because of "the itching yen of a small randy male for a fine large female figure, the lust of a Niebelung to pollute a Rhine maiden," which is added to complete the Wagnerian motif in the tale. In a letter from Edith to Morton she remembers when she heard an opera with him where the hero kisses the heroine "*and then she can't let him go*" (*Letters*, 31), and she adds she felt this too when Morton kissed her. So here Martin kisses Arlina and "Her response was all I could have wished" (TY, 77). Then the love affair begins. It is great at first, but then Arlina began to be "too anxious to possess every aspect of my nature." She wanted "to question me about the exact quality of my feeling for her" (TY, 78), a

reminder of the tone of Edith's letters to Fullerton. While Arlina is on a book tour, she demands daily letters during her absence which Martin failed to write. When the famous old homosexual painter, Dan Carmichael, gets Martin to pose, he also gets him to have sex with him. Hiram Scudder in a jealous mood walks in on the affair. When he reports it immediately to Arlina, she breaks off her relations with Martin.

What is new in this third portrait of Edith is that Auchincloss abandons for the most part Edith's letters and shows Arlina in personal confrontation with Martin. Martin bemoans the fact that "academic researchers" give their sympathy to her "disprized love," which "is only further grist for their busy mills": "While as for the poor partner of this 'love,' well, out upon him! Who is he to play gross tunes upon the heartstrings of genius?" (TY, 84). Auchincloss's Morton is an envious one. The story ends with the octet from the Shakespearean sonnet, underlined by Arlina, whose first line, or at least the first half of it, is the title of the tale. We now see completed the octet of the sonnet which includes the end of the first line of the title "and will do none," as well as the third line, "Who, moving others, are themselves as stone." Martin adds that the sestet reminds the reader that those "lords and owners of their faces" are "also lilies which, when festering, smell far worse than weeds! Trust the artist to have the last word" (TY, 84).

The art references help create the tone of this story, which is very different from that of the preceding two. Its mood is very second half of the twentieth century, although the action takes place in the nineteen forties. Martin candidly shows his character to be weak-willed, pleasure-loving, amoral, and interested in any kind of sexual experience just as we know Fullerton to have been.

The artist, Dan Carmichael, is described "as the last exponent of the Ashcan School," whose "angry canvases of Coney Island bathers, drunken sailors and crowded urban streets . . . had been considered appropriately powerful and radical in the Depression years" (TY, 63). Martin, an art critic, writes a review of Dan's show, which pleases him, so it is Dan who introduces him to Arlina and takes him to one of her parties. In his description of Dan, Auchincloss had no particular Ashcan painter in mind, but the sexy sailors were taken, he wrote me, from Reginald Marsh.[24] Dan is described as exactly the opposite of Reginald Marsh, who, although obsessed with the roiling overpopulated masses on Coney Island, was a man who, while he was not originally a New Yorker, came from the same social stratum as both Edith Wharton and Auchincloss. In contrast to Arlina's gifts to Martin, which are conservative--three scenes of Venice by Whistler and a copy of Shakespeare's Sonnets--Dan's pictures, based on Marsh's pictures, are contemporary in feeling. Marsh's streetwalkers and his supposedly sexy girls look like men in drag, all of which makes it possible to see Reginald Marsh, despite his two wives, as either a repressed homosexual or perhaps a homosexual known to his own group. Critics have commented on his Michelangelesque quality. It is realism and openness, bisexuality and hetero-sexuality brought up to the present day in tone. Actually, when Martin makes the great mistake of not only posing in the nude for Dan, but also having sex with him, we are reminded more of the male nudes by Lucien Freud. Freud had a major show at the Metropolitan during the time that Auchincloss was writing the story, and since so many of these recollections are something he himself can't put his finger on, it is possible a large nude self-portrait by Freud and the much admired nude of the performance artist, Leigh Bowery, are behind the nude Martin as he poses for Dan. A kind of post-modern bitter taste lingers in the extreme realism of this story. The character of Fullerton as Martin has an acrid flavor, although Martin professes to end his affairs "with tact and kindness." There is a certain breakdown of moral standards in the rest of his behavior which would fit into the sophisticated world of the 1930s that Martin Babcock is describing, a world which today is out of the closet.

The moods of these three stories vary. The first is a moral and rational analysis by Adam Winthrop of Ada's selfish victimization of Bob. The second story of Grace Eliot's rough treatment by an imperious lover who exposes the love affair; is a tale buttressed by imitations of Edith's passionate letters. But we find a different mood in the third story where the sexual aspects are now fully discussed and described, but where Arlina is shown to be a noble, if an over-romantic novelist. Surrounded by a group of homosexuals and homoerotics, she is seduced by an undependable bisexual young man by whom the story is told.

Either instinctively or as part of a plan, Auchincloss has arranged that each of the three "Edith" tales follows a repetitive template: that of a complex relationship with two men in a power triangle. In each she is shown in conflict with one man, and that relation is judged by someone outside it. Bob and Ada Guest are judged by Adam Winthrop; Grace Eliot and Leonard Esher are judged by her adoring agent Bertie; Martin and Arlina are brought together and then sundered by Hiram Scudder.

Apparently Auchincloss found that he was not finished with his Edith figure after these three tales. Only a year after the third one, he brings her in again in a chapter of a short novel; only this time she appears undisguised, under her own name and at the height of her career. She appears in *The Education of Oscar Fairfax* in one of three cameos, which

include Walter Berry and the Abbé Mugnier, part of her Paris circle, although they have more space devoted to them.[25]

In presenting the real Edith in two-and-a-half pages, Auchincloss manages to suggest her severity to the *femmes fatales* in the group and her pride in her garden. Both Berry and Mugnier were close friends of Wharton's, and Auchincloss establishes the atmosphere of her circle in the 1920s. He has taken his material from Wharton's *A Backward Glance* and perhaps from a more recent article by Leon Edel on Walter Berry.[26]

The Education of Oscar Fairfax (1995) is loosely modeled on Henry Adams's *Education.* The hero, a young New York lawyer who wishes to write a book on the golden *fin de siécle* in France, gets part of his education from interviews with friends of the great writers of that period. Edith in this novel is no longer totally reinvented by Auchincloss's imagination, but is visible as herself, nor do we see a rearrangement of Edith's life as the other three stories exhibited it. Although in each one Edith was pictured as a gifted writer, she is always an imagined character placed in situations or in interrelations analogous but not identical with those which Edith Wharton enjoyed with her husband and her friends. In this novel, Oscar Fairfax and his wife, Constance, are guests of Edith Wharton "at a Sunday lunch party at the Pavillon Colombe" (OF, 78) because of letters to her "from mutual friends," and because Oscar "had successfully handled a small legal matter" (OF, 79) for her. She is described as being "in her mid-sixties" as she truly was in 1927. She has "fine strong features, a straight back and a high clear voice that perfectly articulated her neatly constructed sentences" (OF, 79). In the conversation between Mrs. Wharton and Oscar, we are allowed to see two of her well-known animosities evidenced in the published material by her or concerning her. The first is her antagonism to women attractive to and successful with the men in her own circle, here an invented princess perhaps modeled on Anna de Noailles, a sexually liberated poetess whom she calls a traitor and refuses to have her a subject of conversation: "Parlons d'autre chose" (OF, 79). Her next remarks indicate how her admiration for Proust is tempered by the "lapses in his moral sensibility," which "must deny him the very highest rank" (OF, 80). She then cites the passage where Marcel on a ladder watches Jupien and the Baron de Charlus "involved . . . in 'an unedifying scene,'" material extracted from Wharton's chapter on Proust in *The Writing of Fiction.*

The four people Oscar consults about the "belle époque" finally let him down in the long run. His discussions with Walter Berry, which include a lunch and three visits to his flat, are a disappointment because Berry refuses to talk about his famous friends and is only interested in the "roaring twenties." The chapter in which these four friends appear has been named "The Novocaine of Illusion" because Oscar, through them, loses his illusions about these survivors of a golden past from whom he has expected to get interesting and illuminating anecdotes about the great writers of the period. What Oscar had thought was a golden age, seems to have turned out to be "an age of tinsel" (OF, 78). When we arrive at Mrs. Wharton's luncheon at the Pavillon Colombe, her discussion of Walter Berry seems promising at first for Oscar's book of memoirs until he mentions the Princess Nelidoroff. When it comes to her discussion of Proust, she reveals both her squeamishness and her prejudices. She admits to refusing to meet Proust because of "his social climbing" (OF, 80). Even Walter Berry, who had been a close friend of Proust's, does not have anything specific to say about him, when Oscar had told Berry that he was, in his book, trying to deal with "the last gold sunset of unity," which to him meant "the last explosion of style--isn't style the essence of civilization? And haven't we lost it?" (OF, 74). Berry is not forthcoming either on Proust's conversation or on the wit of Anatole France. The upshot of his interview with him makes Oscar think that basically Berry is jealous of "his friends' accomplishments" (OF, 76). Violet, the princess, tells Oscar stories that only show herself to be the star and, when it comes to their short affair, she proves herself to be merely a mechanical lover.

In this particular instance, Auchincloss again shows his use of art as an index of a person's character, and throughout the vignette the names of Boldini, a society portraitist of the period, of Walter Gay, a painter who specialized in interiors, of Sargent, and of other American artists of the time continue to indicate his interest in thickening the *Zeitgeist* of whatever era he deals with by including its plastic artists. A Fragonard painting is brought in to show how the Abbé Mugnier is a sensualist, and, instead of talking about the great writers he knew, he gives Oscar worldly advice about how to handle Constance's possible adultery. The upshot of Oscar's disillusionment with the people he meets is that he wakes up from his dose of the "novocaine of illusion," and, "because of the worldliness of my chosen craftsmen," abandons his book (OF, 95). Berry, Wharton, Mugnier, and the princess have disillusioned him about their friends, as well as about themselves.

In this fourth Edith story, Auchincloss has brought the real woman on the scene, but, in spite of her name and the biographical data utilized for her luncheon party, there is still a reinvention of her figure and a rearrangement of some of her comments from her book, *The Writing of Fiction.* Auchincloss has transposed her recorded reactions to a woman like Sybil Colfax to an invented foreign princess. Her

breaking up of her luncheon party to avoid responding to the embarrassing turn Constance has given to the conversation is a fictive construction made by Auchincloss, but it is a reasonable one, based on Edith's known behavior patterns. Whether this is the end of Auchincloss's fun with the elements of Edith's life and those of her intimate friends remains to be seen.

