Make It Short: Edith Wharton's Modernist Practices as a Short Story Writer.

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Abstract

In this thesis I argue for a repositioning of Edith Wharton's short stories in relation to both the twentieth century and modernism. Whilst Wharton was acclaimed for her novels, I argue that the short story, the genre in which she felt most proficient as a writer, yet is still habitually overlooked by critics, presents Wharton at her most experimental and "renovat[ive]", to use her own words. I consider how the restrictive confines of the short story, both in terms of its brevity and commercial value, particularly in relation to the magazine market, were exploited by Wharton to her own advantage, and how her literary craft flourished in such a contained form.

I do not argue for a re-envisioning of Wharton as a modernist writer, rather for recognition of her modernist tendencies both in terms of her narrative technique and her interaction with the literary marketplace. Accordingly this thesis is divided into two parts; the first considers Wharton's poetics: her use of myth, modes of narration, creation of narrative gaps, and her notable use of ellipsis points (closely associated by critics such as Henry with modernist writing). The second part of this thesis explores Wharton's modernist practices outside her texts. Here I investigate Wharton's short story magazine publication history, outlining the uneasy balance between her challenges to editorial policy in both the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, and her businesslike attitude toward the profession of writing. Finally, given recent critical reassessments of modernism and its relationship with both the short story and the magazine industry, I argue for the timely recognition of the distinctly modernist nature of Wharton's popular, mass marketed short fiction.

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Abbreviations

Full publication details given in bibliographies

RBM *Red Book Magazine*

CS1 *Collected Stories* (Volume One)

CS2 *Collected Stories* (Volume Two)

WF *The Writing of Fiction*

BG *A Backward Glance*

PS 'Pomegranate Seed' (poem)

LI 'Life and I'

TL Woolf, Virginia (1927) *To the Lighthouse*

G *Ghosts*

HN *Human Nature*

VR 'The Vice of Reading'

CI *Crucial Instances*

FS Miles, Alfred (1905) (ed) *Fifty-Two Stories of Head, Heart, and Hand for Girls.*

GI *The Greater Inclination*

DM *The Descent of Man and Other Stories*

TMG *Tales of Men and Ghosts*

HWW *The Hermit and the Wild Woman and Other Stories*

TWO *The World Over*

CP *Certain People*

HB *Here and Beyond*

X *Xingu and Other Stories*

SEP *Saturday Evening Post*

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'Make it Short' is dedicated to Karel Morlans Hernandez.

Introduction

1.1: Edith Wharton and Modernism

The lack of consensus on exactly what features a text should possess to be considered modernist lies at the heart of current critical dissonance over Wharton's modernist practices. This is a dissonance which is further confounded by both the quantity and variety of Wharton's literary output: a collection of prose fiction, travel writing, critical essays, poetry, autobiography, and art appreciation published over a span of forty-eight years, constituting an opus which 'stubbornly defies classification' (Wegener 1999: 31). Few scholars nowadays would view Wharton as the 'literary aristocrat' Parrington had firmly ensconced in the nineteenth century (1962:153). Indeed, Benstock, who initially stated Wharton 'belonged totally to the nineteenth century' (1989:37), five years later, according to Bauer, 'enshrines [her] for her prominence as a female modernist' (Bauer 1994: 115). But even if critics agree on what Wharton is *not* (or rather, *no longer*) modernism's blurred and shifting boundaries make Wharton's place in the canon vague, if she is eligible at all.

Recent re-evaluation of Wharton's work, largely fuelled by feminist criticism (Ammons 1980, Showalter 1985, Bauer 1994, Haytock 2008) and the discovery of hitherto unpublished private letters, manuscripts and diaries, have made the issue of Wharton's relationship with modernism one that demands further critical attention. Although even as late as the end of the twentieth century little consideration was given to Wharton in studies of modernism, as evidenced by her omission from Scott's 1990 *The Gender of Modernism*, in the twenty-first century scholars are becoming increasingly recognisant of Wharton's interaction with modernism. Halliwell dedicates a chapter to Wharton, Wilde, Norris and Huysmans in *Transatlantic Modernism* (2001: 29-38), Thompson's fourth chapter in *Influencing America's Tastes* considers 'Edith Wharton's Argument with Modernism' (2002:

89-122) and published in the same year, Beer and Bennett's *Special relationships: Anglo-American Affinities and Antagonisms* contains a chapter entitled '"Embattled tendencies": Wharton, Woolf and the nature of Modernism' (Joslin 2002:223). Three years later, in Lamb and Thompson's *A Companion to American Fiction 1865-1914* (2005), Wharton features in Wagner-Martin's chapter 'Women Authors and the Roots of American Modernism' (140-147) and is the subject of a later chapter entitled 'Wharton's Modernist Aesthetic' (Waid and Colquitt 536-556). Peel's *Apart from Modernism: Edith Wharton, Politics, and Fiction Before World War 1* (2005) gets directly to the heart of the matter, with a focus on her early writing, in contrast to the general critical tendency to consider Wharton's later work when assessing her relationship with modernism (Haytock 2002, Thompson 2002, Kim 2006, Beer and Horner 2009). In *Edith Wharton and the Conversations of Literary Modernism* (2008) Haytock considers Wharton's novels, stories and non-fiction in her argument that the recent re-envisioning of modernism, particularly in its representation of gender issues, demands a repositioning of Wharton's writing in relationship to the canon. A year later Beer and Horner argue in their chapter 'Edith Wharton and Modernism' that Wharton's post 1925 fiction demonstrates a hybridity and generic experimentation found in what is typically described as 'late modernist' (2009:1) writing. Rather than abating, the 'ongoing critical controversy over [Wharton's] status as a modernist writer' (Ware 2004:17) has, without doubt, considerably intensified over the last five years.

As the title of Nicholl's book, *Modernisms* (1995) implies, the modernist tradition is 'pluralistic and diverse' (Halliwell 2001: 7). Almost twenty years earlier Bradbury and McFarlane had already acknowledged that the term was used 'to cover a wide variety of movements' (1976:23) and, in the next decade, responding to a call for a definition of American modernism in particular, Singal describes it as 'a constellation of related ideas, beliefs, values, and modes of perception', stating there is more critical agreement on what

modernism is *not* than what it is (1987:7). This generally negative vision of modernism, that is, what it is *not,* has meant it has often been viewed in dichotomous rather than evolutionary terms. The variety of movements Bradbury and McFarlane recognise are all 'subversive of the realist or romantic impulse' (1976:23) and Huyssen refers to the modernist movement as one of 'resistance .. abstention ... and ... suppression' (1986:55). What is being rebelled against depends on the critic; the traditional system that is rejected may be that of form (Lodge 1976: 481), of subject matter (Thompson 2002: 113, Haytock 2002), of underlying ideologies (Peel 2005), of 'moralism' (Halliwell 2006), or intended reader and relationship with mass consumerism (Huyssen 1986, Carey 1992). Critical perception of the criteria of modernist rebellion and the means in which it is manifested vary, but there is a general tendency to view modernism's relationship with tradition as an 'embattled' one (Joslin 2002). Indeed, Kaplan and Simpson write simply that modernists saw the Edwardians 'as the enemy' (1996: viii). This vision of modernism cannot accommodate writers such as Wharton, whose work appears to simultaneously uphold tradition and subvert it through her use of irony and satire.

A more workable definition of the term has been proposed by critics who have rejected historical categorization and called for a widening of the net of features that may be perceived as modernist. Nicholls cites Baudelaire and Mallarmé as early modernists (1995: 1), and Bradbury and MacFarlane's candidates include Emile Zola, for his experimental novel in 1880 (*Le Roman Expérimental*) and Walter Pater in the 1870s for presenting a 'multiplicity of consciousness' (1976:30). As the boundaries of modernism continue to shift, in terms of both the historical period this tradition encompasses and the features that are perceived as modernist, a far more workable use of the term is evolving. Henry James is increasingly named as a modernist writer (Nicholls 1995: 165) (Peel 2007:17) and Benstock writes that even decades ago Stein had said that he embodied the tradition of 'modern

writing' (Benstock 1997: 89). Childs also points in particular to James's tales, citing 'The Figure in the Carpet' (1896) as 'the quintessential self-reflexive modernist story, with its metaphor of hidden patterns in the weave of a carpet to stand for intricate design and for depth reading' (2000: 75). This repositioning of James gives further impetus to a reconsideration of Wharton's place in relation to modernism.

Scholars now recognise that certain modernist features, such as Chekhov's 'slice of life' techniques and Paterian individualism (Matthews 2004: 18), were being employed by realist and naturalist writers well before Woolf's pivotal year of 1910. The growing acceptance that there is no single, definitive line in terms of a historical or literary definition of modernism has certainly made the debate less clear-cut, but without doubt more perceptive and probing. As both Wharton and modernism itself are revised, the task of unravelling the inscrutable relationship between the two has become an increasingly significant and pressing one.

A consideration of Wharton's modernist practice must also deal with her complicated relationship with America and the unreliable nature of her critical and autobiographical writing. In terms of the former, Wharton prized her American citizenship and despite choosing to spend the last thirty years of her life in Europe, she was principally an American writer who wrote about Americans, be it in their native country, or across the Atlantic.[1] Unlike Woolf and Joyce, who often feature in discussions about Wharton's relationship with modernism (Joslin 2002, Daugherty and Barrett 1996, Kim 2006), Wharton wrote primarily for an American readership (Bentley 2003: 150). Wharton wrote for her native reader, and never wrote about the world through any other than American eyes. As she put it: 'It is doubtful if a novelist of one race can ever really penetrate into the soul of another' ('The Great American Novel' in Wegner 1996: 157).

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[1] Unlike James, Wharton did not give up her American citizenship (Wright 1998:87).

America was a very different place from Europe at the turn of the century in terms of technological advances, immigration, social hierarchies and publishing conventions. Halliwell notes that America experienced the force of industrialisation, particularly in terms of urbanism, later than Britain (2001: 11). Glass comments on the different social structures and publishing conventions in the two continents at this time, and writes that whereas Europe had 'well-established cultural hierarchies and institutionally separated markets for art and literature', America had a 'much less-established tradition of high culture and a far more developed mass cultural public sphere' (2004: 6). This difference is particularly apparent in the context of magazine publication and Glass contrasts the European, elitist small scale magazines with those written for an American mass middlebrow readership (2004: 6); which was, ultimately, Wharton's intended readership.

Although Wharton did publish in Europe – her work was marketed in England and she also wrote a story in French - her primary readership was American, and this factor's influence on her work, both within and outside her texts in terms of marketing, is considerable.[2] Her dictum that the situation chosen for a short story should be presented in terms of 'the widest possible view' (*WF* 36) can easily be extended into her practice of writing for the widest possible audience, both in terms of her narratives themselves and her close interest in the promotion and sales of her work. Stylistically she achieves this through American references, use of gaps and unreliable narrators, which create both a sense of understanding with the reader, and a sympathetic ambiguity which allowed her stories to be all things to all readers.[3] Given the influence of Wharton's readership on her poetics, any study of her modernist tendencies should take into consideration both her American reader and the publishing environment in which she wrote. Such a mode of analysis not only serves

[2] 'Les Metteurs en Scène' (1908) was written and published in French in *Revue des Deux Mondes* 67, 1st September (Wright 1998: 165).
[3] 'The Pelican' (1899), for example, lends itself to a comic reading within a patriarchal frame, but should the narrator be regarded as unreliable the story seems to take on a distinctly blunter, critical feminist tone.

to highlight the often overlooked influence of place of publication on modernist writing (demonstrated by the enlightening work done by Scholes (2006, 2008) and Chan (2007)), but also underlines the fact that her European contemporaries wrote in different publishing environments, for different audiences.

Perhaps the tendency to attempt to place Wharton's stories within a European modernist tradition, with little regard for her predominately American readership and narrators, lies not only in her residence there and its recognised position at the forefront of modernism, but in the difficulty in finding comparable, contemporary *American* writers. Although she is frequently coupled with Cather and Chopin, neither of these two is generally viewed as having produced essentially modernist short stories. (Indeed, despite 'The Awakening's well recognised status as a modernist or proto-modernist text, Horner laments the 'halting and piecemeal' connections between Chopin's work and modernism (2008: 132)). Faulkner, another American, is often cited as a writer of modernist short stories (Kartiganer 1988) and his name is increasingly coupled with Wharton's in terms of their modernist privileging of an individual consciousness over a more omniscient, reliable narrative standpoint (Waid and Colquitt 2005). However, he wrote his first story in 1919 (Volpe 2004: ix), twenty-eight years after Wharton's first short story was published, which makes him only a useful, but not definitive point of comparison. Sherwood Anderson, Sinclair Lewis, Fitzgerald and Hemingway are also cited by Homberger (1976: 159) as American modernists, yet all began writing almost thirty years after the publication of Wharton's first short story.

Much of the difficulty in identifying a comparative American writer lies in Wharton's own self- positioning within a European tradition. In *The Writing of Fiction* she cites her admiration in particular for French, English and Russian writers, dedicating a complete

chapter to Proust, who is now widely regarded as modernist in his use of subjective narration. Given that Wharton analyses Conrad's narrative technique in her chapter 'Constructing a Novel', it is hardly surprising that a critic should choose this 'un-American' writer as a point of comparison in a measure of Wharton's modernist tendencies. Indeed, in his discussion of *Ethan Frome,* Peel clearly states that Conrad's impressionism, rather than Stein's experiments in form, are the most suitable grounds for a comparison of the text's modernist features (2007:16).

Lacking an American short story writer who could act as a point of comparison, Wharton is often contrasted with writers whose work was published primarily for European consumption. However, as Benstock (1987) demonstrates, despite Wharton's émigré status and residence in Paris, she actually had very little in common with the iconic modern writers living just miles away. They shared the same city, but different readerships. Much of the current critical tendency to compare Wharton with contemporary writers resident in Europe also lies in the distinctly European focus of modernist scholarship. Most studies of modernist practice focus on writers who lived in Europe and wrote for European readers, readers who lived within quite a different social hierarchy and culture from that of their American cousins. In terms of the short story, a literary form which is generally regarded to have been 'invented' (Prescott 1988:13) by Americans, it seems particularly incongruous that a European modernist frame of reference is used to quantify an American writer's work. Indeed, although the effect of American editorial policy on Wharton's writing practice has been considered by various critics and biographers (Bell (1957), Lewis (1975), Kaplan (1986), Balestra (1996), Lee (2007)), little critical attention is given to the fact that her writing was sold to a primarily American readership. In considering the modernist short story - a category I will argue comfortably accommodates Wharton's shorter fiction - Head, the only scholar to have completed a book-long study of the subject (1994), makes no reference

to any American writers, and considers rather the work of James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield and Wyndham Lewis. This almost invariable European frame of reference is employed by various scholars of the modernist short story including Russell (1998) and Hunter (1999), the only exception I have encountered to date being Hanson's *Short Stories and Short Fictions 1880-1980* (1985), in which she explores not only the work of Joyce, Woolf, Mansfield and Conrad, but also Hemingway (76) and Stein (71).

As Henry James's work edges into the territory of the modernist literary canon, the temptation to use his narratives as a yardstick for Wharton's own modernist tendencies has the potential to undo all the progress made over the last few decades in separating the two, and I will therefore attempt to desist from such an exercise, despite finding no other suitable American candidate for comparison.[4] Although the two writers certainly have much in common stylistically, including a prolific short story output, their relationship with the reader market could not have been more different, as evidenced by James's unpopularity towards the end of his career, the very time that Wharton's earnings were to exceed those of any other living writer (Singley 1995: ix).

The second stumbling block in any consideration of Wharton's modernist tendencies as a short story writer is the contradictory and unreliable nature of her critical and autobiographical writing. Vita-Finzi notes that on one page of *The Writing of Fiction* (1925) Wharton underlines the importance of form, highlighting the writer's need for rules and formulae and on another she describes herself as being freed from 'the incubus of an artificially pre-designed plan' (1990:3). Wegener also notes Wharton's 'mercurial' nature (1999: 45), citing the importance she gave to 'design', only to later write that it is 'one of the

[4] Peel writes 'It is generally accepted now that too much has been made of James's influence on Wharton the artist' (2005: 27). In *Edith Wharton: A Study of Her Fiction* (1961) Blake Nevius had already argued that 'it would be absurd to think of Mrs Wharton as a poor man's Henry James ... she is much more than that' (pp10-11).

least important things in fiction' (1999:28). Indeed at the beginning of her career she celebrates James's intricate structuring, but later finds the very same complexity of design a weakness in his writing and remarked in 1934 that 'he tended to sacrifice to [technical theories and experiments] that spontaneity which is the life of fiction' (*BG* 190). The various examples Wegener gives of Wharton's contradictory statements about a writer's craft also includes her remark that ' la morale est purement géographique' only later to proclaim 'it is the temperament and *not* the environment that makes the artist' (1999: 31). His perceptive consideration of Wharton's critical writing clearly demonstrates the unreliability of some of her remarks about her craft and indicates that analysis should be firmly centred upon the fiction itself, rather than Wharton's proclaimed tenets.

When it came to writing about herself, Wharton appears to have taken even more liberties with her readers. Much of her autobiographical work is gap-ridden artifice. Fryer writes of *A Backward Glance* 'the more closely one reads the autobiography, the more convinced one becomes that there is *something that is not there*' (1983: 159 Fryer's italics). Her evasive style also includes making statements which have since proved to be untrue. Peel notes that Wharton claims in *A Backward Glance* that she never kept a journal before 1918, but the discovery of her 1888 journal from her cruise of Vanadis proves this was not the case, as did the discovery of 'L'âme close'', first referenced by Lewis in 1975. One of the most famous events of her young adulthood, that is, her mother's refusal to tell her daughter what to expect on her wedding night, is now considered by her most recent biographer to be ' a masterfully shaped piece of fictionalisation' (Lee 2007: 75). Her diary of the affair she had with Morton Fullerton, which led scholars to believe they were finally seeing behind the veil so carefully placed around Wharton's private life, has also proved to be more a crafted piece of writing than a revelatory confession. Price and Mc Bride observe the disparity between Wharton's fictional ending in terms of a 'powerful (if painful) affirmation' of the relationship

and the fact that the affair actually 'drifted toward a sour ending' and note the very different tone and content of the actual letters she sent to Fullerton in comparison with the artifice of her 'Love Diary' or 'L'âme close' (1994: 667).

Despite these discrepancies and Wharton's apparent disingenuousness, features of her life and lifestyle, such as the years she spent in Paris, are sometimes cited to support arguments for Wharton's affiliation with the modernism. Peel (2005: 82) and Thompson (2002: 90) lament the critical tendency to use biographical information to arrive at a literary analysis, such as citing Wharton's residence abroad as evidence for a modernist alienation to be found in her texts. It is not unusual for scholars to blur the line between Wharton's character and the character of her writing. In her discussion of the sexually charged *Summer*, Thompson defies the charge of Wharton's coldness, originally levelled by contemporaneous critics, by referring to her love letters to Fullerton (2002: 93). Privileging biographical information in analysing Wharton's modernist literary tendencies runs the risk of losing sight of the text itself, and the possibility of being misled by the often fictitious persona Wharton created.

If Wharton deliberately left 'L'âme close' to her posthumous public to endow her seeming cold public persona with a vulnerable, passionate side, the 'Beatrice Palmato' fragment was not destroyed by its writer so as to prove that she could break just as many taboos as the new modern writers. In fact, in what appears to be a reference to this fragment, Wharton directly compares herself to other modern writers. In a 1935 letter to Berenson about the respective 'nastiness' of Moravia, Faulkner and Céline, she states that she has an 'incest *donnée* up my sleeve that wd make them all look like nursery-rhymes' (Lee 2007: 581). Paradoxically, Wharton uses the similarity of theme to show her difference. Indeed, much of Wharton's critical commentary serves the function of disassociating her own work

from that of other modern authors. 'Subject to critical pigeonholing since the very beginning of her career' (Beer 1997: 117), Wharton took pains to promote the distinct, unique nature of her own writing, which is still so difficult to classify (Joslin 1993: 337). Targets of her disapproval ranged from the mainstream Jewett,Wilkins, Galsworthy and James, to the unconventional Woolf and Joyce.[5]

Whilst Wharton decried the modernist 'Kodak' school of writing (Thompson 2002:112-3), the new writers were just as eager to disassociate themselves from the outdated realist predecessors she represented.[6] Linking Wharton with James, Virginia Woolf criticizes the pair for not offering English readers 'anything that we have not got already' stating that what their work gains in refinement it loses in 'that perpetual distortion of values, that obsession with surface distinctions – the age of old houses, the glamour of great names' (1925: 1-3). Even though Eliot was to praise *Summer* as a 'death-blow' to the traditional New England novel (Tuttleton, Lauer and Murray 1992: 263), Benstock writes of the left bank modernist slogan of 'Down with Henry James, down with Edith Wharton' (Benstock: 1987 : 40). The desire by Wharton and the modernists to prove themselves as being distinct from each other may have blinded critics to some of the similarities in their literary practices.

Wharton's fear of public encroachment of her own private life, as evidenced by her careful burning of any compromising documents, including those of her close friends Walter Berry and Henry James, and her use of this subject for the stories 'Copy' (1900) and 'The Touchstone' (1900), demonstrate the importance she gave to a writer's privacy. Her secretive, anti-revelatory nature and promotion of a separate public persona is partly

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[5] Wharton writes of 'rose-and-lavender' pages of the local colourists Jewett and Wilkins in *A Backward Glance* (294); in a 1904 letter to Brownell she refers to James as a writer 'whose books of the last ten years I can't read as much as I delight in the man' (Bell 1965: 221). In a 1925 letter to Daisy Chanler Wharton laments a review of *The Mother's Recompense*, which links her writing with that of Galsworthy (Lewis 1988: 483).

[6] In 'Fleeing the Sewer' Joslin writes that Wharton's distaste for the new modern writing echoed that of many male critics (1993:340).

responsible for the artifice of her literary criticism. Surveying her critical writing and letters Wegener writes that Wharton was 'startlingly different from the indomitable and self assured novelist, traveler, correspondent, literary businesswoman and cultural observer' (1999:5-6) presented in her texts. As with her fiction, there are layers of sometimes contradictory significance in her critical writing, and this should be taken into account when assessing her well publicised views on what has since been labelled modernist writing. Wharton's hostility towards stream of consciousness writing, for example, becomes less straightforward when she draws the 'misleading connection' (Wegener 1999: 32) between this technique and the naturalistic 'slice of life' practised by writers such as Chekhov, who felt no need to challenge conventional sentence and paragraph structure. This lack of clarity as to exactly what she is criticising is further confounded further by Wharton's own predilection for internal monologue, a device closely associated with modernist writing. Wharton uses this narrative form predominantly in her short stories, frequently presented in the form of a dialogue with self but without speech marks to indicate thought in what Blackall terms a 'mental wrestling match' (1987: 150-151). Such use of internal monologue increases in Wharton's later stories (Fracasso 1994: 127). Sterling sums up the contradiction neatly writing 'Wharton herself decries the disorganisation of stream-of-consciousness writing in James Joyce, but she is willing to utilize it in the short stories to further her thematic explorations' (2005: 14).