The four tales tell us a lot about Auchincloss as an ingenious and inventive author, for, although Edith is shown in all four cases as a great novelist, he knows enough about her to see her faults. The fact remains that the "real" Edith helps, along with her "real" friends, Walter Berry and the Abbé Mugnier, to disillusion Oscar Fairfax through her own prejudicial attitudes. When the discussion becomes argumentative at her luncheon party, she forces her guests, in a domineering fashion, to leave the table and admire her roses; thus the "real" Edith joins the three previously invented Ediths and shares their similar faults. In spite of them, every one of these Ediths is presented as one of the great writers of our time.

New York City

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Edith Wharton on Film and Television: *A History and Filmography*

by Scott Marshall

Edith Wharton lived the first half of her life (38 years) in the nineteenth century and the final half (37 years) in the twentieth century. As she explains in *A Backward Glance*, she "was born into a world in which telephones, motors, electric light, central heating (except by hot-air furnaces), X-rays, cinemas, radium, aeroplanes and wireless telegraphy were not only unknown but still mostly unforeseen" (6-7). A woman who valued the past, she also appreciated many modern conveniences. She loved the motorcar, utilized the convenience of both telephone and telegraph, had electricity and central heating installed in The Mount in 1901, and saw the first airplane fly over Paris seven years later. However, one major new invention that she was never able to come to terms with aesthetically was the motion picture, or the "cinema," as she called it.

Despite her personal dislike of the medium, several of Wharton's most popular novels were filmed during her lifetime, including *The Age of Innocence* (twice, first as a silent movie, then as a sound film), *The House of Mirth, The Glimpses of the Moon*, and *The Children* (as "The Marriage Playground").* Wharton realized substantial income from the sales of these works to film companies, but she apparently never viewed any of them, nor is there evidence that she expressed the slightest interest in seeing them. Shortly after her death one additional film was made: "The Old Maid," with Bette Davis and Miriam Hopkins. Following its release in 1939, no feature film of a Wharton work would appear until the unsuccessful version of "The Children" in 1990--a hiatus of over fifty years.

Wharton may have entered a movie theatre only once in her lifetime. Although in his 1975 biography, R. W. B. Lewis notes that "Edith Wharton herself appears never to have entered a movie theater" (7), the Lewises' 1988 edition of Wharton's letters establishes that the author did see one silent film on a trip to Spain in 1914 with her friend Walter Berry. Wharton describes the event in a letter from Spain to Bernard Berenson:

> The other day Walter insisted on going to the Cinema at Bilbao, & I was so glad he did, for the *stupendo dramma di 3 mila metri* was called: "*Comment on visite une ville au galop*" [How to visit a town on the run]. But he only smiled as the panting travellers spun by, & said, when it was over: "Well, we ought to start by 9 sharp tomorrow." (*Letters*, 325)

The earliest mention of film in Wharton's fiction occurs in *Summer* (1917), most likely based on that experience in Spain three years before. In *Summer*, Charity's attendance at a silent movie in Nettleton on the Fourth of July represents an exhilarating expansion of her narrow world:

> . . . for a while, everything was merged in her brain in swimming circles of heat and blinding alternations of light and darkness. All the

* *To distinguish book from screen titles, film and television adaptations of Wharton's fiction referred to in this essay appear in quotation marks.*

> world has to show seemed to pass before her in a chaos of palms and minarets, charging calvalry regiments, roaring lions, comic policemen and scowling murderers; and the crowd around her, the hundreds of sallow candy-munching faces, young, old, middle-aged, but all kindled with the same contagious excitement, became part of the spectacle, and danced on the screen with the rest. (139)

Two of Wharton's "jazz age" novels, *Twilight Sleep* (1927) and *The Children* (1928), contain numerous references to the cinema. Wharton's portrayal of films in her fiction a decade later became more negative; movies for her had evolved into trendy, mindless experiences to be avoided by serious, intelligent people. In *Twilight Sleep*, the Marchesa, who is excited that an acquaintance is appearing in a film for a great deal of money, justifies the artistic value of making films by equating the process with the production of bathrooms:

> And besides, is it ever degrading to create a work of art? I thought in America you made so much of creativeness--constructiveness--what do you call it? Is it less creative to turn a film than to manufacture bathrooms? Can there be a nobler mission than to teach history to the millions by means of beautiful pictures? (295-96)

The author's tone clearly implies that for her the cinema was neither beautiful nor noble--and that it could not be seriously considered as "a work of art." Wharton's final word on film appears in the preface to Ghosts (1937), her last collection of stories. Here she scathingly denounces both "cinema" and "wireless" radio as the "two world-wide enemies of the imagination." She further laments: "To a generation for whom everything which used to nourish the imagination because it had to be won by an effort, and then slowly assimilated, is now served cooked, seasoned and chopped into little bits, the creative faculty . . . is rapidly withering, together with the power of sustained attention . . . "(2)." This criticism has a contemporary sound; one need only substitute the concept of television today for the cinema and the radio she despised.

Wharton always preferred the word over the picture. As a child, Edith Jones loved to hear great language beautifully spoken. Wharton remembers in a late memoir, "A Little Girl's New York," that the two

> events in which I took an active part were going to church--and going to the theater. I venture to group them together because, looking back across the blurred expanse of a long life, I see them standing up side by side, like summits catching the light when all else is in shadow. (362)

She explains that in the Old New York of her youth, the Reverend Dr. Washburn of Calvary Church had helped her to discover "the matchless beauty of English seventeenth-century prose" (362). Similarly, theater-going, for Wharton, was "*largely a matter of listening to voices*" [emphasis Wharton 363]. For an author who was extremely sensitive to words, church-going and the theater were incomparable aural experiences, whereas the cinema was probably judged to be lacking because it was essentially a visual medium. If, in fact, Wharton only saw one silent movie (or even several silent movies), then the medium of cinema for her was only a visual experience, without any enhancement of sound. In that same memoir Wharton expresses personal abhorrence at the thought of sitting in an audience, which may account for her disdain for film: "[S]omething in me has always resisted the influence of crowds and shows, and I have hardly ever been able to yield myself unreservedly to a spectacle shared by a throng of people" (362). Cinema produced for the masses forced a viewer to interact with the "sallow candy-munching" people that Wharton evokes at the movie showing attended by Charity Royall in *Summer*. By contrast, the live theater witnessed during her youth, primarily the great classics of the stage, is rapturously described as "something new, a window opening on the foam of faeryland" (363).

Wharton's thoughts on how actors should perform their roles also suggest why she did not favor the cinema. She asserts: "I am involuntarily hypercritical of any impersonation of characters already so intensely visible to my imagination that anyone else's conception of them interferes with that inward vision." After "five minutes" of watching the actors in a play, she felt the strong desire to "get up on the stage and show them how they ought to act" (363). The even more exaggerated performances of actors in silent films must, understandably, have been anathema to Wharton.

Like Henry James, Wharton desired successful stage adaptations of her stories and novels. Moreover, in her early years, she herself worked on several dramatizations, including a translation of Hermann Sudermann's *Es Lebe das Leben* in 1902 for the actress Mrs. Patrick Campbell. Wharton also collaborated with the celebrated dramatist Clyde Fitch on a dramatic adaptation of *The House of Mirth*, but it failed soon after the Broadway opening in 1906. In later years Wharton worked on drafts of a

dramatization (never produced) of her short story "Confession." In the final decade of her life, three of Wharton's best novels were dramatized for the stage by other writers: *The Age of Innocence* by Margaret Ayer Barnes in the late 1920s, starring Katharine Cornell; *Ethan Frome* by Donald and Owen Davis in 1935, starring Raymond Massey and Ruth Gordon; and *The Old Maid* in 1936, which won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama for Zoë Akins, and starred Judith Anderson and Helen Menken. Both *The Age of Innocence* and *The Old Maid* were then made for the cinema (in 1934 and 1939, respectively), primarily from these theatrical adaptations, rather than the original texts.

Unlike the films based on her work, Wharton took an interest in these theatrical versions, which she read but never had the opportunity to see. She wrote several letters detailing manners, customs, and period clothing for the benefit of the productions. In her 1936 foreword to the published play version of "Ethan Frome" by Owen and Donald Davis, she enthusiastically sets aside her concerns regarding actors physically inhabiting the characters that she had originally conceived in fictional terms, as well as her distaste for "that grimacing enlargement of gesture and language supposed to be necessary to 'carry' over the footlights":

> It has happened to me, as to most novelists, to have the odd experience, through the medium of reviews or dramatizations of their work, to see their books as they have taken shape in other minds: always a curious, and sometimes a painful, revelation.

She further specified her "admiration for the great skill and exquisite sensitiveness with which my interpreters have executed their task. . . . [It is] an unusual achievement" (viii)--praise only accorded to an adaptation of her work for the theater.

Like these stage successes, all of the Wharton works filmed in her lifetime were drawn from her bestselling novels. The first to be filmed was also her first and greatest success, *The House of Mirth* (1905). Metro Pictures Corporation made a silent film version in 1918, starring Katherine Harris Barrymore, which Albert Capellani directed from a scenario he co-authored with June Mathias. Although the film does not survive, William Larsen, whose ground-breaking 1995 dissertation studies the adaptations of Wharton's works for the screen, has discovered from a published synopsis in *Picture Play* that the novel's ending was radically changed for the movie: Lily takes chloroform, but "in the final shots of the film Selden arrives with a doctor, who announces that Lily will survive the overdose. Clutching Lily in his arms, Selden kisses her as he tells her that all will work out well for them both: she is safe now from danger and they will remain together" ("'A New Lease on Life,'" 59). Larsen notes that this silent version "clearly affirms the happy marriage ending which was the conventional resolution to the nineteenth-century sentimental domestic female novel and the male pastoral novel that Wharton was writing against in *The House of Mirth*" (59-60). The cinematic revision also actualizes William Dean Howells's comment to Wharton after viewing the 1906 play of *The House of Mirth*: "What the American public always wants is a tragedy with a happy ending" (qtd in Lewis, *Edith Wharton*, 172). The 1918 film version delivered exactly that.

A cinema version of *The Glimpses of the Moon* (1922) quickly appeared in 1923, directed for Paramount by Allan Dwan from an adaptation by E. Lloyd Sheldon. F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote film dialogue titles, but apparently his script was not used. Major silent film stars Bebe Daniels, Nita Naldi, and Maurice Costello were featured.

The Age of Innocence (1920) was first filmed as a silent in 1924, directed by Wesley Ruggles, with Beverly Bayne as Countess Olenska and Elliot Dexter as Newland Archer. The Pulitzer Prize-winning novel--the only Wharton work filmed three times--was later filmed twice more with sound: in 1934 and 1993.

Unfortunately, all three of these early silent movies are considered lost films, and although major performers and directors were involved, it is difficult to evaluate their quality or their faithfulness to the original texts. However, the first sound film based on a Wharton work does survive: *The Children* (1928), filmed in 1929 by Paramount and released under the title, "The Marriage Playground." Directed by Lothar Mendes, it features rising star Fredric March in the leading role (the actor made his film debut in another 1929 feature). This version imposes a happy ending in which Martin Boyne (middle-aged in the novel, but portrayed by the 32-year-old March) marries the very young Judith Wheater. The novel has a far darker and more realistic ending in which Boyne is left alone, observing Judith from a distance dancing with young men her own age. The review in *Variety* indicates the successful reception of the changes from the original novel, while recalling Wharton's distaste for being awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1921 "for uplifting American morals" (Lewis, *Letters*, 445):

> A peach of a picture, well above the satisfaction-giving average . . . and the kind that leaves a sense of full-hearted human pleasure with it. Can be booked in safety and exploited with confidence. It's packed with children, assumingly impudent, touchingly

> warm youngsters who will carry a tremendous appeal to the great home-keeping, family-loving American public. In the midst of the children . . . is Fredric March . . . [A] couple of pictures like this one and March . . . will romp toward pronto. Miss Brian is splendid . . . [I]t is a production characterized by quiet, unostentatious elegance. (qtd. Quirk, *Films of Fredric March*, 52)

Although a 35-millimeter print of "The Marriage Playground" survives in the archives of the film department of UCLA in Los Angeles, its inaccessibility (except to film scholars) effectively renders this another "lost" film for Wharton scholars and the general public.

It would be interesting to know what Wharton would have thought of the 1934 film version of *The Age of Innocence*. Released by RKO Radio Pictures, it stars Irene Dunne (Countess Olenska), John Boles (Newland Archer), Julie Haydon (May Welland), and a fine supporting cast, including Laura Hope Crews and Lionel Atwill, under the direction of Philip Moeller. The movie also features attractive settings, beautiful costumes designed by Walter Plunkett, and a musical score composed by Max Steiner (both Plunkett and Steiner would work together again five years later on "Gone with the Wind"). William Larsen has discovered that screenwriters Victor Heerman and Sarah Y. Mason originally wrote the script for Katharine Hepburn, but because of a contract difficulty, the part of Ellen Olenska went to Irene Dunne ("'A New Lease on Life,'" 133). *The New York Times* review was respectful, but unenthusiastic:

> In an ideal world, Mrs. Wharton's distinguished novel would fill the screen with tragic emotion as it filled the stage six years ago in the impassioned acting of Katherine Cornell. For Philip Moeller's screen drama . . . has been managed with all possible dignity and sincerity. . . . Yet the photoplay at the [Radio City] Music Hall leaves the spectator curiously cold and detached from the raging emotions of the story. . . . In Mr. Moeller's garrulous and faintly ponderous production the tragedy touches you cerebrally rather than emotionally.

"The Age of Innocence" of 1934, although not a great film, is a highly interesting one. Very much a product of the mid-1930s, it reveals surprising choices in both the screenplay adaptation and in its direction. For example, the narrative opens in the present-day and returns to that setting at the end, rendering the story an extended flashback as told by Newland to his grandson (not his son, as at the conclusion of the novel). The elderly Newland and his grandson now live in a violent world (suggested by a jarring, wildly paced montage sequence immediately following the opening credits), which is set in opposition to the order and supposed harmony of the Old New York of the 1870s. Additional contrast is provided by the information that the grandson, a young man in his twenties, is currently involved in a love affair; however, unlike his grandfather's romance in the "flashback," Dallas's affair is a public scandal. While much less faithful to the original novel in many aspects than the 1993 Scorsese version, the 1934 "Age of Innocence" is respectfully realized, and features appealing performances by Irene Dunne and Julie Haydon. This rare film is unfortunately not available for viewing, although a special screening for the conference, "Edith Wharton at Yale," sponsored by the Edith Wharton Society, took place at Yale University in April 1995.

V

Little is known about the 1935 version by Universal Pictures of Wharton's short story "Bread Upon the Waters," released under the title "Strange Wives." The original Wharton story contains direct references to films and to Hollywood; for example, "the world's leading movie star," Halma Hoboe (15), almost certainly refers to Greta Garbo. "Strange Wives," directed by Richard Thorpe with a screenplay by Gladys Unger, is also a lost movie which cannot be properly evaluated as a translation of Wharton to the screen.

The best-known Wharton work on film (due in part to its cast and perhaps to its current availability on videocassette) remains *The Old Maid* (1924). Released as a film in 1939, two years after Wharton's death, the Warner Bros. movie stars Bette Davis (Charlotte Lovell), Miriam Hopkins (Delia Lovell), and George Brent (Clem Spender), under the direction of Edmund Golding. Larsen has determined that the film began shooting in March 1939 with Humphrey Bogart as the male lead, but the producer and director disliked the result and recast the role of Clem Spender with George Brent ("'A New Lease on Life,'" 207-08).

"The Old Maid" screenplay by Casey Robinson is based on the play by Zoë Akins that premiered on Broadway in 1935. The time period of Wharton's novella, subtitled "The Fifties" (i.e., the 1850s) is reset a decade later in the 1860s, perhaps due to the tremendous popularity of the then-bestselling novel *Gone with the Wind*. The film received both critical and popular acclaim. *The New York Times* reviewer enthused: "'The Old Maid' must be reckoned another fine theatrical property to come unimpaired to the screen [note source of film as the play, not the novel]. . . . Miss Davis has given a poignant and wise performance, hard and

austere on the surface, yet communicating through it the deep tenderness, the hidden anguish, of the heartbroken mother" (qtd. in Ringgold 97). The film, which is often effective, might best be classified as a melodramatic "weepie"--a three-handkerchief women's picture. Margaret McDowell compares the adaptation and the resulting film to the original Wharton novella in her 1987 essay "Wharton's 'The Old Maid': Novella/Play/Film." In addition, Larsen's details the extensive problems that "The Old Maid" screenwriters, director, and producer faced in adapting Wharton's story to meet Hollywood's strict code requirements of the 1930s.

By the time that "The Old Maid" was released, Wharton was dead. It seems clear that she never experienced or considered an improved cinema--represented by the 1934 "Age of Innocence" and the 1939 "Old Maid"--whether based on literary sources or not. Her knowledge of and her prejudices against the medium must have been based on the often outrageous overacting and the obvious, grimacing melodrama of early silent movies. Rapid advances in film technology and rising standards in the quality of acting, direction, and production in her lifetime were apparently ignored by the author. After her death, most of Wharton's fiction was considered old-fashioned, and for many years the popularity of her novels, with the exception of *Ethan Frome*, waned. Appropriately it became the first Wharton work to be dramatized for the small screen of television. The 1911 novella with a principal cast of three trapped in an isolated wintry farmhouse setting adapted well to the intimacy of the new medium, appearing on February 18, 1960, as the "Dupont Show of the Month." It stars Sterling Hayden (Ethan), Julie Harris (Mattie), and Clarice Blackburn (Zenobia), with narration by Arthur Hill. The adaptation is by Jacqueline Babbin and Audrey Gellen, with direction by Alex Segal; the producer is David Susskind. It would be almost a third of a century more before *Ethan Frome* finally appeared as a major motion picture in 1993.

The publication of Lewis's biography in 1975 and Cynthia Griffin Wolff's *A Feast of Words: The Triumph of Edith Wharton* in 1977 stimulated new interest in televising both Wharton's life and her works. Twenty years after *Ethan Frome* appeared on television, the Public Broadcasting System (funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities) produced a three-part series on Wharton in 1981, consisting of one segment on her life and two dramatizations of her fiction. Wharton scholars, including Lewis, McDowell, Elizabeth Ammons, and Blake Nevius, are billed as consultants. The first part of the series, "Looking Back," is loosely based on sections from *A Backward Glance* and the Lewis biography. It features Kathleen Widdoes as Wharton, John Collum as Walter Berry, John McMartin as Teddy Wharton, Richard Woods as Henry James, and Stephen Collins as Morton Fullerton. Directed by Kirk Browning, the teleplay by Steve Lawson envisions Wharton returning to The Mount in Lenox as an older woman as she confides to Berry the momentous events of her life. *The House of Mirth*, directed by Adrian Hall, was this novel's first film treatment since the 1918 silent movie. Written by Hall and Richard Cummings, the adaptation stars Geraldine Chaplin as Lily Bart and William Atherton as Lawrence Selden, with members of the Trinity Square Repertory Company. The final installment is *Summer*, written by Charles Gaines and directed by Dezso Magyar. Filmed in New England, it stars Diane Lane (Charity Royall), Michael Ontkean (Lucius Harney), and John Collum (lawyer Royall). According to a 1937 profile of Wharton that appeared in the Paris edition of the *New York Herald, Summer* had previously been under consideration to be filmed by an unnamed company, but the studio heads deemed it "too immoral" for the public. The 1981 television version is the first and only dramatization of this novella.

In 1983, three of Wharton's ghost stories--"The Lady's Maid's Bell" (1902), "Afterward" (1910), and "Bewitched" (1925)--were filmed for the "Shades of Darkness" series by Granada Television of England. All three were seen in America as part of "Mystery," a presentation of WGBH/Boston. The first two, well-directed and performed, sensitively and faithfully realize the tone of the original stories. They rank as the finest screen adaptations of Wharton's works to date.