Wegener suggests that a literary fidelity to James's reverence for form and technique may have prevented Wharton from entering into a constructive, unblinkered dialogue with the new modern writing. He suggests that this espousal to Jamesian values may be responsible for her 'strange' condemnation (in 'Permanent Values in Fiction' (1934)) that Woolf and Joyce's fiction is 'that unhappy hybrid, the novel with a purpose'(1999: 32, 175). The foundation of this criticism is unclear; on the one hand she appears to disparage narratives with a moral, but in the next sentence she criticises the new modern writers who no

longer have one as a purpose. She contends that the new writers' purpose is more likely to be a 'remunerative one', and often the reason they make the inappropriate choice of the novel form for their narratives is the hope that their work 'will reach the largest public' (*PVF* 175). On both subjects, that is, the morality both within and outside narratives, Wharton is self contradictory. In terms of moral vision within a text, Vita Finzi highlights the way that while Wharton disparages novels with a purpose, she writes that if a work is to be judged to have lasting value as art, it must contain moral significance (1990: 29). Vita Finzi goes on to quote from Wharton's unpublished article 'Fiction and Criticism' in which she writes 'every serious picture of life contains a thesis' (1990: 29). In her published treatise on writing, Wharton also writes of every reader's question, that is, 'What am I being told this story for? What judgment on life does it contain for me?' (*WF*: 23). In terms of what could be construed as the immorality of economic gain, Wharton's own wrangles with editors over the amount she will accept for a short story or novel are well documented (Bell 1957, Kaplan 1986, Balestra 1996); writing as a source of income was certainly not a moral dilemma for her.

Wharton openly criticised the new writers for their throwing out of old forms in the desire to 'make it new'. The modernist rejection of literary tradition as an 'oedipal' desire to free themselves from 'Victorian parents and, by extension, the Edwardian artists' (Kaplan and Simpson 1996: xii), prompted Wharton to snort:

> There is no theory more contrary to the free action of genius than the persuasion that a given formula – alphabet, language, or any generally accredited form of expression- is worn out because too many people have used it. ('A Cycle of Reviewing' Wegener 1999: 176)

Although Wharton was dismissive of Joyce's seemingly plotless narratives, it appears it was the modernist violation of the rules of punctuation that most irked this meticulous writer who

checked all her galleys herself.[7] Wegener notes that 'Writing a War Story' (1919) makes 'diabolical fun [of the] posturings and eccentricities of modernism' (1999B: 118), quoting the advice Miss Spang is given on improving her poems: 'that they would 'gain incommensurably in meaning' when she abandoned the superannuated habit of beginning each line with a capital letter'' (Wharton, *Collected Stories* 1911-1937 Vol 2: 247)[8]. Wharton was later to comment that dropping out capital letters and punctuation 'is only a symptom of poverty of imagination' (Carroll 1936:6).

Yet Wharton was herself experimenting with form and nowhere more radically so than in her short stories, in which the parameters of correct grammar and punctuation become part of a carefully balanced tightrope act. She was not dropping capital letters à la school of Spang writing, but she insisted on using British spelling for her American reading public, used up to three lines of continuous dots within the texts of her stories, irked grammarians such as Thorndike with her excessive use of ellipses, which 'reduce[d] the intelligibility and interest of [her] stories' (1948: 225) and used so many dashes that one editor was prompted to exclaim that 'a printed text reproducing all her idiosyncrasies [sic] would be ... unreadable' (Blackall 1987: 145).[9] These idiosyncrasies in her texts are often celebrated by present day critics; writing on 'The Muse's Tragedy' Witzig describes Wharton as using 'a language which contradicts and doubles back on itself through its punctuation, in parentheses and dashes, colons and ellipses, making sense through a strategy of non-sense' (1992:266). Indeed, by the beginning of the twenty-first century the experimental, rather than 'incorrect' nature of her short stories had been widely accepted (Beer 2002: 36, Ware 2002: 18, Peel 2005:43).

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[7] When it came to punctuation and typography Wharton meticulously checked her galleys and wrote letters to her editor if she felt the spaces in between the dots of an ellipsis were too wide, writing to Brownell on 29th July 1907 that 'one could drive a coach and four between them' (Lewis 1988:116).

[8] Hereafter cited in the text as either *CS1* (Vol 1) or *CS2* (Vol 2)

[9] Ammons notes that one modern Scribner's reprint of *Ethan Frome* obscures the fact that Wharton originally separated the frame story from the inner narrative by three lines of dots (61-62: 200,n4) (Blackall 1987: 145).

Wharton certainly did not disapprove of innovation, it was the junking of past literary tradition, which Peel conceives as 'the connection between art and wider society' (2005: 99), that she found unacceptable. In *The Writing of Fiction* she describes the great novels of the past as 'counsellors' (19). She advises the writer to 'learn to listen to them, take all they can give, absorb it into himself, and then turn to his own task with the fixed resolve to see life only through his own eyes'(20). Her advice mirrors the description Head was to give of the modernist short story sixty-seven years later, that is, that the narrative 'utilizes and restructures literary form' (1992:187).

When it came to her own writing practice, Beer and Horner identify Wharton's 'reworking of traditional narratives and imbuing them with a twentieth century consciousness' as innovative, or at least 'renovative', citing her use of the Greek literary tradition onwards in her quest to present life through new eyes (2009:3). Although Beer and Horner choose to demonstrate the link between Phaedra and Hippolytus, and her late novel *The Mother's Recompense* (1925), Wharton's short stories were also informed by Greco-Roman reference and inspiration and as I discuss in the following chapters, often constitute reworkings of traditional narratives in what is a distinctly subversive, modernist manner. Such regenerative poetics are reflected in her clear admiration for Proust, to whom she dedicates a complete chapter in *The Writing of Fiction*. She recognises the innovative nature of his work, which she labels 'renovat[ion]', and states that he has taken 'the next step forward in a developing art without disowning its past' (*WF* 109). Following Proust's steps, Wharton's short stories are innovative, experimental, 'risk tak[ing]' (Ware 2004:21) uses of a literary past which often present a decidedly modern challenge to accepted social and literary norms. Not only the form, but also the subject of her stories challenge the constraints of the accepted norms of her age. Using a rich literary heritage, Wharton takes classical narratives to push cultural and social boundaries.

Given the ambiguity of Wharton's critical work and the contradictions it creates in relation to her own writing practice, it should not in itself provide the basis of a study of her modernist practices, but rather a testament to her relationship with her public. Wharton was a woman whose promotion photograph shows her writing at her desk, yet she actually wrote every morning in bed. She gave her readers what they wanted, but abhorred revelation, unless, perhaps, it was posthumous. Everything Wharton produced for public consumption served to further her literary persona, and this tactic impacted directly on her critical writing. Wharton did not want to be forgotten, to be part of a blurred history of a particular genre or school, and although she was sold herself as an icon of the past, much of her antimodernist posturing has been accredited to 'an awareness of her own waning popularity and power in the literary marketplace' (Ware 2004:18) and the fear that 'her own work has already been overlooked and forgotten' (Wegner 1999:128). [10]

Wharton's real relationship with modernism is therefore to be found rooted in her fiction, and nowhere is her writing more 'renovative' than in her short story practice. Ware notes:

> Wharton always felt more sure of her skill in this genre, and it is in the short stories that she is more formally experimental, more self-consciously ironic, and more explicitly critical of her contemporary society's materialism and hypocrisy. (2004:17)

The short story form, with its elliptical, fragmentary nature and reliance on metaphor and metonymy provided Wharton with the perfect tools to develop her own literary experimentation. Her skilful use of silence and absence, often the essence of her stories,

[10] Thompson notes that Wharton's criticism of the new writers mirrored that of the 'many critics of her own day who saw modernist aesthetics as intellectual *regression*' (2002: 109).

enabled her to break taboos by effectively saying the unsayable, whilst not upsetting the quasi -Victorian sensibilities of many of her readers, publishers and reviewers.

The inherent ambiguity of the short story provided Wharton with a means of creating multilayered, polyphonic texts: comic-horror such as 'Miss Mary Pask' (1925) or the 'light and bleak' (White 1991:7) 'Roman Fever' (1931). More susceptible to their material frame than the novel, the satire, irony and subversive nature of Wharton's short stories was often taken beyond the boundaries of the text itself and was also achieved through the text's interaction with the very context in which it was published. Whilst reflecting a deep respect for literary tradition and largely being first published in mainstream magazines, Wharton's short stories presented a challenge to tradition, to the society in which she wrote, to the readers who bought her stories, to the accompanying texts on the pages in which she was published. It is this respect and interaction with tradition and the mainstream that has hitherto camouflaged Wharton's modernist tendencies, tendencies which I will endeavour to reveal in this thesis.

1.2 Wharton's modernist tendencies within her short stories.

Wharton's short stories are reworkings of traditional narrative form in what is a crafted response to the restrictions of the genre (both in terms of imposed length and publishing frame), and it is here that her innovative, often subversive style displays various modernist tendencies. Indeed, as Head observes, the fragmentary poetics engendered by the brevity of the short story are well suited to the use of gaps, paradox and ambiguity considered typical of modernist writing (1992:20-22), all of which I argue are present in Wharton's short fiction. In her study of the short story in the 1890s, Chan also considers the effect of the genre's physical format, particularly its typical magazine context, on narrative strategy and notes a growing preference for 'suggestion rather than statement, and limiting point of view [so that] the short story at the *fin de siècle* was already taking on characteristics often identified with modernist poetics' (2007: xv-xvi).

The modernist experimentation that was taking place at the turn of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth was firmly rooted in a literary tradition; its 'allusion to or imitation of literary models' (Lodge 1976: 481) can be found in texts such as Joyce's 'A little Cloud', in which the tri-part structure of a learning or initiation plot is mimicked when the aspirational Chandler, after meeting up with a successful friend returns home to his nagging wife and crying child, in a 'cruel parody of enlightenment and decisive action' (Head 1992:187).[11] T.S. Eliot's remark that 'the most original talent is ... bound within a tradition' (Bell 1999: 15), bears a striking similarity to Wharton's advice that writers should turn to their literary predecessors for counsel (*WF* 19). In this way Wharton's respect for a literary tradition, rather than setting her apart from modernism, is arguably the cornerstone of her distinct affiliation to the new writing of this era.

[11] In his thesis on the modernist short story, Russell dedicates a complete chapter to the manner in which the romance narrative is adapted by Conrad and Kipling (1998:22).

In the following chapters I demonstrate the various modernist features both within Wharton's short stories, in terms of her narrative strategies and also outside her texts, focusing on her interaction with the literary marketplace and the magazine industry in particular, where most of her stories were first published. I therefore have divided this thesis into two parts: the first four chapters consider Wharton's poetics and the final two chapters explore Wharton's 'profession of authorship' (Kaplan 1986), in which I consider how her business strategies and desire to be widely read has influenced her place in the literary canon. My neat structuring, however, is a deceptive one, and as I later conclude, the frame of publication of the short stories and their narrative style cannot and should not be separated; to do so would be to lose much of the subtle layers of (often ironic) meaning with which Wharton 'packages' her texts. I have made this distinction nevertheless in order to consider the two readers for whom Wharton wrote her unarguably reader-led texts. The first is her intended reader, who perhaps can be identified by narrative devices such as Wharton's intertextuality and deixis and the second, actual reader, who can be found in the sales figures she meticulously recorded and her correspondence with her editors. It is Wharton's ability to make the second feel like the first (via a technique I later label a 'pseudo intimacy') that is the root of her success as a short story writer and Wharton's learned, crafted technique, which challenges the notion that modernist writing need be inaccessible is the subject of the following six chapters.

In Chapter One I consider Wharton's challenge to the sentimental tradition of women writers and demonstrate how both the content and narrative vision in her short stories signal what Ware recognizes as ' a surging moral, intellectual and aesthetic movement of defiance beneath the surface' (2004: 18). Her depiction of women, in particular, presents uncomfortable visions of maternity, aging, marriage and adultery, in stories such as 'The Long Run' (1912) in which the tragedy lies in a man's inability to run away with a married

woman, or 'The Dilettante' (1903) wherein a man is rejected by his fiancée because he never consummated his relationship with his previous ladyfriend. Wharton broke boundaries in her depiction of female desire, particularly that of the older woman and Beer and Horner refer in particular to the story 'Miss Mary Pask' as an example of a 'wry critique of conventional attitudes to desire' (2003: 274). (I would also add 'The Pretext' (1908) and 'The Dilettante' (1903) to their list.) Wharton's transgressive narratives broke with conventional representations of women found in the magazines in which her stories were published and Lee notes that 'Diagnosis' (1930), in which a woman dupes her lover into marrying her by letting him believe he is dying, was offered to twelve magazines before it was finally accepted by *Ladies' Home Journal* (2007:686).

I also discuss Wharton's use of unreliable narration in Chapter One and demonstrate her tendency to choose a narrating consciousness who, although articulate and witty, appears to be incapable of fully understanding the situation in which (usually) he is placed, nudging the readers to produce some form of omniscient narration themselves. Frequently using the trope of a young man who has recently undergone a rest cure for nerves, as in 'The Triumph of the Night' (1914), 'Confession' (1936) and 'Miss Mary Pask' (1925), the reader creates a past for the narrating voice, which in turn colours the narrative itself. Often her bumbling narrators eclipse her heroines in terms of their own intriguing, gap-ridden histories and once recognized, their incipient prejudice artfully subverts the patriarchal frame in which the stories are invariably presented. Narration also loses its reliability via Wharton's favoured device of embedding her tales in frame narratives (used in stories such as 'The Duchess at Prayer' (1900), 'Coming Home' (1915), and 'All Souls'' (1937)) which serve to add further layers of meaning to the story as a whole. Wharton's telescopic, subjective narration serves to create polyphonic, ambiguous texts which have little resemblance to the 'reassuring' reliable (Lodge 1976: 481) omniscient narration of nineteenth century naturalism. Indeed I argue that

the discernable writer's voice, present in the novels of Dickens and Zola, is completely camouflaged in Wharton's short stories, texts in which she hands much of the assignment of meaning to the reader.

Wharton's short stories are often reworkings or adaptations of traditional narratives. In 'Miss Mary Pask', rather than the narrator believing he has seen a woman when in fact she is a ghost, his mistake is reversed; he believes he has seen a ghost, when the woman in question was actually alive. 'Bunner Sisters' (1916) is also an 'ironic reversal' (Saunders 1977) of female sacrifice for the happiness of others. Rather than reaping the rewards of her selflessness, Ann Eliza, who has given up all her savings, so that the man who was originally *her* suitor can marry her sister, ends up in lonely destitution. Wharton's 'The Moving Finger' (1901) is a reworking of *Pygmalion*, as stated by the artist figure in the story (*CS1*: 321) who continues to age his portrait long after the subject of the painting has died. Much, if not all, of the irony and parody in Wharton's stories rests upon the knowledge of an earlier text or genre, such as her parodic use of the Gothic in 'Miss Mary Pask' (Beer and Horner 2003: 270), in which the tropes of inclement weather, windows blowing open in the wind and candles mysteriously going out are exaggerated to comic effect. Such palimpsestic writing relies heavily on reader recognition of Wharton's renovative poetics and therefore incurs a certain risk of being 'overlooked' (Singley 2000:232). However, this technique allows Wharton to imbue moments of irony and pathos with a certain detached humour. Unafraid of morbid subjects and not averse to uncomfortable visions of society, Wharton uses intertextuality in such a way that her stories, whilst often 'unsettling' (Beer and Horner 2003: 284), rarely contain the unmitigated pessimism commonly found in modernist short fiction such as Lawrence's 'Odour of Chrysanthemums' (1911), Joyce's 'A Painful Case' (1914) and Faulkner's 'Dry September' (1931).

Probably the most influential precursive texts used by Wharton are the Greek and Latin myths she infuses into all levels of her narratives, much in the same manner as her modernist contemporaries. In Chapter Two I explore her use of classical narrative in her texts both as a means of depicting human existence and a reflection of the time in which she wrote, which was experiencing a resurgence in interest in mythology, as evidenced by the popularity of works such as Pater's *Greek Studies* (1895) and Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, (1923).[12] Wharton's interest in the Greek and Roman myths was one shared by many modernist writers including Joyce, Woolf, and Eliot, who cited *The Golden Bough*, as a 'profound[] influence[]' on his generation, in the first prefatory paragraph to his notes on *The Waste Land*. Wharton builds upon mythological narrative at various levels in her short stories, such as single references, plot and structuring; Singley describes *Ethan Frome* as a Greek tragedy, citing the narrative distance as an echo of the chorus (1995:117). Wharton's use of myth displays strikingly modernist features, in particular her depiction of Hades' Underworld realm in the stories 'A Journey' (1899), 'The Angel at the Grave' (1901),'The House of the Dead Hand' (1904) and 'Mr Jones' (1928). Here she nudges her readers towards a consideration of an unspoken, subterranean level of human experience in what appears to be a precursor to modernist considerations of consciousness.

Wharton revised conventional imaging of the goddesses, and rather than using these figures to celebrate the feminine, particularly the maternal, it is often with a cruel irony that Aphrodite, Andromeda or Persephone is evoked. In a direct challenge to the images created by Swinburne, Tennyson, Rossetti, Leighton and even Woolf, Wharton's Demeter figures rarely possess the symbolic fertility associated with this goddess and are invariably an inadequate mother of some sort.[13] Across the Atlantic, American depictions of the Greek

[12] Bradbury and McFarlane recognize Pater's *Greek Studies* as a milestone in the modernist 'ruffling of the hard naturalistic surface by a state of multiplicity of consciousness' (1976: 30).
[13] I chart a radical change in Wharton's depiction of Demeter in her Persephone stories in Chapter Two, but even in her later sympathetic reading of this figure she is invariably a mother who is rejected by her offspring.

goddesses, who frequently appeared between the pages of the increasingly popular magazines, were also those of an idealized mother (Sherman 1989: 22-3), images that were quite distinct from Wharton's Mrs Lombard in 'The House of the Dead Hand', who, imprisoned in a large, shadowed-filled house, embodies Pater's 'goddess[] of dark caves' (1895: 110). Rather than representing fertility and nature, Mrs Lombard personifies oppression, being both victim herself and her daughter's gaoler, a role also played by Mrs Clemm in 'Mr Jones' (1928). But as is so often the case in her writing, Wharton's apparently subversive revision is a return to the original source. The earliest account of Persephone and Demeter, found in Homer's *Hymn to Demeter* suggests Persephone's complicity in her imprisonment and this implicit desire to escape the mother is not lost on Wharton.[14] Indeed in Wharton's 1912 poem 'Pomegranate Seed', when Persephone is asked to return by her mother, she simply refuses.

Wharton's reworkings of these ancient narratives are often painted with a distinct modernity, reflecting the way the myths had become part of common cultural currency at the time in which she was writing. Her references to classical figures are often made via fashionable, contemporary paintings (Honey (1994) Orlando (2007)), the Parthenon appears as a paperweight on Orestes Brown's desk in 'Angel at the Grave' (1901) and a silly woman guesses that 'Xingu' might refer to the rites performed at the Eleusinian mysteries, in the 1911 story of the same name. (Perhaps she had been reading Pater.) Whilst the Greek literary tradition provided Wharton with a selling point, in terms of the heightened public interest at the time, it also presented her with a means by which to write about the unspeakable, about human desires and behaviour usually hidden in polite society. The respectable packaging of classical reference allowed Wharton to allude to the taboos upon which many of the narratives were based, such as the incestuous desire within the Persephone myth, much in the

[14] Foley, Helene P. (ed) (1994) *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Translation, Commentary and Interpretive Essays.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

same way as Pater wrote 'undiluted reveries on homosexual motifs such as male youth and beauty' (Brake 1994: 119) in his commentaries on Greek art and civilization. An admirer of Pater's work, Wharton's use of the Greek myth is similar to Pater's not only in its treatment of what was widely regarded as unsuitable subject matter for mass magazines but also in terms of the use of subjective narration, a literary technique closely associated with modernist poetics. Indeed, Pater's impressionistic style is now unarguably linked by critics to the emerging modernist vision of individual consciousness (Matthews 2004:18).

In her 2004 article 'The Architecture of the Short Story', Ware argues that 'Wharton's alignment with modernism begins with form' (2004: 18) and close study of Wharton's short stories reveals that before the turn of the century she was using techniques commonly accredited to later modernist writers. A case in point is Wharton's innovative use of the ellipsis, which was spotted as early as 1948 by a grammarian who lamented the 'veritable mania for the punctuation mark in the *modern* text' (my italics) (Thorndike 1948: 222-5). As I outline in Chapter Three, Wharton uses this punctuation mark in an experimental, often subversive manner, frequently using absence to add to her texts. Drawing heavily upon Blackall's 1987 study, I demonstrate the illusory intimacy Wharton achieves via her use of ellipses, creating both an orality of tone and the impression of a shared understanding, which I label a 'pseudo-intimacy'. Whilst modernist writers such as Mansfield have been accredited with 'invent[ing] a whole new grammar of musical punctuation to tell her stories' (MacCrae 2000: viii); I contend that Wharton had mastered many facets of this art, particularly her use of ellipsis, for decidedly modernist effect, twenty years earlier. Very much an 'icon' of modernist writing (Henry 2001: 151-3) the ellipsis constituted a direct challenge to the determinate nature of Victorian writing not only in its associations with uncertainty and the unsaid, but also in the manner in which it could be used to fragment a text. Comparing Wharton's use of this punctuation mark in the first half of her career to that of other writers of

this era, her short stories stand out in terms of her sustained, innovative use of ellipsis and demonstrate Wharton's ability to harness every element of a text, down to punctuation to create the subtly layered, reader-led narratives commonly associated with modernist writing. Wharton's use of irony serves to strengthen this apparent intimacy she engenders and her presentations of situations with a 'dual vision of sympathy and irony' (Sterling 2005:5) enabled her to write about frequently dark, sometimes unpalatable subjects in a deceptively lighthearted manner which belied their implicitly critical vision of society.

In Chapter Four I consider Wharton's artful use of narrative gaps and discuss the prolepses, analepses and unfilled gaps that feature in her work to create ambiguous, 'interrogative' (Belsey 1980:92) texts. I demonstrate how Wharton fuses apparent closure, via determinate plotting and resolution at story level whilst often deliberately leaving unanswered the central question asked by every reader, that is, 'What am I being told this story for?' (*WF*23). Even the gaps that Wharton *does* close demand an active reader both in terms of their revisionary function in the narrative, as in 'The Young Gentlemen' (1926), 'Diagnosis' (1930), and 'Roman Fever'(1934) and in terms of the further questions the new, seemingly 'complete' narrative creates. Even in the stories in which a logical frame or explanation for events is given, such as 'All Souls'' (1937), the unreliability of the narrator encourages the reader to shift to a further diegetic level and search for meaning beyond the text itself. In a fusion of decidedly realist closure and a rejection of a single truth that was more typical of twentieth-century writing, Wharton successfully caters for the widest possible range of readers, including those whose very values her narratives set out to challenge. Her gap-filled stories allow each reader to make the text their own and this technique has much to do with the continued relevance and apparent modernity of her stories in the twenty-first century.