In the 1990s, Hollywood rediscovered Wharton, coinciding with and perhaps because of an increasing interest in women's issues and a resurgence in the popularity of period films. No longer considered old-fashioned, Wharton's works were recognized to be timely and dramatically compelling; her vivid evocations of a past era defined by manners and mores were also found appealing. A 1992 article, "Hollywood Hears Her Roar--The Year of the Woman," in *The Washington Post*, begins: "How about that Edith Wharton? Dead since 1937, and all of a sudden her books have become hot film, TV and video properties." Wharton's posthumous cinematic revival followed a string of films based on the novels of E. M. Forster. With the film releases of "Ethan Frome" and "The Age of Innocence" in 1993, Wharton was clearly the classical author of the moment (a position currently held by Jane Austen).

"The Children," an international co-production of Isolde Films in 1990, stars Ben Kingsley (Martin Boyne) and features a rare screen appearance by Kim Novak in the role of his fiancée, Rose Sellars. Directed by Tony Palmer and scripted by the playwright Timberlake Wertenbaker, the 1993 film version is far more faithful to the 1928 novel than the early Hollywood version, "The Marriage Playground" (1929), which had substituted a happy

ending for the original one. The reviewer for *Variety* liked the principal performers but felt the film "cries out for a brisker pace and sharper cutting. . . . A beautiful, sad love story might have been made from this material, but 'The Children' comes across as uninvolving and dated. It'll be a hard sell . . ." (n. pag.). The 1993 version failed both critically and financially and did not receive an American theatrical release.

Released in February 1993, the first and only film version of *Ethan Frome* stars Liam Neeson (Ethan), Patricia Arquette (Mattie), Joan Allen (Zenobia), Tate Donovan (the Reverend Smith), and Katharine Houghton (Mrs. Hale). *Ethan Frome* had been announced for filming as a motion picture at least twice previously. In 1948 Warner Brothers planned a film version starring Bette Davis as Mattie and Mildred Natwick as Zenobia. Davis wanted Gary Cooper to play Ethan, but he declined. The studio then cast British actor David Farrar in the title role, but the film was eventually shelved (Stine, *Mother Goddam*, 228). In April 1987, *Variety Magazine* announced a movie version to be directed and adapted by Adrian Hall of the Trinity Repertory in Providence, Rhode Island; he had previously done *The House of Mirth* for television. This project, too, was never realized. Unfortunately, the 1993 film version, produced by American Playhouse Theatrical Films and Miramax Films, was not a success. *The New York Times* reviewer, although noting it to be "a fairly faithful adaptation . . . with the best of intentions," felt that "in place of a nearly perfect novella is a sad and solemn little film that never has a life of its own. This 'Ethan Frome' is not dead exactly, but rather in a state of suspended animation waiting to be roused, which never happens. . . . *Ethan Frome* deserves better than this." The film did not remain in first run theaters long but did appear the following year on nationwide television for American Playhouse.

Following the appearance of "Ethan Frome" in early 1993, Columbia Pictures released Martin Scorsese's "The Age of Innocence" in the fall of that year amidst tremendous publicity and reviews noting the director's change of pace from previous subjects of mob violence, crime, and New York's Little Italy to the very different world of Wharton's Old New York. *The New York Times* reviewer began: "Taking *The Age of Innocence* . . . Martin Scorsese has made a gorgeously uncharacteristic Scorsese film. It would be difficult to imagine anything further removed from the director's canon. . . . Yet with a fine cast . . . , Mr. Scorsese has made a big, intelligent movie that functions as if it were a window on a world he had just discovered, and about which he can't wait to spread the news. . . . 'The Age of Innocence' isn't perfect, but it's a robust gamble that pays off." In interviews in *Mirabella* and *Premiere* magazines, Scorsese explained that he had been drawn to the story, its characters, and to the violence under the surface of that 1870s world with its different kinds of punishment and bloodletting. The film, with a screenplay by Scorsese and Jay Cocks, starred Michelle Pfeiffer (Countess Olenska), Daniel Day-Lewis (Newland Archer), Winona Ryder (May Welland), and a strong supporting cast, especially Miriam Margolyes as Mrs. Manson Mingott, who received a British Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress for her performance. Despite several Academy Award nominations, the film received only one Oscar–Best Costume Design (Gabriella Pescucci).

The making of the film is documented by an attractive art book, *The Age of Innocence: A Portrait of the Film*, by Martin Scorsese, co-screenwriter Jay Cocks, and the film's visual consultant Robin Standefer. The screenplay adaptation is included in this work, along with discussions of the filmmakers' intentions, preparations, and sources. The fact that "The Age of Innocence," an expensive motion picture, did not do as well financially as Columbia Pictures had hoped has apparently ended several announced film productions of other Wharton works, including *The Custom of the Country* and *Glimpses of the Moon.*

Most recently Wharton's final novel, *The Buccaneers*, left unfinished at her death and published posthumously in 1938, has enjoyed a renaissance. Several new editions of the book (with and without new endings by other authors) preceded a multi-part television dramatization by the British Broadcasting Corporation and WBGH/Boston. Maggie Wadey's adaptation followed the original novel fairly faithfully; for the unwritten ending, Wadey used Wharton's outline of the conclusion as a beginning point for a mostly new finale. "The Buccaneers," shown in the United Kingdom in five installments in March 1995, premiered in America in three installments on "Masterpiece Theatre" during October 1995 to enthusiastic reviews. *The New York Times* review is typical: ". . . ravishing television . . ., 'The Buccaneers' is really a delicious soap opera played out by a superb cast in gorgeous costumes against even more gorgeous settings. . . . Despite the liberties taken, I suspect Mrs. Wharton would not be disappointed."

Wharton scholars and film critics complain that writers and directors unnecessarily update the original texts, often in ways judged inappropriate or destructive to the author's intentions. One obvious change has been a tendency to lighten Wharton's tone by imposing cinematic happy endings on the original tragic ones, such as in "The House of Mirth" in 1918, "The Marriage Playground" in 1929, and the television dramatization of "Summer" in 1981, which ends optimistically on the outstretched hands of lawyer Royall and Charity as he rescues her from a fate

on the Mountain. Tony Palmer's "The Children" includes Ken Russell-type hallucinations by Martin Boyne, which may or may not been inspired by the text. John Madden's "Ethan Frome" features consummated sex between Ethan and Mattie (definitely not in the 1911 novella), while Zenobia lies in bed listening in an adjoining room. Martin Scorsese's "The Age of Innocence"--faithful in the use of locations, interior settings, costumes, manners, and other period details--nonetheless reverses the coloring of the two main female characters, affecting textual subleties, according to scholars. A blonde Michelle Pfeiffer plays the dark Countess Olenska; a brunette Winona Ryder portrays the blonde May Welland.

More recently the television adaptation of "The Buccaneers" adds homosexuality to the plot. As the reviewer for *The New York Times* wrote: "Needless to say, not all Wharton scholars and readers will be pleased. One character, for instance, who is sexually incompetent in the book turns out in the mini-series to be homosexual. Welcome, Mrs. Wharton, to the Gay Nineties." The scene in question involves Nan's husband, the Duke of Tintagel (renamed Trevenik for television), who is discretely shown in the arms of a groom of his estate.

How might Wharton feel about the renewed interest in her works by film studios and the recent movies that have appeared? She would probably be surprised at the level of interest, but certainly delighted at the financial windfalls from the sales of dramatic rights and film options in the 1990s. In 1934, with the American economy in the throes of depression, Wharton wrote her former sister-in-law Mary Cadwalader Jones concerning the sale of a short story to the movies: "Thank you so much for acting as my substitute in the film contract for 'Bread Upon the Waters.' I wish the sum had more nearly approached the prices I used to get!" (*Letters*, 577). If she were with us today, she would appreciate the income from sales of her works to become films, but, as usual, she would probably completely ignore the cinematic results.

Filmography

1918 THE HOUSE OF MIRTH (Metro, 6 reels, silent)
Director: Albert Capellani *Screenplay*: June Mathis and Albert Capellani
Cast: Katherine Harris Barrymore (Lily Bart), with Henry Kolker, Christine Mayo, Joseph Kilgour, Edward Abeles, W. D. Fisher, Lottie Briscoe, Pauline Welsh, Maggie Western, Nellie Parker-Spaulding, Sidney Bracy, Kempton Greene, Morgan Jones
Status: lost
Notes: credits from Bodeen (81); also see Lewis, *Edith Wharton*, 7.

1923 THE GLIMPSES OF THE MOON (Paramount, 7 reels, silent)
Director: Allan Dwan *Screenplay:* E. Lloyd Shelton and Edfrid A. Bingham *Presented by* Jesse L. Lasky
Cast: Bebe Daniels (Susan), David Powell (Nick), Nita Naldi (Mrs. Vanderlyn), Maurice Costello (Mr. Vanderlyn), with Rubye De Remer, Charles Gerard, William Quirk, Pearl Sindelar, Beth Allen, Mrs. George Peggram, Delores Costello, Millie Muller, Beatrice Coburn, Fred Hadley, Robert Lee Keeling, Barton Adams, Freddie Veri
Status: lost
Notes: credits from Bodeen (81). Film rights sold for $13,500 (Lewis, *Edith Wharton*, 444) or $15,000 (Benstock, *No Gifts*, 372). Both note that F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote the film dialogue; Benstock states Fitzgerald was paid $500 for this, but "his script apparently was not used" (372). She adds that "Appleton had flooded Los Angeles and Hollywood newspapers with advertisements to create a demand for film rights to her [Wharton's] works" (371).

1924 THE AGE OF INNOCENCE (Warner Bros., 7 reels, silent)
Director: Wesley Ruggles *Screenplay*: Olga Printzlau
Cast: Beverly Bayne (Countess Olenska), Elliot Dexter (Newland Archer), with Edith Roberts, Willard Louis, Fred Huntley, Gertrude Norman, Sigrid Holmquist, Stuart Holmes
Status: lost
Notes: credits from Bodeen (81). Wharton netted $9,000 after agent's fees from the movie contract (Benstock, *No Gifts*, 361)

1929 THE MARRIAGE PLAYGROUND (Paramount, 70 minutes, All talking)
Director: Lothar Mendes *Screenplay*: J. Walter Ruben
Adaptation and Dialogue: Doris Anderson
Photography: Victor Milner
Cast: Mary Brian (Judy), Fredric March (Martin), Huntley Gordon (Cliffe), Lilyan Tashman (Joyce), Kay Francis (Lady Wrench), William Austin (Lord Wrench), Phillip de Lacey (Terry), Seena Owen (Mrs. Sellars), with Anita Louise, Little Mitzi Green, Billy Seay, Ruby Parsely, Donald Smith, Jocelyn Lee, Maude Turner Gordon, David Newell, Armand Kaliz, Joan Standing, Gordon De Main
Status: exists
Notes: credits from *Variety* 5/30/90 and Bodeen (81). Wharton received $25,000 for the film rights from

Paramount Famous Lasky Corporation (Lewis, *Edith Wharton,* 484, and Benstock, *No Gifts*, 407).

1934 THE AGE OF INNOCENCE (RKO Radio, 9 reels, sound, c. 80-90 minutes)
Director: Philip Moeller *Screenplay:* Sarah Y. Mason and Victor Heerman (from the novel by Wharton and the theater dramatization by Margaret Ayer Barnes)
Producer: Pandro S. Berman *Costumes:* Walter Plunkett *Music:* Max Steiner
Cast: Irene Dunne (Countess Olenska), John Boles (Newland Archer), Julie Haydon (May Welland), Lionel Atwill (Beaufort), Laura Hope Crews (Mrs. Welland), Helen Westley (Granny Mingott), Herbert Yost (Mr. Welland), Theresa Maxwell-Conover (Mrs. Archer), Edith Van Cleve (Janey Archer), Leonard Carey (butler)
Status: exists
Notes: credits from *The New York Times* review 10/19/34 and Bodeen (81). Wharton received $15,000 for the film rights (Lewis, *Edith Wharton,* 430).

1935 STRANGE WIVES (Universal, 8 reels, sound)
Director: Richard Thorpe *Screenplay:* Gladys Unger (from Wharton's short story "Bread Upon the Waters")
Additional Dialogue: Barry Trivers and James Mulhauser
Cast: Roger Pryor, June Clayworth, Esther Ralston, Hugh O'Connell, Ralph Forbes, Cesar Romero, Francis L. Sullivan, Valerie Hobson, Leslie Fenton, Ivan Lebedeff, Doris Lloyd, Claude Gillingwater
Status: lost
Notes: Wharton to Mary Cadwalader Jones, April 10, 1934: "Thank you so much for acting as my substitute in the film contract for 'Bread Upon the Waters.' I wish the sum had more nearly approached the prices I used to get!" (Lewis and Lewis, *Letters,* 577). Benstock notes that Rutger Jewett sold the story for $5,000 to the movies (*No Gifts*, 439).

1939 THE OLD MAID (Warner Bros., 95 minutes, sound)
Director: Edmund Goulding *Screenplay:* Casey Robinson (from Wharton's novella and the theater dramatization by Zoë Akins) *Producer:* Hal B. Wallis with Henry Blanke *Photography:* Tony Gaudio *Art Direction:* Robert Haas *Music:* Max Steiner
Costumes: Orry-Kelly *Editor:* George Amy
Cast: Bette Davis (Charlotte Lovell), Miriam Hopkins (Delia Lovell), George Brent (Clem Spender), Donald Crisp (Dr. Lanskell), Jane Bryan (Tina), Louise Fazenda (maid), James Stephenson (Jim Ralston), Jerome Cowman (Joe Ralston), William Lundigan (Lanning Halsey), with Rand Brooks, Cecelia Loftus, Janet Shaw, William DeWolf Hopper, Marlene Burnett, Rod Cameron, Doris Lloyd, Frederick Burton
Status: Available for rental on videocassette, and in 16 mm or 35 mm
Notes: credits compiled from *The Films of Bette Davis* (96) and Bodeen (81). See Margaret B. McDowell's "Wharton's 'The Old Maid': Novella/Play/Film" for a full discussion of the various adaptations; also see Lewis, *Edith Wharton*, 7, 436.

1960 ETHAN FROME (*Television*--aired February 18, 1960 as the DuPont Show of the Month)
Director: Alex Segal *Teleplay:* Jacqueline Babbin and Audrey Gellin *Producer:* David Susskind
Cast: Sterling Hayden (Ethan Frome), Julie Harris (Mattie Silver), Clarice Blackburn (Zenobia Frome), with narration by Arthur Hill
Status: May be viewed at the Museum of Broadcasting, New York City.
Notes: First Wharton adaptation on television (Marshall, 16).

1981 LOOKING BACK (*Television*--biographical sketch of Wharton, 56 minutes)
Director: Kirk Browning *Teleplay:* Steve Lawson
Producers: Sam Paul and Dorothy Cullman (A Cinelit Production) *Associate Producer:* Jackie Craig
Photography: Francis Kenny *Art Direction:* John Kasarda *Costumes:* Jennifer Von Mayrhauser
Casting: Bonnie Timmerman *Executive Producer:* Jack Willis
Cast: Kathleen Widdoes (Edith Wharton), John Cullum (Walter Berry), John McMartin (Teddy Wharton), Richard Woods (Henry James), Stephen Collins (Morton Fullerton)
Notes: Loosely based on *A Backward Glance* and *Edith Wharton* by R.W.B. Lewis. The Elms in Newport, Rhode Island, was used for the exteriors of The Mount. Credits transcribed from tape by author.

1981 THE HOUSE OF MIRTH (*Television*, 95 minutes)
Director: Adrian Hall *Teleplay:* Adrian Hall and Richard Cumming *Producers:* Daniel A. Bohr and Dorothy Cullman *Executive Producer:* Jack Willis
Photography: Paul Goldsmith and Hart Perry
Production Design: Eugene Lee and Franne Lee
*Costumes:*Karen Roston *Casting:* Bonnie Timmermann
Editor: Charlotte Zwerin *Music:* Richard Cumming

Cast: Geraldine Chaplin (Lily Bart), William Atherton (Lawrence Selden), Barbara Blossom (Mme. Regine), Bree (Old Man), Timothy Crowe (Lord Dacey), Barbara Damashek (Nettie Struther), Virginia Donaldson (Alice Wetherall), Tim Donoghue (Ned Silverton), Elaine Eldridge (Mrs. Bart), Monique Fowler (Evie Van Osburgh), Elizabeth Franz (Grace Stepney), Peter Gerety (Jack Stepney), Bradford Gottlin (Percy Gryce), Ed Hall (Paul Morpeth), Judith Harkness (Miss Corby), Richard Jenkins (George Dorset), David Jones (Mr. Bart), Melanie Jones (Mrs. Bry), David Kennett (butler), Richard Kneeland (Simon Rosedale), Marjorie Lee (Duchess of Beltshire), Marguerite Lenert (Mrs. Peniston), Howard London (lawyer), Mana Manente (Gerty Farish), George Martin (Gus Trenor), Barbara Meek (Mrs. Haffen), Barbara Orson (Judy Trenor), Julie Pember (Mrs. Peniston's maid), Margo Skinner (Carry Fisher), Lois Smith (Bertha Dorset), Norman Smith (Wellington Bry), William E. Smith (Mr. Wetherall), Amy Van Nostrand (Gwen Van Osburgh). With the participation of the Trinity Square Repertory Company.
Notes: Some scenes filmed in Newport, Rhode Island. Credits transcribed from tape by author.

1981 SUMMER *(Television,* 87 minutes)
Director: Dezso Magyar *Teleplay:* Charles Gaines *Producers:* Daniel A. Bohr and Dorothy Cullman *Executive Producer:* Jack Willis *Photography:* Michael Fash, B.S.C. *Art Direction:* Leon Munier *Costumes:* Carr Garnett *Music:* Lee Hoiby *Casting:* Bonnie Timmermann *Editor:* Janet Merwin *Sound:* Vincent Stenerson *Hair and Makeup:* Steve Atha *Associate Producer:* Walter Rearick
Cast: Diane Lane (Charity Royall), Michael Ontkean (Lucius Harney), John Cullum (Lawyer Royall), Ray Poole (Reverend Miles), Edith Meiser (Miss Hatchard), Jackie Brookes (Verena), Kevin Martin (Liff Hyatt), Kevin O'Connor (Bash Hyatt), Kathryn Dowling (Annabell Balch), Lauralee Bruce (girl in jewelry shop), Pippa Pearthree (Ally Hawes), Jarlath Conroy (gaunt man), Robin Tilghman (Charity's sister), William Preston (old man)
Notes: Filmed in Temple, New Hampshire, and Jaffrey Center, New Hampshire. Credits transcribed from tape by author. *Looking Back, The House of Mirth,* and *Summer* were Special Presentations in the Humanities under the auspices of the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

1983 THE LADY'S MAID'S BELL *(Television,* 53 minutes)
Series: Shades of Darkness *Production:* Granada Television of England, in association with WGBH, Boston (shown as part of the "Mystery!" series)
Director: John Glenister *Screenplay:* Ken Taylor *Producer:* June Wyndham Davies *Production Manager:* Roy Jackson *Photography:* Tony Caldwell *Designer:* Tim Farmer *Music:* Paul Reade *Sound:* Harry Brookes *Editor:* Alan Ringland *Makeup:* Julie Jackson *Costumes:* John Fraser *Casting:* Malcolm Drury *Research:* Nicky Cooney
Cast: Joanna David (Hartley), June Brown (Emma Saxon), Norma West (Mrs. Brympton), Ian Collier (Mr. Brympton), Charlotte Mitchell (Mrs. Blinder), Roger Llewellyn (Mr. Ranford), Harry Littlewood (Mr. Wace), Diane Whitley (Agnes), Clive Duncan (Bob Burling), Malcolm Raeburn (Ted Roberts), Bernard Atha (pharmacist), Alick Hayes (Vicar)
Notes: Principal location: Arley Hall, Cheshire, England. The 1904 short story--set by Wharton on the Hudson River--works well in an English setting. Credits transcribed from tape by author.