Whilst not considered revolutionary in her use of form, the first four chapters of this thesis demonstrate Wharton was renovative rather than innovative, often before her time in terms of narrative style and the architect of a complex, deceptively intimate relationship with her reader. Wharton's poetics were not radical but radical form does not in itself constitute a modernist text, as evidenced by the fiction of Fitzgerald, whose fame is 'based more on his popularization of modern love and the new woman than his literary experimentation' (Glass 2004: 17). However, Wharton's experimentation in the short story genre stands out in relation to her other writing. A writer who felt that 'the significance of a work is the outcome of careful selection of form' (*PVF* 29), Wharton made the conscious decision to practise certain distinctive narrative strategies in this genre. It appears Wharton compromised her ticket into a literary elite, by choosing what was (and still is) often considered an inferior form, tainted by the commercialism associated with 'magazine fiction' (Tuttleton et al 1992: 496), but it is here, in terms of narrative technique, that we find Wharton at her most artfully modern and modernist.

1: 3 Outside texts.

In the final two chapters of this thesis I consider Wharton's modernist strategies outside her texts in terms of the magazine context in which the majority of her short stories were first published and her relationship with her editors and reading public. Over the forty-six years in which she published her short fictions (in a total of nineteen different magazines), her stories were rarely a comfortable fit into their material frame. From the outset, Wharton's writing practice was subversive in nature. The stories which first appeared in the Gilded Age magazines were often ruthless in their representations of society and were frequently softened by the editor with tasteful illustrations (Lee 2007: 170).[15] Whilst other writers were contributing articles on 'Color arrangements of Flowers', 'Collecting Old China in New England', love poems, sentimental presentations of motherhood and marriage, Wharton was producing stories depicting the emptiness of women's lives as mothers, wives and lovers within the constraints of patriarchy. When she began publishing her stories in the mass magazines of the Progressive Era[16] her relationship with her new editors became an increasingly uncomfortable one, as evidenced in both her stories which mocked both editorial policy and readers, and her often venomous letters.[17] Although Wharton's decisive move into middlebrow territory has been read as an active espousal of mass culture and commodification (Dean 2002: 243-44), her stories in this half of her career frequently challenge both the values and even the products that these publications were promoting. Such

[15] I use the term 'Gilded Age' throughout this thesis to refer to the period in which the 'quality magazines' of the last decades of the nineteenth and the turn of the century were produced for a 'select audience of mostly Northeastern, well-to-do... sympathetic ...cultivated [readers]' (Wilson 1985:43). I take this term from Wilson's *A Labor of Words:Literary Professionalism in the Progressive Era* (1985:43-44).

[16] I employ the term 'Progressive Era' throughout this thesis to refer to the 'new style of American popular writing' (Wilson 1985: 1) aimed at a mass readership that emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century. Wilson first uses this term in his 1985 study *A Labor of Words:Literary Professionalism in the Progressive Era.*

[17] See Balestra, Gianfranca (1996) ''For the use of the magazine morons': Edith Wharton rewrites the tale of the fantastic'. *Studies in Short Fiction.* 33 (1), pp. 13-24.

a subversive relationship with the material frame of her stories carried risks, and as Stange notes, by entering the mass market, and therefore soliciting its endorsement, her fictions were often in danger of being misread (1998: 39).

Particularly revealing in the stories' relationship with their magazine context is Wharton's portrayal of her readers. Whilst not wholly positive, her depictions of readers are far more sympathetic in her earlier stories than those published in the Progressive Era magazines later in her career. This shift coincides with a radical change in her readership, from the cultural elite of the 'quality' magazines of the Gilded Age to the aspirational masses who bought the popular, highly commercial monthlies and weeklies. It is in her early stories, such as 'Copy' (1900), that she considers the role of the reader in the worth of a text. Here a famous poet and novelist wrangle over the ownership of some love letters they had sent each other years ago, which they decide not to return, aware of their significant value now that they have become famous. This story not only focuses on anxieties over the public's right to celebrities' private documents, a subject recently covered by James in 'The Aspern Papers' (*Atlantic Monthly* 1888 March – May) but, as Glass notes, also questions the notion of ownership, and asks whether the letters belong to the writer or the recipient (Glass 2004:160). Mrs Dale says 'You couldn't have written them if I hadn't been willing to read them' (*Scribner's Magazine* June 1900: 662), highlighting the importance and the agency of the reader. In the same manner, in 'The Angel at the Grave' (1901), Paulina Anson's manuscript is worthless when the publisher tells her nobody would want to read it now that its subject had gone out of fashion and in 'The Touchstone' (1900), Margaret Aubyn's letters are only truly read by their addressee when they are published and prove to be of real interest to the general reading public.

The reader appears to lose this value and importance to the text itself in Wharton's later stories. Paradoxically, whilst she actively courted a wider audience through the mass

magazines, her attitude towards her readers became an increasingly despairing one. Her letters to both editors and friends were often vitriolic towards her readers and in the stories themselves she ridicules the very consumers to whom the mass magazines were sold (Balestra 1966). At a time when the majority of her magazine readership was female, her stories frequently criticise the way in which women are duped by the very commodity culture promoted by the publications which carried Wharton's fiction. Stories printed on pages surrounded by advertisements for beauty products depict heroines needing to have their hair permed in order to leave their husbands, needing to pay fake clairvoyants to reassure themselves they are still attractive and needing a flattering photograph to 'sell' a story.

Critics have assigned Wharton's increasingly negative attitudes towards both her readers and editors to a decrease in popularity and financial pressures (Balestra 1996:13), however her literary income actually peaked in the latter part of her career, in 1928 (Towheed 2007: 2). By the time Wharton started selling her stories to the mass magazines she was a well known name, particularly after the 'spectacular' success of *The House of Mirth* in 1905 and could command a 'premium price' in America (Towheed 2007: 13). Sixteen years later she won the Pulitzer Prize in 1921 and was short listed for the Nobel Prize in 1927. I therefore contend that one reason why Wharton became progressively belligerent towards her readers and editors was because she was famous enough to be so; her literary prestige was by now established and she sought recognition of this from both her editors and readers. She became increasingly bitter when she felt she did not receive the due acclaim she deserved and once wrote to her close friend Daisy Chanler 'As my work reaches its close, I feel so sure that it is either nothing, or far more than they know ... And I wonder, a little desolately, which?' (Lewis 1988: 483).

Wharton's apparent distaste for the mass readership who funded her lavish lifestyle was not so different from what is now regarded as a modernist mix of courtship of and distain

for the middlebrow. Lawrence, who complained about his work 'going into the tuppenny hands of the tuppenny public' (Boulton and Robertson *Letters* v: 387), continued to write for them (Worthen 2007:115) and Conrad 'gladly collaborated' in a project to make his writing more attractive to a female readership, after which 'almost everything he touched turned to gold' (Watts 2007: 86). Rainey writes that modernism was 'an institution that was simultaneously half withdrawn from yet half nestled within the larger apparatus of cultural production' and points to Joyce's economic success in publishing *Ulysses* in the form of a limited edition, which commanded high prices from collectors who saw the edition's potential of making a handsome profit (1999: 62, 59). Wharton's businesslike attitude to authorship was one shared by various modernist writers who, even in the case of the limited edition business, aimed to make a very healthy profit from their writing. Indeed, Worthen sums up Lawrence's limited edition of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in 1927 as a book 'about an aristocrat who has an affair with a game keeper [that was] sold in a form in which only the aristocrat could have afforded to buy it' (Worthen 2007:121).

Perhaps what most set Wharton's work apart from much modernist writing was the way in which it was marketed. The telling use of the word 'living' in the promotion of Wharton in the *Pictorial Review* as 'recognized on both sides of the Atlantic as foremost of living novelists' in June 1920 indicates how she was often associated with past, if not dead, masters of a bygone era. Thornton notes this magazine's decidedly theatrical, melodramatic, old style illustrations for Wharton's fiction, in direct contrast to the cinematic, realistic representations used next to Kathleen Norris' serial which appeared in the same edition (2005:30). As Thornton concludes, such editorial strategies imbued Wharton's texts with a highly marketable nostalgia associated with a 'slower, pre-technical era' (2005: 42). This typically nostalgic marketing of her fiction left its legacy and continues to camouflage many of Wharton's modernist tendencies.

Modernist writers were certainly not adverse to advertising and promotion, but they were invariably sold as new or different in some way. Hemingway nurtured his masculine, macho image, sending back a proposed cover for *Men Without Women*, questioning the bull on the front's 'faintly lesbian look' and the offending animal was accordingly remodelled with the note 'We have defeminized the bull' (Strychacz 1993: 158). Hemingway actively participated in Scribner's publicity campaigns, which frequently included photographs in which he looked 'as lean and athletic as his prose' (Strychacz 1993:157) and the July 1927 cover of the *Scribner's Bookstore News* carried the advertisement in which one lady says to another 'Until I have read *The Sun Also Rises* by someone named Hemingway ... I shall not dare to accept another dinner invitation' (Strychaz 1993: 161). Wharton was certainly not apart from modernism in the way she used her celebrity status to sell, nor her in her desire to court a mass readership. Indeed her compatriot Hemingway, whose modernist credentials are rarely questioned, used advertising so successfully that he won 'perhaps the largest and most mainstream audience of any major American modernist' (Turner 2003: 170).

Recent recognition of modernism's active interaction with consumerism (Wicke 1988, Rainey 1999, Turner 2003, Willison et al 2007) certainly challenges the notion that Wharton's place of publication in the mainstream magazines sets her apart from short story writers such as Mansfield, Lawrence, Faulkner and Joyce. She displayed a modernist dislike of mass-produced culture, but, like Conrad and Lawrence who 'saw they had much to gain by reaching a détente with commerce' (Turner 2003: 4), found herself a place in a market in which literature was a commodity itself. Wharton's interaction with the mass market is best summed up by Turner's description of modernism as an 'integrative mode' (2003: 6); she entered the mainstream, reaped the benefits and corresponding critical dismissal, to artfully subvert it. And perhaps her subversive tendencies begin not so much in her place of

publication but in her long-standing love affair with the short story and its inexorable link with magazine fiction.

Chapter 1: Wharton's Narrators and Narrative Vision.

In this chapter I demonstrate how Wharton's short story technique constitutes a direct break from the nineteenth-century tradition of omniscient narration, distinct authorial voice, and 'the old stable ego ... of the character' (Lawrence 1914 vol. 1: 282). I argue that her preferred use of a single, often unreliable narrating consciousness aligns her stories more closely to that of modernist writing than to the Victorian narratives with which she is traditionally associated. Furthermore, the distance she creates between writer and narrator, which enables the 'author [to] disappear [] from view' (Haytock 2008: 87-88), appears to foreshadow Joyce's vision of the artist 'within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible' (Joyce 2004: 191), and is characteristic of a reader-led narrative strategy which has since been associated with modernism. Apart from the subjective, often flawed, vision presented in her narratives, I consider other modernist features of Wharton's narrative technique, tone and content, including her use of symbolism and epiphany, noting her often critical attitude towards the emerging modern technologies of the era. I argue that despite her adherence to literary convention, Wharton's stories contain many of the open-ended, ambiguous, contradictory qualities of the 'interrogative' (Belsey 1980:92) texts typically associated with the modernist short story (Hunter 2007: 65), and that they are imbued with a subtle, often satirical irony which can easily be overlooked.

Wharton's rigid attitude to perspective and narrating consciousness (rarely shifting from a single narrative perspective), is one of the defining characteristics of her short fiction, as observed by Q.D. Leavis in her essay entitled 'Henry James's Heiress' (1938). James's use of a reflecting consciousness or 'reflector' (James 1998:11) is widely regarded as a precursor to the modernist 'subjective method' (Bullet: 1926: 12-13), and in her treatise on the short story, Wharton cites his principle concerning the selection of a reflector, writing 'the

mind chosen by the author ... should be so situated ... as to take the widest possible view of it' (*WF* 36). However, whereas Wharton and James concur on an author's choice of reflector or focalizer, the question 'By whom do I mean that it shall be reported?' (*WF* 35), that is, their use of narrator, separates the two writers.

In his analysis of 'narrating' Genette distinguishes between a focalizer, who sees and a narrator, who tells (1980: 156). Such a distinction particularly suits James's form of narration, in which a clear authorial voice is often present despite the narrative's field of vision being rigidly delineated by an individual consciousness. This technique allows James to narrate *What Maisie Knew* (1897) from the perspective of the six year old Maisie (the focalizer), but in the sophisticated and urbane discourse of an adult narrator. In the same way the focalizer in *Daisy Miller* (1878) is the insensitive, immature Winterbourne, but the narrator is far more worldly wise, indicating his knowledge of social conventions by highlighting Daisy's faux pas. The narrator's sensibility is demonstrated by pointing to Winterbourne's fatal lack of concern, and seasoning the text with a liberal dose of French and Italian expressions, thus aligning the narrator with the author, rather than Winterbourne. Stevenson argues that this permanent authorial presence echoes nineteenth-century tradition, and despite his interest in inner consciousness and individual vision, James's choice to never to give his focalizers their own voice prevents his work from being seen as truly modernist (1992:21).

Wharton, on the other hand, frequently blurs this distinction between narrator and focalizer. Her reflectors never 'record anything not naturally within [their] given registers' (*WF* 36), her narratives echoing the knowledge and prejudices of her focalizers, with no direct intervention from the author. Of the reflector, Wharton writes:

> It should be the story-teller's first care to choose this reflecting mind deliberately ... and when this is done , to live inside the mind chosen, trying to feel, see and react exact as the latter would, no more, no less, and, above all, no otherwise. (*WF* 36)

By remaining firmly positioned within a single, often unreliable, narrating consciousness Wharton denied her reader access to a complete, conclusive viewpoint, and edged the narrative focus towards the essentially modernist concern of 'the nature of perception and the psychology of the perceiver' (Stevenson 1992: 27).

In this way Wharton's focalizers do not simply influence what is seen, but also *how* it is perceived, and consequently related. In her discussion of Wharton's use of predominately male narrating consciousnesses, Nettels notes that their 'command [of] power of reference and ... mastery of rhetorical effect' (1992: 257) are in distinct contrast to the poverty of expression demonstrated by Wharton's few female narrators. Not only the state of mind, but also the gender and consequent life experience of the reflector influences the telling of Wharton's tales, in a manner not found in James's short story poetics.

Nettels' study refers to Wharton's first person narrators, who both see and tell the tale. However Wharton's third person narratives, which constitute the majority of her short stories (sixty-eight of her eighty-seven), often contain a merging of the voice of the narrator with that of the focalizer, blurring Genette's neat distinction of these two agents of narrative. Necessarily articulate and cultured, the narrator/focalizer is usually flawed in terms of vision or understanding. Nettels notes the lack of insight possessed by Wharton's predominantly male narrators, 'who are blind to the meaning of their own behaviour, misjudge others, but believe themselves infallible' (1992: 251). Such a description would suit many of Wharton's focalizers, whether they narrate the story or not, who, despite being presented the widest possible view are often lacking in insight in their understanding of a situation. (As in the focalizers in 'A Journey' (1899) and 'Poor Old Vincent' (1935), which I discuss in more

detail presently.) This is complemented by Wharton's frequent motif of imperfect sight and her emphasis on the role of the onlooker, evident from the titles of her stories such as 'Mrs Manstey's View' (1891), 'The Lamp of Psyche' (1895) 'A Glimpse' (1932) and 'The Eyes' (1910), and from a misread picture in 'The House of the Dead Hand' (1904) , a misread diagnosis in the 1930 story of the same name and a misread book in 'The Descent of Man' (1904). The incomplete nature of the resulting narrative encourages the reader to search for meaning elsewhere, such as in the story's structure, its implicit symbolism and within the absences in the text.

Wharton mingles narrator and focalizer in her early story, 'A Journey' (1899). Here the third person narrative is written from the inner consciousness of a woman concealing her husband's death, and her fraught, but sometimes outwardly comic, interaction with the other people on the train. The opening sentence of the story is one of increasingly subjective narration in which the narrative focus begins objectively on the exterior world, and ends within the abstract, impressionistic environment of the focalizer's mind. Wharton writes: 'As she lay on her berth, staring out at the shadows overhead, the rush of the wheels was in her brain, driving her deeper and deeper into circles of wakeful lucidity' (*CS1* 65). This blending of public and private experience, inner and outer history, is typical of Wharton's interest in the subjective, impressionistic field of individual experience, framed within the social, communal aspect of the human condition.[18]

'A Journey' begins in media res, and in Wharton's typically revelatory rather than chronological exposition, the reader later learns something of the identity of the woman, although her name is never given. It is revealed that this is a school teacher who married late in life, only to have the undreamed of opportunities presented by her newfound prosperity and marital status thwarted by her husband's illness. The three-day train journey is one back

[18] This feature of Wharton's writing is discussed in detail in Haytock's chapter on Wharton's modernist practices, 'Troubling the subjective: the Problem of Impressionism in *The Reef*' (2008: 21-44).

to New York, where the wife can have her family close by as her husband dies. Concluding that 'life had a grudge against her' (*CS1* 66), the tone of narration is infused with the woman's resentment, from her bitter attitude towards the doctors' 'accustomed treacheries' (67), to her increasing revulsion at her husband's emaciated state, whom she 'caught herself furtively watching ... as she might have watched a strange animal' (66).

Remaining in the third person throughout, Wharton moves into free indirect discourse in her narration of the night the husband dies in the sleeping car. She writes:

> She lay down and tried to sleep ... Had she not heard him move? She started up trembling ...The silence frightened her more than any other sound. He might not be able to make her hear – he might be calling her now... What made her think of such things? (68)

In a technique Genette describes as the merging of character and narrator (1980:174), the past tense and third person associated with reported speech are fused with the present tense and question marks to be found in direct speech. In his discussion of Lawrence's use of this method, Stevenson suggests the term 'free indirect style' be used in cases where the focalizer's words are not actually spoken aloud. In the above example the phrase 'He might not be able to make her hear- he might be calling her now ...' are the woman's thoughts rather than spoken words, and free indirect style seems a more suitable term for Wharton's technique here. Her use of question marks creates a sense of the focalizer's unmediated thoughts, belying Wharton's use of the third person, and the ellipses add both uncertainty and a dreamlike, semi-conscious element to the passage as the woman begins to fall asleep. Blackall notes Wharton's tendency to signal a narrative shift towards 'inner, subjective and reflective, material' via a 'prolifer[ation]' of ellipses (1987:149), a punctuation mark very much associated with modernist writing including, in particular, the short stories of Katherine Mansfield (Childs 2000: 88) and James Joyce (Thompson 2002: 102).

Wharton's short stories often are the product of a mixture of different genres, as noted by critics including Beer and Horner, who discuss her use of 'Parodic Gothic' (2003), and Wegener who concludes Wharton 'defies classification' (1999: 31). As I mentioned earlier, the human tragedy of the husband's death is moderated by the wife's comic inability to 'read' the other passengers around her. So annoyed by a gum-chewing freckled child's fascination with her still living husband, she is prompted to ask his mother to stop him staring. Wharton writes:

> She had to explain to the child's mother that her husband was too ill to be disturbed; a statement received by that lady with a resentment visibly supported by the maternal sentiment of the whole car ... (*CS1* 67)

The woman's ability to incur the resentment of the *whole* car, because she is so wrapped up in her own, is almost comic, as is her memory of 'waving unregretful farewells to acquaintances she had never really liked till then' (*CS1* 67) the day before. Whilst given privileged insight into the focalizer's mind, the reader is also encouraged to step back and laugh at her, in this case, ruefully, prompted by a comedy situated outside her inner consciousness. The comic irony both distances the reader from the focalizer and adds an almost lighthearted feel to the narrative. Thus seasoned with bathos, the narrative then becomes one of suspense, as the wife must find a way of concealing her husband's death in order to stay on the train until their final destination. Having been estranged from the focalizer by the earlier comedy, the reader is now empathetically invited into her desperate mind: 'But how? Her mind refused to act; she could not plan, combine. She could think of no way but to sit there, clutching the curtains, all day long ...' (*CS1* 70). Whilst the (necessarily detached) irony is never far from the reader's mind, the narrative is a highly subjective, impressionistic version of the woman's thoughts, closely aligned to modernist representations

of experience, albeit within a frame of order not found in the stream of consciousness writing of Woolf and Joyce.

The woman falls fitfully in and out of a dreamlike state during the last afternoon of the journey and is abruptly woken from a nightmare of plunging into a 'darkness of death' (*CS1* 75) by the sounds of her fellow passengers preparing themselves for the train's imminent arrival at its final destination. The mythical, fragmentary account of her dream is directly contrasted with the heightened realism with which the people around her are described. She notices the sickly ivy plant a woman with false braids is holding, the Christian Scientist she had met earlier reversing his cuffs, and hears the clicking sound of the conductor's gadget as tickets are collected for the baggage. The juxtaposing of these two distinct forms of narrative highlight the two selves – the inner, perhaps unconscious, self and the outward persona driven by social convention and routine in an essentially performative existence. (Wharton earlier signals the end of the husband's act by the wife's pinning together the two curtains around his berth.) The reader is encouraged to consider the self beneath the outward behaviour and appearance, and to look for symbolic value in the details Wharton has chosen to relate; the false hair, the folding back of dirty cuffs, the sickly state of the plant. The insistent clicking of metal is reminiscent of the annoyance created by the young child who 'hung about ... like a fly' (*CS1* 67) the day before, and suggests the irritatingly distracting nature of social connivance.

In his discussion of Conrad's narrative technique, Levenson notes his positioning of human consciousness 'against the evanescent flux of the phenomenal world', giving the latter 'permanence pattern and significance' (1984: 2). He sums up Conrad's essentially realist use of detailed physical description as a mode of defining a character's sensibility, and concludes that 'as the conventions of omniscience were breaking down ... one result was an increased dependence on evocative physical description' (1984: 5). In his discussion of modern fiction,

Lodge describes Conrad's method as a development of realism into symbolism, and suggests it can also be found in Joyce's *Dubliners* (1977: 42). Kaplan and Simpson note a surfeit of the trivia of Victorian culture in *Ulysses* presented through Joyce's extensive use of newspaper cuttings and advertisements in a world he reconstructed from maps and directories (1996: 101). This use of the detailed commonplace for symbolic purpose, closely associated with modernist writing, is a prevalent feature of Wharton's short stories, from the stained wallpaper and shabby books in 'Mrs Manstey's View' (*CS1* 6) to the radio left on in 'All Souls'' (1937) (*CS2* 811).

In terms of Wharton's use of the 'detailed commonplace' for symbolic purpose, motifs such as a door knocker in the form of a dead hand and a pomegranate design in a carpet often serve to reinforce an allusion already present in the text. Wharton also frequently uses the absence of an everyday object, such as the lack of an inscription on a tomb, a space on a wall where a picture used to be, or some asterisks or ellipses in a letter to signal the central concern of a narrative and thus provide a key to the palimpsestic meaning of the text as a whole.

In the case of the final section of 'A Journey', the details that the woman notices define her character: the performative, artificial, even deceptive nature of her surroundings mirrors her own performance, particularly in what she predicts as her ensuing act - that of feigned shock when she will 'find' her husband dead, even though his cold body will give her away. There is no such performance. The story ends in ambiguous darkness, typical of modernist writing (Lodge 1976: 481, 1977: 46). The final sentence reads: 'She flung up her arms, struggling to catch at something, and fell face downward, striking her head against the dead man's berth' (*CS1* 75).