1983 AFTERWARD *(Television,* 53 minutes)
Series: Shades of Darkness *Production:* Granada Television of England, in association with WGBH-Boston (shown as part of the "Mystery!" series)
Director: Simon Langton *Screenplay:* Alfred Shaughnessy *Producer:* June Wyndham Davies *ExecutiveProducer:* Michael Cox *Production Manager:* Keith Thompson *Photography:* Tony Caldwell *Designer:* Alan Price *Music:* Patrick Gowers *Sound:* Ray French *Dubbing:* John Whitworth *Editor:* Anthony Horn *Makeup:* Lois Richardson *Costumes:* Anne Salisbury *Casting:* Priscilla John *Research:* Nicky Cooney
Cast: Kate Harper (Mary Boyne), Michael J. Shannon (Edward Boyne), Penelope Lee (Alida Stair), John Grillo (Harold Parvis), Meg Ritchie (Trimmle), Rolf Saxon (Robert Elwell), William Abney (Inspector Yates), Merelinda Kendall (Agnes), Arthur Whybrow (Mr. Craig), Eric Francis (Cooper)
Notes: Credits transcribed from tape by author.

1983 BEWITCHED *(Television,* 48 minutes)
Series: Shades of Darkness *Production:* Granada Television of England, in association with WGBH-Boston (shown as part of the "Mystery!" series)
Director: John Gorrie *Screenplay:* Alan Plater *Producer:* June Wyndham Davies *Executive*

Producer: Michael Cox *Production Manager*: Roy Jackson *Photography*: Doug Hallows *Designer:* Peter Phillips *Music:* Geoffrey Burgon *Sound:* Ray French *Dubbing:* John Whitworth *Editor:* Alan Ringland *Makeup:* Julie Jackson *Costumes:* Esther Dean *Casting:* Malcolm Drury *Research:* Nicky Cooney
Cast: Eileen Atkins (Mrs. Rutledge), Alfred Burke (Reverend Hibben), Ray Smith (Sylvester Brand), Gareth Thomas (Owen Bosworth), Alfred Lynch (Saul Rutledge), Mary Healey (Loretta Bosworth), Martyn Hesford (Andrew), MaryJo Randle (the girl)
Notes: Credits transcribed from tape by author.

1988 SONGS FROM THE HEART (*Television*–biographical sketch of Wharton, with scenes from her fiction, 56 minutes)
Director: Dennis Krausnick *Screenplay:* Mickey Friedman from his play *Producer:*JohnMacGruer/ Downtown Productions *Photography:* Arnold Beckerman *Editors:* Mickey Friedman and John MacGruer *Sets:* Matthew Larkin *Costumes:* Joan DeGusto *Music:* Lawrence Wallach
Cast: Gillian Barge (Edith Wharton), with Margaret Whitton, Henry Stram, Kathleen Mahoney-Barrett, John Talbot, Caris Corfman, Peter Whittrock, Michaela Murphy
Notes: Available on videocassette. Primarily filmed at The Mount, Lenox, Massachusetts, and other Berkshire County locations. Credits compiled by author.

1990 THE CHILDREN (Isolde Films, in association with Film Four International, Arbo Film & Maram GbmH and Bayerliche Landesanstalt for Aufbaufinanzierung, 115 minutes)
Director: Tony Palmer *Screenplay:* Timberlake Wertenbaker *Producer:* Andrew Montgomery *Photography:* Nic Knowland *Editor:* Tony Palmer *Sound:* John Murphy *Production Design*: Chris Bradley and Paul Templeton *Art Direction:* Renate Hofer *Costume Design:* John Hibbs *Makeup:* Penny Smith *Co-Producer:* Harald Albrecht
Cast: Ben Kingsley (Martin Boyne), Kim Novak (Rose Sellars), Siri Neal (Judith), Geraldine Chaplin (Joyce Wheater), Joe Don Baker (Cliffe Wheater), Britt Ekland (Lady Wrench), Donald Sinden (Lord Wrench), Karen Black (Sybil Lullmer), Robert Stephens (Mr. Dobree), Rupert Graves (Gerald Ormerod), Terence Rigby (Duke of Mendip), Marie Helvin (Princess Buondelmonte), Rosemary Leach (Miss Scope), Mark Asquith (Terry), Anouk Fontaine (Blanca), Ian Hawkes (Bun), Eileen Hawkes (Beechy), Hermonie Eyre (Zinnie), Edward Michie (Chippo)
Notes: Filmed in Venice, Paris, Bavaria, Switzerland, Italy. Credits: *Variety* 5/30/90 and Isolde Films. Did not receive a U.S. release in theaters; the film did have a limited release on videocassette in an edited version (c. 90 minutes).

1993 ETHAN FROME (American Playhouse Theatrical Films and Miramax Films, 99 minutes)
Director: John Madden *Screenplay:* Richard Nelson *Executive Producers:* Lindsay Law and Richard Price *Producer:* Stan Wlodkowski *Associate Producer:* Johlyn Dale *Photography:* Bobby Bukowski *Music:* Rachel Portman *Costume Design:* Carol Oditz *Production Design:* Andrew Jackness *Art Direction*: David Crank *Set Direction:* Joyce Anne Gilstrap *Editor:* Katherine Wenning *Sound*: Paul Cote *Assistant Director:* Allan Nicholls *Casting:* Billy Hopkins and Suzanne Smith
Cast: Liam Neeson (Ethan Frome), Patricia Arquette (Mattie Silver), Joan Allen (Zenobia Frome), Tate Donovan (Reverend Smith), Katharine Houghton (Mrs. Hale), Stephen Mendillo (Ned Hale), Jay Goede (Denis Eady), George Woodward (Jotham), Debbon Ayer (Young Ruth Hale), Rob Campbell (Young Ned Hale)
Notes: Available on videocassette. Final credits state: "Filmed entirely on location in the Northeast Kingdom, Vermont," including Peachum, Vermont. A Miramax Release of an American Playhouse Theatrical Films Presentation, in association with Richard Price/BBC Films. Credits transcribed from tape by author.

1993 THE AGE OF INNOCENCE (Columbia Pictures, 138 minutes)
Director: Martin Scorsese *Screenplay:* Jay Cocks and Martin Scorsese *Producer:* Barbara De Fina *Photography:* Michael Ballhaus, A.S.C. *Production Design:* Dante Ferretti *Editor:* Thelma Schoonmaker *Costume Design:* Gabriella Pescucci *Music:* Elmer Bernstein *Title Sequence:* Elaine and Saul Bass *Co-Producer and Unit Production Manager*: Bruce S. Pustin *Associate Producer*: Joseph Reidy *Casting:* Ellen Lewis *Art Direction:* Speed Hopkins *Visual Research Consultant:* Robin Standefer *Script Supervisor:* Kathryn M. Chapin *Make-up*: Allen Weisinger *Special Effects Make-up*: Manlio Rocchetti *Michelle Pfeiffer's Make-up:* Ronnie Specter *Chief Lighting Technician:* Raymond Quinlan *Dialect Coach:* Tim Monich *19th-Century Music Consultant:*

David Montgomery *Etiquette Consultant:* Lily Lodge *Dramaturg:* Michael X. Zelenak *Dance Consultant:* Elizabeth Aldrich *Table Decorations Consultant:* David McFadden *Chef for 19th-Century Meals:* Rich Ellis A Cappa/De Fina Production of a Martin Scorsese Picture

Cast: Daniel Day-Lewis (Newland Archer), Michelle Pfeiffer (Countess Olenska), Winona Ryder (May Welland), Geraldine Chaplin (Mrs. Welland), Michael Gough (Henry van der Luyden), Richard E. Grant (Larry Lefferts), Mary Beth Hurt (Regina Beaufort), Robert Sean Leonard (Ted Archer), Norman Lloyd (Mr. Letterblair), Miriam Margolyes (Mrs. Mingott), Alec McCowen (Sillerton Jackson), Sian Phillips (Mrs. Archer), Jonathan Pryce (Riviere), Alexis Smith (Louisa van der Luyden), Stuart Wilson (Julius Beaufort), Joanne Woodward (Narrator)

Notes: Stage Facilities: Kaufman Astoria Studios, New York. Filmed in New York City; Troy, New York; Long Island, New York; and Paris. Available on videocassette. Nominated for five Academy Awards, including Best Screenplay (adapted from another medium--Cocks and Scorsese), Best Supporting Actress (Ryder), Best Art Direction, Best Costume Design, and Best Original Score. The film received one Oscar for Best Costume Design (Pescucci). The National Board of Review named it "Best Picture of the Year," and recognized Scorsese as "Best Director" and Ryder as "Best Supporting Actress." Ryder also received the Golden Globe Award for her performance. Miriam Margolyes received the British Academy Award for "Best Supporting Actress" as Mrs. Manson Mingott. Credits transcribed from tape by author.

1995 THE BUCCANEERS (*Television*, BBC Productions, c. 330 minutes)

Director/Producer: Philip Saville *Screenplay:* Maggie Wadey *Executive Producer:* Philippa Giles *Co-Producer:* Rosalind Wolfes *Associate Producer:* Nigel Taylor *Production Manager:* David Mason *Designer:* Tony Burrough *Costume Design:* Rosalind Ebbutt *Makeup Designer:* Christine Walmesley-Cotham *Casting Director:* Sarah Bird *Lighting Cameraman:* Remi Adefarasin *Sound:* John Pritchard *Editor:* Greg Miller *Art Direction:* Choi Ho Man and John Hill *Music:* Colin Towns *Choreography:* Domini Winter

Cast: Cheri Lunghi (Laura Testvalley), Carla Gugino (Nan St George), Mira Sorvino (Conchita), Alison Elliott (Virginia St George) Rya Kihlstedt (Lizzy Elmsworth), Ronan Vibert (Richard), Mark Tandy (Lord Seadown), James Frain (Julius, Duke of Trevenik), Dinsdale Landen (Lord Brightlingsea), Rosemary Leach (Lady Brightingsea), Greg Wise (Guy Thwaite), Michael Kitchen (Sir Helmsley Thwaite), Sophie Dix (Honoria), Sienna Guillory (Felicia), Emily Hamilton (Georgina), Connie Booth (Miss March), Jenny Agutter (Idina Hatton), Gwen Humble (Mrs. St George), Peter Michael Goetz (Col. St George), E. Katherine Kerr (Mrs. Parmore), Conchata Ferrell (Mrs. Elmsworth), Elizabeth Ashley (Mrs. Closson), James Rebhorn (Mr. Closson), Sheila Hancock (Dowager Trevenick), Richard Huw (Hector Robinson), Gresby Nash (Miles Dawnley), Diana Blackburn (Gertrude Trevenick), Matt Patresi (Lord Percy), Vicky Blake (Rose), David Neilson (Blair), Richard Cubison (jeweller), Valerie Minifie (Miss French), Karen Ascoe (Mrs. Lindfry), Roger Brierley (Tory MP for Lincoln), Lloyd McGuire (Tory MP for Bath), Martin Milman (Mr. Firle), William Tapley (Thomas), Christopher Owen (Speaker, House of Commons), Stephen Reynolds (Hogwood), Alister Cameron (Longlands butler), Bev Willis (Fisher), Stephen Billington (Lieutenant James)

Notes: Credits supplied by the BBC. United Kingdom premiere: March 1995, in five segments. U.S. premiere: Masterpiece Theatre, October 8-10, 1995, in three parts (Part I: 90 minutes; Part II: 120 minutes; Part III: 120 minutes). Filmed in Newport, Rhode Island, and at various English country house locations.

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Lenox, MA

BOOK REVIEWS

Helen Killoran. *Edith Wharton: Art and Allusion.* Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1996. 223 pp. $39.95

In *Hudson River Bracketed,* Edith Wharton's portrait of the artist as a young man, the protagonist Vance Weston rejects the superficial brilliance of his comtemporaries and declares that "the real stuff is way down, not on the surface." The artist's statement, which Helen Killoran quotes in *Art and Allusion,* is the premise of her engrossing and illuminating study of Wharton's fiction. In her exhaustive analyses of ten novels, from *The House of Mirth* to *The Gods Arrive,* Killoran discloses the significance of allusions to scores of literary works and paintings embedded in each of Wharton's texts: she reveals the importance of the books characters read, the plays and pictures they see, and the poems they quote, as well as the origin and meanings of place names, key phrases, titles of the novels, and names of the characters. Killoran's exploration of the complex pattern of allusions in the fiction reveals Wharton's "personal mythology" (1), in which myths of the Sphinx and the Furies together express the author's overmastering desire both to conceal and to reveal meaning.

Some of Wharton's sources identified by Killoran are well-known works, such as Wordsworth's poem "She was a Phantom of Delight," which gave Wharton the phrase "a moment's ornament," one of the discarded titles of *The House of Mirth.* Many of the allusions Killoran has uncovered probably lie beyond the knowledge of most readers: for instance, Theodore Rousseau's painting of a frozen landscape, *Le Givré,* the name of the French chateau in *The Reef,* itself suggestive of the "Mansion of Many Apartments" described by Keats, whose "Ode on a Grecian Urn" gives George Darrow his images of Anna Leath.

Rarely does an allusion in Wharton's fiction stand alone. In each chapter Killoran traces the formation of clusters, as in *The Age of Innocence,* in which allusions to works by Poe, Washington Irving, Balzac, Goethe, Dante, and Tennyson (among many others) embody and connect themes of live burial, revolt, exploration, and innocence, both social and sexual. "Layered allusions" occur when one work alludes to another, as in *Twilight Sleep* and *Hudson River Bracketed,* where references to *Paradise Lost,* which alludes to Genesis, link the actions of Wharton's characters to the Temptation and the Fall in the Garden of Eden. If one-all-embracing allusion exists, Killoran argues, it is to Emerson's poem "The Sphinx," which unites Wharton's dominant themes of rootlessness, inescapable pain, cosmic mystery, death-in-life, and blindness and sight.

Most intriguing is Killoran's conclusion that allusions function not only as visible signs but also as "buried messages," "pieces of an encoded puzzle" (180) that expose hidden themes, notably incest and insanity, that Wharton count not state directly. In *The Children,* for instance, the lines from Goethe's *Faust,* Milton's *Comus,* and Stevenson's *The Ebb Tide* that Martin Boyne recalls associate him with scenes of sorcery, seduction, and madness that reveal the true nature of his unacknowledged desire for the fifteen-year-old Judith Wheater.

All the chapters illuminate hitherto unexplored depths in the novels. Even long-time readers of Wharton's fiction may be startled to discover how much they have missed. Killoran's method is especially valuable in interpreting problematic characters, such as Lawrence Selden, Sophy Viner, and Vance Weston, who have puzzled readers or generated conflicting readings. Killoran's analysis may teach one how to read an entire novel. For instance, the detailed representation of manners and social occasions in *The Custom of the Country* might lead one to judge the protagonist Undine Spragg by the conventions of realism and pronounce her monstrous nature unbelievable. But Killoran shows how the network of allusions creates a fabulous structure, an "American Genesis Myth," in which the predatory soulless Undine, associated with water, snakes, glittering light, poison, and greed for pearls, perfectly typifies the "Western gold-devouring reptiles" that defeat the "Titan Gods of Old New York" (43).

In several ways, *Art and Allusion* is a book about reading. It explores the manifold importance of reading in the lives of Wharton's characters. It reveals the wide range of Wharton's reading, demonstrated in the extraordinary density and intricacy of the patterns of allusions, in which scarcely a name or an image is without significance. Finally, Killoran's study of the art of allusion shows how Wharton wanted her books to be read, by a reader always alert to the possibility of depths below depths, a reader who strives to be, in Henry James's phrase, "one of the people on whom nothing is lost."

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Alan Price. *The End of the Age of Innocence: Edith Wharton and the First World War.* New York: St. Martin's, 1996. 233 pp inc. bibliography. $29.95

The culmination of fifteen years of careful research, this new book will do much to broaden and deepen our understanding of the expatriate Edith Wharton living in France during the Great War. Drawing largely on unpublished letters and other sources, Alan Price explores a question that has disturbed Wharton scholars for some time; namely, "What led Wharton, with her rich sense of irony, to turn her pen to sentimental fiction and propaganda essays?" (xii). Devoting each of the five chapters comprising the book to one year of the War (1914-1918), Price delineates Wharton's evolution from fiction writer to an incredibly energetic organizer of charities for Belgian refugees (the American Hostels for Refugees and the Children of Flanders) as well as of a series of workrooms to provide employment for French women deprived of work by war mobilization. Like many of her European peers, Wharton in 1914 believed the battle between the Central Powers and the Allies would be short-lived, and, as Price points out, little did she suspect that beginning in 1915, Wharton's heavy commitments to the defense of France would result in a repetitive cycle of physical and mental exhaustion alternating with rest periods that would permanently affect her health.

Like Henry James, Wharton was ashamed and angry at the neutral stance of the American government and its refusal until April 1917 to declare war on Germany. Price does not explore the larger context of world politics and its relationship to Western imperialism, and one wonders to what extent Wharton herself understood the complications that prevented America from entering the War until such a late date. Price does make clear, however, that Wharton saw the invasion of Belgium and France (and by alliance, England) as " . . . the threatened [her] own ability to make a well-ordered world. To Wharton, the attack on French ways and their meaning was an attack on her own ability to make meaning imaginatively and to create habitable and elegant spaces" (21). Her fear of the Germans, of course, was largely a fear of Prussian militarism, a quality already experienced by the "civilized" French in the Franco-Prussian War. Wharton's efforts to rouse American pro-French sentiments are carefully documented in Price's references to her letters to the New York press and her close relationship with her sister-in-law Mary (Minnie) Caldwalader Jones, who assisted Wharton in raising countless American dollars to aid her charities. In spite of her personal reservations about appeals for funds that depended on emotional and sentimental aspects of hardship cases, Wharton resorted to such tactics because they succeeded in moving the American public. The details of the prolonged (and exhausting) project of *The Book of the Homeless* are fascinating; thanks to Minnie Jones' efforts, the auction of the MS of the book brought Wharton's charities nearly $7,000. Meanwhile, in France, Wharton relied heavily on the work of Elisina Tyler to oversee the complex management of the Children of France, the American Hostels for Refugees and her sewing workrooms. Considering Wharton's commitments to the war effort (in 1915, she visited the front five times in seven months), her continuing stream of reporting on the war's destructive effects on the civilian population, and her personal loss of friends Henry James and Egerton Winthrop in 1916, it seems almost miraculous that in that year she succeeded in completing her "hot Ethan" novel, *Summer*. Having heard about the role of the American Red Cross in France after 1917 from survivors of the Great War, this reader found Price's chapter "At War with the American Red Cross: 1917" particularly illuminating. The use of "big business" tactics by the ARC diverted American funds from private charities in France such as those run by Wharton; as Price states, "The final break came when the ARC showed through its clumsy handling of personnel situations that it did not care about national or personal sensitivities, only about imposing American control and ensuring efficiency" (128). Price points out that these problematic American attitudes later provided Wharton with ironic grist for her war fiction, including *A Son at the Front* (1923) and *The Mother's Recompense* (1924-25).

Edith Wharton and Alan Price spare us most of the grim details of the front during the Great War. Readers interested in learning more about the "war to end all wars" that left more than 10 million dead may consult works such as Lyn Macdonald's *1915: The Death of Innocence* (New York: Holt, 1993). But Alan Price has shown us a richer, deeper side to Edith Wharton's character that we have seen before; his careful documentation of her deep commitment to humanitarian and charitable causes, her skill in detailed administrative and economic responsibilities and her ability to engage in serious and convincing propagandistic campaigns when the cause was right will seriously impact on our perception of the author of *The Age of Innocence.*

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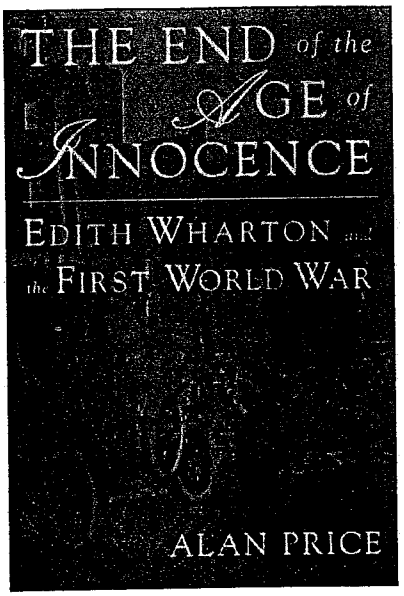


The End of the Age of Innocence

Edith Wharton and the First World War

Alan Price

"Drawing on unpublished letters and archival materials in Europe and the United States, *The End of the Age of Innocence* documents Wharton's activities as fund-raiser, philanthropist, propagandist, and political activist during the Great War. A fascinating account of a little-understood period of Wharton's life."