It is unclear whether the woman lives or not and the reader must search through the significant absences in the text to find closure. The husband speaks only six words; little is

given of his experience, implying it holds little interest for her; no mention whatsoever is made of their courtship; and the insertion of 'of course', after the statement 'she still loved him' (*CS1* 66), suggests she is as much a slave to convention as her fellow passengers on the train. The commonplace, clichéd nature of her vision of her situation, in terms of being denied the chance to finally 'spread her wings' (*CS1* 66), and the practical concerns of concealing her husband's death are mirrored in Wharton's use of the indefinite article in the title. This is *the* last journey for her husband; for the other passengers it is one of many journeys they will make in their lifetimes. Via her use of detail, Wharton fuses the everyday with the crucial, signalling the link between the two. The subject of this tale is death and disappointment, which are both inevitable and consequently commonplace.

Wharton frequently uses the ordinary, presented in a realist mode to voice anxieties about consumer culture and its influence in the objectification of women and women's lives. Her penultimate story, 'Poor Old Vincent' (1935), deals with this concern; that is, the duping of women by the beauty business (a theme already touched upon in 'Looking Glass' (1933)), and the extent to which they are complicit in their own commodification. Here, rather than directly attacking the social construction and economy of the beauty business, Wharton uses this context as the frame for her story and by doing so implicitly voices the modernist resistance to the 'seductive lure of mass culture' (Huyssen 1986: 52) epitomized by the beauty industry.[19] Whereas the focalizer of the story, Mrs Nalda Craige, is a devout follower of fashion, the narrative strategy via its absences and allusions encourage another point of view. Written in the third person, often in indirect free style, Wharton never explicitly contradicts or criticizes Nalda's thoughts and actions, yet the story's very composition presents a second, contradictory reading which highlights the unreliability of the focalizer.

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[19] Inness argues that the early twentieth century saw a significant growth in the beauty industry via an enormous complex of cultural practices that can be called the feminine beauty system. She points to evidence of this 'in the mass media, advertisements, ... countless businesses [including] hair salons, beauty parlors, cosmetic manufacturers, the clothing industry' (2004:136).

The promotional copy that accompanies the story acknowledges Wharton's use of irony, but the fact that it is described as 'delightful' encourages readers to view this as a charming story, rather than an indictment of the commodification of women. It reads:

> The distinguished author of 'The House of Mirth' and 'Ethan Frome' builds this story of delightful irony and tenderness around that four hours of immobility known to hairdressers as a 'permanent wave'. (*RBM* 21)

The use of deixis in reference to the hair treatment suggests that the intended reader is probably female and is familiar with, if not a participant in, the beauty business herself.

The story opens with the literally physical shock Nalda experiences at the thought that she might have missed her turn at Gaston's, a shock which is later contrasted with the mild pity she feels for her husband whom she is to leave the next day. Remaining firmly within Nalda's consciousness, the narrative mimics her rhythms of speech. Wharton writes:

> And it had taken all her arguments, persuasions, feigned indignations, fawning flattery, even, to persuade the illustrious hairdresser that he had no right, absolutely no right, to give her appointment away because she was a few minutes late. (*RBM* 20)

Planning to elope the next day, Nalda's reliance on having her hair permanently waved in order to do so indicates her willing submission to the social construct of beauty and the extent to which it influences her life. Wharton writes 'Think of it! If she had to join Phil Ingerson at the station the next morning with a mop of lank irregular hair' (*RBM* 21).

The hairdresser's is described as a curious mixture of comfort and confinement. Initially described by the narrator as a 'tiled sanctuary' (20), Nalda has until now seen the salon as a prison, remembering previous visits as 'serving a life-sentence'. She misguidedly tells herself that now she has something exciting to think about, the 'four hours' imprisonment' with her own thoughts will become 'a secret bath of beatitude' (21). However, when she is actually forced to sit for this extended period and reflect on her

situation she decides it is 'too long' (23) and that 'it was never safe to turn any sentiment inside out' (116), suggesting that she is aware considered thought will expose the tenuous nature of her resolve. Wharton's use of the passive, women go to Gaston's to *be waved*, indicates their objectification and loss of agency. In her discussion of this story, Inness significantly uses the metaphor of sight when she writes that this 'is an examination of how the beauty system imprisons women who accept and blindly follow its dictates' (1993:140). Nalda appears unaware of her own situation, unable to see the signs visible to the reader that Phil, who initially came to Kingsbridge in pursuit of a 'good-looking girl he had run across on a West Indian cruise' (*RBM* 22), has no deep attachment to her. Nor does she see, so wrapped up is she in the 'socially- constructed nature of beauty' (Inness 1993: 135), that her husband, who she feels does not appreciate the efforts she takes with her appearance, perhaps does.

By limiting the narrative within the boundary of Nalda's narrow consciousness, Wharton urges the reader to find a wider frame. Nalda's mention of having to borrow money in secret to pay a bill for a coat after a 'nasty dispute' with a dressmaker, has echoes of Madame Bovary, who was fatally influenced by the romantic novels that she read, and suggests that Nalda's short- sightedness may be a symptom of the social construction of beauty in which she so actively participates. By presenting Nalda as a passive figure, a product of the beauty system, Wharton's 'brilliant and brutal' (Quennell 1936: 670) portrait bizarrely engenders some sympathy.

In her comments on Wharton's description of Nalda's hair as 'Medusa locks in the steel clutch of the waver' (*RBM*: 22), Inness acknowledges the mythical element the comparison gives to the narrative, which I suggest implies something of the nature of female fate in particular. Innes writes that such a 'hideous' comparison suggests that 'perhaps technology is not able to create the beauty that it promises' (1993: 142). However, whilst

acknowledging the detached comedy of such a description, I argue Wharton's comparison with Medusa is significant here. This seemingly powerful mythical woman, whose power comes from her hair, was in fact raped by Poseidon and beheaded, whilst pregnant, in her sleep. If anything, her legendary beauty was responsible for her role as victim. Perseus' subsequent use of her head to turn people into stone after her death is her literal change from a living individual to an object for the use of men. In a technique that Hoeller identifies in 'The Muse's Tragedy' (1899), the deliberately crafted nature of the short story belies the narrow critical imagination of the focalizer (2000:63), and encourages the reader to find a wider meaning in her narrative, in this case through her use of allusion.

Mansfield uses the trope of the hairdresser in her short story ' Revelations' (1920), in which the depressed, confused Monica, avoiding a lunch date with Ralph at Prince's, seeks comfort at the 'warm and glittering' hairdresser's, which 'smelled of soap and burnt paper and wallflower brilliantine' (*Complete Stories* 193). Here, having someone brush and set her hair is both a respite from her anxious existence and indirectly a means of enhancing the good looks Ralph has fallen for. Upset by the hairdresser's unexpectedly cold manner, it is only as Monica leaves that she is told that his daughter had died that morning, and is forced to think beyond her own personal orbit. She considers sending him some white flowers, but it is only a fleeting thought as her taxi makes its way to Prince's for her one-thirty lunch appointment. Perhaps more a victim than Nalda, in that she is acutely aware of her own unhappiness, Monica finds herself going to the lunch date, despite having decided to end her relationship with Ralph that morning, egged on by the tremendous sense of freedom this would produce. Her suffering seems inconsequential juxtaposed with that of her hairdresser, her plans of flowers meaningless as they are not realized, and the reader wonders to what extent Monica was fooling herself that going to the hairdresser's was an escape from, rather than a preparation for, her lunch date.

Joyce also mingles third person and indirect free forms in 'Eveline' (1914), in a 'hovering narrative technique [which makes the reader] unsure whether the perceptions evoked are those of the girl herself or the narrator' (Hanson 1985: 58). As with 'Poor Old Vincent' (1935) and 'Revelations' (1920), the story is written from the inner consciousness of a young woman, whom the reader is encouraged to judge in a manner other than that presented overtly in the narrative. All three stories have the typically modernist time scale of less than a day (Hanson 1985: 55) and describe the plans, or perhaps dreams of the young woman concerned, but ultimately end in inaction. Despite her carefully thought out arrangements, the letters left for her family, Eveline decides at the last moment not to elope with Frank to Buenos Aires. Was she, one asks, ever really going to leave? Was Monica ever going to stand up, let alone break up with Ralph? Was Nalda ever going to leave Vincent? Eveline realizes she can't go through with her plans, Monica and Nalda do not; the incident at the hairdresser's and the confusion over dates are given as respective reasons for their lack of action. All three stories are clear examples of the modernist rejection of omniscient narration in the form of an unreliable focalizer. In each the reader is encouraged to reconsider the focalizers' view not only of their situation, but also of themselves. The architecture of these stories, by reason of their brevity and ambiguity present an embodiment of 'the twentieth century sense of the opacity and elusiveness of human character' (Hanson 1985: 56) and urge the reader to look beyond the focalizer's point of view.

'Poor Old Vincent' contains various modernist features. Its mode of narration, including particularly indirect free style, was one practised by short story writers including Joyce, and Mansfield. The use of the third person allows a certain distancing from the focalizer, whilst remaining firmly within their orbit of personal experience and thought, and therefore encourages a second, often contradictory perspective. Childs acknowledges the alternative perspectives created by this particular use of the third person, and writes of

Mansfield's short story 'Bliss' (1920) that such a technique allows room for irony, ambiguity and alternative meanings (2000: 88). In her detailed discussion of Wharton's use of irony in her short stories, Sterling points to a basic unreliability of the text that that must be compensated for, and acknowledges the importance of the reader's reaction for irony to be successful (2007: 20). Paradoxically, by distancing herself from her characters, Wharton creates a greater intimacy and reliance on her reader. Her use of concurrent, often conflicting, narratives within her stories endows them with a polyphony, which necessitates an active reader in the assignment of meaning.

Most of Wharton's short stories contain humour of some sort. In his 1942 study of the modern short story, Bates notes that often humour in this genre is the product of vision rather than intrinsic comedy (1942: 49), and it is Wharton's ability to present a detached view via 'architectural structuring' (Ware 2004: 17) and allusion, whilst remaining firmly in the consciousness of her focalizer that allow her stories to carry some 'judgment on life' (*WF:* 23), yet entertain. The situations Wharton writes about are frequently dark, such as female imprisonment (Fracasso 1994) and incest (White 1991: 40-2), yet few stories are devoid of humour. Even Mrs Manstey's fate – her only pleasure in life being the view from her window which is about to be obliterated – is not immune to the odd ironic rendition. Wharton writes: 'She might move, of course; so might she be flayed alive; but she was not likely to survive either operation' (*CS1* 5). Wharton's short stories are narratives of flawed vision, disappointment, frustration and human failing but without the inherent bleakness and pessimism found in Joyce's *Dubliners*.

In all her third person narratives, despite narrating from the inner consciousness of a focalizer, and often slipping into indirect free style, Wharton never moves into the first person in the manner of Joyce or Woolf. She does, however, sometimes heighten the immediacy and indeterminacy of the narration by creating a mutability of self, in which the

focalizer has two voices. An early example of this is in her story 'The Reckoning' (1902), which begins with an epigraph which reads 'The marriage law of the new dispensation will be: thou shalt not be unfaithful – to thyself.' This curious mixture of modern sentiment and archaic language appears to be the doctrine by which the focalizer of the story, Julia Westall, has decided to live her life.