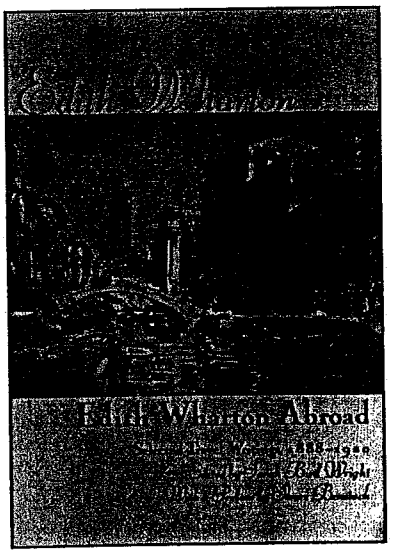
—Shari Benstock, author of
No Gifts from Chance: A Biography of Edith Wharton

The American novelist Edith Wharton saved the lives of thousands of Belgian and French refugees during World War I. When the war began, the expatriated Wharton and Henry James saw any possible German victory as "the crash of civilization," thus prompting their early involvement in the allied cause. In the opening weeks of the conflict, Wharton wrote war reportage at the front and organized relief efforts in Paris. Before the first year of the war was over, she had created organizations and raised funds for three major war charities that bore her name. As the war sank into a stalemate of trench warfare, Wharton continued to write magazine and newspaper articles, organize fund raising schemes, and rally the world's best painters, composers, and writers to donate money for her refugees and to sway the American popular opinion. *The End of the Age of Innocence* tells the dramatic story of Wharton's heroic crusade to save the lives of displaced Belgians as well as the suffering citizens of her adopted France.

Alan Price is Associate Professor of English and American Studies at Pennsylvania State University, Hazleton Campus. He is co-editor, with Katherine Joslin, of *Wretched Exotic: Essays on Edith Wharton in Europe.*

CONTENTS: Preface: A Life Punctuated by War • Introduction: The Second Greatest Fourth • A Season of New Beginnings: 1914 • Reporter at the Front and Organizer at the Rear: 1915 • Honors and Losses: 1916 • At War with the American Red Cross: 1917 • Armistice and Withdrawal: 1918 • Conclusion: The End of the "Age of Innocence" • Notes • Bibliography • Index

May 1996 / 224 pp. with illustrations
ISBN 0-312-12938-6 **$29.95 cl.**



New in Paperback!

Edith Wharton Abroad

Selected Travel Writings, 1888-1920

Edith Wharton
Edited by **Sarah Bird Wright**
Preface by **Shari Benstock**

"[Wharton] annoints these passages with the same gracefulness with which she approaches her novels."

—*Entertainment Weekly*

This collection gathers together for the first time excerpts from Edith Wharton's seven works of travel. The writings span a period of three decades: from a time of leisurely travel by chartered steam yacht, diligence, railway, and motor car during the *belle époque,* through the horror and pathos of the French landscape during World War I, to the Morocco of 1917—a country previously forbidden to most women and foreigners.

Scornful of guidebooks, Wharton focuses instead on the "parentheses of travel"—the undiscovered by-ways of Europe, Morocco, and the Mediterranean. Among the sites she describes are the towns of Tirano, Brescia, Poitiers and Chauvigny, and the gardens of the Villa Caprarola and the Villa Aldobrandini. Her account of Mount Athos in Greece (recently discovered in her diary of an 1888 Mediterranean cruise), may be the first ever by an American. An intrepid reporter, she also depicts the front lines of Lorraine and the Vosges during World War I. In these writings, Wharton describes art, architecture, sculpture, and landscape with the eye of a knowledgeable connoisseur and the sensitivity of an observant and imaginative novelist.

Sarah Bird Wright holds a doctorate in American Studies from the College of William and Mary. Her books include the forthcoming *Edith Wharton's Travel Writing: The Making of a Connoisseur* (SMP), *Ferries of America: A Guide to Adventurous Travel, Islands of the South and Southeastern United States,* and *Islands of the Northeastern United States and Eastern Canada.* She lives in Midlothian, Virginia.

CONTENTS: Preface—*Shari Benstock* • Introduction—*Sarah Bird Wright* • The Cruise of the Vanadis • "Africa" • "Chios and Smyrna" • "Mount Athos" • Italian Villas and Their Gardens • "Villas Near Rome" • "Villas of Venetia" • Italian Backgrounds • "A Midsummer Week's Dream" • "Picturesque Milan" • A Motor-Flight Through France • "From Rouen to Fountainebleau" • "Paris to Poitiers" • Fighting France: From Dunkerque to Belfort • "In Argonne" • "In Lorraine and the Vosges" • French Ways and Their Meaning • "Taste" • "The New Frenchwoman"• In Morocco • "Harems and Ceremonies" • Index

September 1996 / 240 pp. with B&W photos
ISBN 0-312-16120-4 **$14.95 pb.**

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CONFERENCE NEWS

MLA in WASHINGTON, DC - Dec. 27-30, 1996

Edith Wharton and Taboo

Arranged and Moderated by Barbara Comins, La Guardia Community College, CUNY

Saturday, Dec. 28, 7:15-8:30 p.m., Maryland Suite B, Sheraton

1. "'Pecking at the Host': Transgressive Wharton," Barbara Comins
2. "Secret Reading and Secret Love: Taboo Books in *The Age of Innocence,*" Jessica Levine, University of California, Berkeley
3. "Public and Private Worlds Reversed: War and Incest," Alan Price, Pennsylvania State University, Hazelton Campus
4. "Sleeping with the Enemy: Jews, Sex, and Edith Wharton," Susan Meyer, Wellesley College.

Edith Wharton and Race

Presiding, Annette Zilversmit, Long Island University, Brooklyn Campus

Monday, Dec. 30, 8:30-9:45 p.m. Maryland Suite B, Sheraton

1. "The Meaning of the Mountain for Race and Theory in Wharton's *Summer.*" Augusta Rohrbach, Oberlin College
2. "Expressing Culture, Seeing Race in *In Morocco,*" Stephanie Batcos, University of Delaware
3. "Wharton, Race and Innocence: Three Historical Contexts," Anne MacMaster, Millsops College

Respondent: Howard Horowitz, University of Utah

EDITH WHARTON AT YALE
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The complicated interrelationship between the feminist biographer and her work was also the focus of the opening convocation, "Visions of Edith Wharton," featuring prominent biographers Shari Benstock (No Gifts from Chance: A Biography of Edith Wharton [1994]) and Cynthia Griffin Wolff (The Feast of Words: The Triumph of Edith Wharton [1977]). Following Benstock's and Wolff's complementary talks, Patricia Willis, Curator of American Literature at the Beinecke, invited all in attendance to a handsome reception, a veritable feast of words, at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. A special exhibit selected by Julia Ehrhardt and Jennifer Greeson from the Wharton collection was displayed on this occasion.

Other events at the conference included BBC producer Sara Feilden's presentation of advance clips from the BBC version of The Buccaneers (later broadcast in October 1995 in the United States on Masterpiece Theatre) and a performance of Houston dramatist Scotti Sween's one-woman play Edith Wharton: An Unnatural Woman, starring Claire Hart-Palumbo.

Thanks to the labor and unrelenting imagination of Scott Marshall, Deputy Director of Edith Wharton Restoration, conference attendees had the chance to view the (wrongly presumed) "lost" 1934 film of The Age of Innocence, in which Fredric March played Newland Archer, and Irene Dunne, Ellen Olenska. One of the conference highlights, the screening was prefaced by a talk on Wharton and film by Marshall, and followed by a presentation on the 1993 Martin Scorsese Age of Innocence by film studies scholar Brigitte Peucker. The conference ended with a lively plenary session "Justice to Edith Wharton" led by Alfred Bendixen, Kenneth M. Price, and Abby Werlock. Glancing backward and forward, the panelists argued persuasively that the time has come for a complete scholarly edition of Wharton's works.

Organizing the conference was a collective effort to which many contributed. The co-directors of the meeting, Clare Colquitt, Susan Goodman, and Candace Waid, and the Wharton Society owe special thanks to the Smart Family Foundation, the Whitney Humanities Center, the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, the Department of English at Yale, the University of Delaware, and San Diego State University; and to Helen Killoran, David Marshall, Scott Marshall, Patricia Willis, and Annette Zilversmit.

The following essays suggest, to borrow from Phelps, the "distinction in style" and subject of the papers delivered at the Yale conference. Sarah Bird Wright illumines how Wharton's nonfiction and fiction alike profited from the "cultural capital" she gained from her travels. As Wright explains, "Wharton frequently intended to convert her actual travels into fictional settings," and her fiction is often best appreciated "as a form of travel." Comparing recent interpretations of Lawrence Selden with the more sympathetic responses of Wharton's contemporaries, Joseph Coulombe maintains that Wharton's characterization of her "negative hero" deliberately challenged cultural stereotypes of her time and "invite[d] readers to re-see gender constructs for men as well as women." Adeline Tintner studies "rearrangements and reinventions" of Wharton in three stories and one novel by Louis Auchincloss, "in a way [Wharton's] heir as a writer of fiction." Though his portraits of Edith Wharton do not always flatter his distinguished predecessor (The Education of Oscar Fairfax, for instance, stresses Wharton's hostility toward sexually powerful women), Tintner concludes that Auchincloss's "Edith," despite her flaws, is always "presented as one of the great writers of our time." The last essay in this special issue is Scott Marshall's study, with filmography, of screen adaptations of Wharton. Regarding Wharton's distaste for film and her apparent decision never to view a movie adaptation of her work, Marshall posits that the "outrageous overacting" and "grimacing

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EDITH WHARTON AT YALE
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melodrama" typical of silent film were anathema to Wharton. He suggests, too, why film versions of Wharton find little favor among scholars: directors rarely respect Wharton's narrative line as, for example, in the BBC production of The Buccaneers in which a homosexual subplot was added.

Annette Zilversmit has graciously allowed the co-editors of this special Edith Wharton Review the opportunity to publish an additional "Edith Wharton at Yale" issue. That second issue will contain papers by Jessica Levine, Helen Killoran, and Brigitte Peucker. Other essays drawn from the conference will appear in the forthcoming book "Edith Wharton: A Further Glance," co-edited by Colquitt, Goodman, and Waid.

In this issue