She thinks she has rejected the traditional notion of marriage, for the belief that an individual's fidelity should primarily be to oneself, rather than to one's spouse. First encountered in the symbolic cigarette haze of the Van Siderens' living room, hearing her second husband speak on the subject, Julia is upset by the presence of the daughter of the house, and thinks that Una Van Sideren should not be listening to such an unsuitable talk. As Julia decides someone really ought to speak to the girl's mother, she falls into the conventional way of thinking she believed she had rejected, and asks herself why, at the ripe age of twenty-six, Una is still single. Unsure what she really believes, Julia is aware of her other, traditional self. Wharton writes:

> It was as though someone else had been speaking – a stranger who had borrowed her own voice: she felt herself the dupe of some fantastic mental ventriloquism. (*CS1* 456)

'The Reckoning' is the story of Julia's search for her own identity hidden within her two conflicting selves. Further clues are given to the reader that her public, conventional self is more important to her than she believes. The social approval of her divorce from her first husband, is, she feels, justification for her action, highlighted by the lack of any concrete reasons for her decisions; all the reader is told is 'Everyone was ready to excuse and even defend her. The world she adorned agreed that John Arment was "impossible"' (*CS1* 460). It is only when her second husband asks to be released from their marriage, to marry the young Una, that Julia has some understanding of how her first husband felt when she left him. She

also acknowledges his kindness in giving her the freedom to remarry by agreeing to the divorce.

Wharton describes an epiphaniac moment when Julia goes to her first husband to ask his forgiveness. Wharton writes 'their eyes met in a sudden shock of comprehension; a veil seemed to be lifted between them' (*CS1* 474). Arment is about to say something important as Julia takes her leave and takes an impulsive step forward, but stops himself when a footman arrives to open the door. It appears he is as much ruled by convention and his public self as his former wife. Julia is therefore left to walk out into the darkness of the street alone. Julia's epiphany ends in the clear vision of being alone in literal and figurative obscurity. 'The Reckoning' begins in a cigarette haze of confusion and ends in the crisp, cold clarity of darkness, as Julia acknowledges both the suffering she has caused and the tempting emotional security of conventional marriage.

Thirty years later, Wharton portrays inner conflict differently in 'Joy in the House' (1932). In this story Christine Ansley must decide between two unsatisfactory men: her lover and her husband. Allowed by her husband to have a 'trial marriage' with another man, on the understanding that if it is over within six months she will be welcomed back to the family home, Christine Ashley decides to return two weeks before her time is up. Even as she packs her clothes for her week-long journey back alone to America, she is still not completely decided. Although also written in the third person, Wharton's presentation of Christine's conflicting thoughts is different from that of Julia Westall's mental struggle in 'The Reckoning'. Using a wide range of punctuation to 'jolt' the narrative, Christine's struggle is disjointed, piecemeal and reaches no real conclusion. Having returned to the family home, Christine's comparisons between the two men continue to a shift from one extreme to another. Wharton writes:

> She put her hands up and hid her face in them for a moment ... Why this perpetual pendulum swing: Jeff – Devons, Devons – Jeff, backward and forward in her brain? (*CS2* 634)

Rather than hearing a second voice, as Julia does in 'The Reckoning', Christine's thoughts are the sum of two incomplete, conflicting points of view, neither actually being her own, in which no resolution is achieved. Christine can only look at her situation through either Jeff's or Devons' eyes. When Christine learns that Jeff has committed suicide she finds a new, much darker meaning to her husband's banner 'Joy in the House' which he put up for her arrival. Her first reaction is one of a need to escape, which is then counteracted by remorse that Jeff can no longer take her away: 'But the hand which had opened the world to her was dead, was stiff in the coffin already' (*CS2* 651). She orders the banner to be taken down and walks wearily upstairs to see her son, for whom, she tells herself, she has decided to remain. There is no moment of understanding, no inner strength achieved by new knowledge and no clear definition of character.

In these two cases of mutability of focalizer, both women are influenced by social forces and have difficulty finding an identity distinct from their public selves, or of finding their own vision without looking through the eyes of others. Despite her focus on inner consciousness and subsequently often impressionistic style, Wharton acknowledges the importance of the wider context – that of social, and often material dimensions, and that an 'explicit awareness of the eternal struggle of man's contending impulses' is needed for the short story to become 'a shaft driven straight into the heart of human experience' (*WF* 14, 36). The difference in the presentation of this struggle in these two narratives is that her later story gives the focalizer's thoughts as a disjointed, fumbling collection of conflicting vision, often qualified by tag comments typical of spoken discourse. In her earlier story the conflict is presented in a more literary fashion, with complete, complex sentences, no innovative use

of italicization, dashes or ellipses to create a distinct orality of tone, which was later to become commonplace in Wharton's short fiction. Her 1902 story ends in Julia Westall's epiphany, a typically modernist illumination of her own confused state and bleak emotional future. Christine Ansen's epiphany however hovers outside the text, as she does what is expected of her, unable to find her own vision of her situation.

Wharton's wide use of epiphany, considered 'a substantive feature of her work' by Kim (2006: 150), illustrates the manner in which she combines subjective vision with wider social experience. She uses the modernist method practised by Joyce in *Stephen Hero* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in that her epiphanies do not reveal a transcendent truth, but serve to focus the spiritual eye, to 'highlight ... a subjective consciousness linked to aesthetic vision' (Kim 2006: 151). Also modernist is her focus on an object, stressing the materiality of aesthetic perception in her moments of epiphany, not unlike Mansfield's use of the pear tree in 'Bliss'. In 'The Reckoning' Julia remembers the statue of a Greek slave in the Arment drawing room in Section One of the story. In Section Two, the man in chains is evoked by her description of marriage as 'bondage of body and soul' (*CS1* 462), and in Section Three, when she returns to her first husband's drawing room, she sees the statue again, significantly blocking the threshold to the inner room. In this way, the reader is given the symbol of Julia's imprisonment in Section One, its significance in Section Two, and the focalizer's vision at her moment of epiphany vision in Section Three.

There are two ways, however, in which Wharton creates her own form of epiphany distinct from that of Joyce. The first is the creation of epiphaniac moments which illuminate not simply a character's understanding of their own experience, but throw light on the relationship between human nature and the material and cultural forces within which it exists. Wharton uses the term 'moral experience' (*WF* 28) in her description of the necessary shift from individual to wider social experience for writing to have any intrinsic quality. As Kim

notes, the term 'moral' is misleading as it is not a reference to correct conduct, but rather a vision of 'human nature as it exists in the context of social and cultural standards' (2006: 154). According to Halliwell, this attempt to chart the 'passage between personal value and social action' is present in much modernist fiction. He writes that this conflict between individual impulse and social force should be seen as typical of modernist fiction given that 'so many works explore the barriers - some psychic, some social – that prevent such a 'passage'' (Halliwell 2001: 3).

The second way in which Wharton creates her own form of epiphany is her refusal to junk the narrative patterns inherited from literary history, coupled with her rejection of the modernist notion of a separation between art and society. Peel sums this up by writing 'it is the political, ultimately bourgeois, message of Anglo-American modernism that she disliked, feeling that the fragmentation of representation anticipated and fostered a fragmentation in society as a whole' (2005:99). In his discussion of the relationship between her early work and modernism, Peel concludes that it is Wharton's belief 'that there should be order in art' and her admiration for traditional forms that sets her apart from modernism (2005:278). Certainly, her work does not have the modernist 'chaotic, random, fluid[ity]' (Peel 2005:278) of Joyce's *Ulysses*, but neither does *Dubliners*. Peel argues that it is not only Wharton's respect for traditional form, but also her vision of the purpose of art, that is, that it has 'an important role to play in the good society', which ultimately excludes her from the modernist canon (2005: 278).

I would question whether Wharton's technique of presenting a wider social significance to a personal epiphany is completely contrary to modernist ideologies. Halliwell and Kim certainly see a social significance in modernist epiphany. In terms of the 'good' society (Peel 2005: 278), Wharton's attitude towards the moral value of a story is an ambiguous one. Some of her critical writing, such as her comment that a reader's first

response to a story will be 'What judgment on life does it contain for me?' (*WF* 23) suggests a belief that literature has some moral purpose, yet other comments, such as her appellation of Woolf and Joyce's fiction as 'that unhappy hybrid, the novel with a purpose'(Wegener 1999: 32, 175) suggest the opposite. I believe that her lack of authorial posturing, the ambiguity of her texts, and the often contradictory meanings they contain suggest that her narratives are not Wharton moralizing, questioning perhaps, but certainly not dictating. Therefore by giving her epiphanies an explicitly social frame, Wharton is commenting on society, but not necessarily posturing on what is needed for *good* society.

Wharton's epiphanies are of vision alone, and rarely change the outward lives of her characters. Her protagonists are not transformed, and ostensibly continue the same lives after the moment of epiphany. Delia Corbett in 'The Lamp of Psyche' (1895) learns that the husband she worshipped had avoided fighting in the Civil War, and her vision of a husband who was 'so obviously admirable that she wondered people didn't stop her in the street to attest her good fortune' (*CS1* 26) is destroyed in a similar manner to the terrible revelation referenced in the title. Reflecting on her husband's lack of shame for his cowardly refusal to fight, Delia knows 'she had passed a milestone in her existence' (*CS1* 41). Her married life would continue as before, but her vision of her situation had changed, as a result of her knowledge. His past had not changed; he was the same person she had married, she just knew him too well now. Wharton writes:

> Formerly he had been to her like an unexplored country, full of bewitching surprises and recurrent revelations of wonder and beauty; now she had measured and mapped him, and knew beforehand the direction of every path she trod. (*CS1* 42)

Wharton uses the miniature of a young cavalry officer who died in battle to precipitate his admission that he chose not to fight in the war. The symbolic function of the portrait is far more explicitly given than that of the pear tree in Mansfield's short story, 'Bliss' (1920), yet

both objects are closely linked to a female epiphany. The miniature is viewed in different ways within the single narrative; Corbett, who bought it as a present for his wife, finds it 'awfully bad', but claims he felt impelled to 'get it out of the clutches of a Jew pawnbroker' (*CS1* 39-40), Delia, by contrast, is overcome when she discovers the contents of the package she is given. In 'Bliss' the pear tree is viewed by Bertha in various ways during the course of the story. She first looks at it alone, then it is meditated upon by Bertha and Miss Fulton together as both are 'caught in that circle of unearthly light, understanding each other perfectly, creatures of another world ' (1974: 102), and Bertha acknowledges her own attraction to the young woman. At the close of the story, when the dinner guests leave and Bertha realizes Miss Fulton is her husband's lover, she runs back to the window for reassurance and guidance, and finds the tree still as full of flower and 'as lovely as ever' (1974: 105). Whereas the miniature brings the story to a crucial moment in Delia's experience, the pear tree has a symbolic centrality to the narrative which is open to multiple interpretations. Head discusses the complex symbolism of the tree in *The Modernist Short Story*, and acknowledges that such a technique serves both to indirectly refer to sexual taboos and replicate the uncertainty of the experience. He writes 'the point is to indicate the psychological confusion caused by the ideology of heterosexual conformity, an ideology which prevents Bertha from understanding and expressing her own sexuality' (1992: 30).

Wharton's use of subjective narration questions the existence of a single, objective, shared truth, and consequently her stories contain not only moments of insight, but also moments of possibly imperfect vision. Both her focalizers and narrators regularly suffer from flawed sight, frequently caused by their various prejudices, and the use of an unreliable narrator in particular is a means by which Wharton often imbues multiple layers of meaning into her short stories. It is not uncommon for Wharton to create enigmatic narrators whose accounts serve to reveal more about themselves rather than the events they relate. Indeed

Wolff identifies the narrator of *Ethan Frome* as the protagonist, and reads the eponymous hero as the narrator's 'Winterman' self (1977: 167). Much of the story of Wharton's tales lie in her narrators, particularly in the case of her nineteen first person narratives, all but one of whom are single, childless, cultured, wealthy men. [20] Nettels assigns Wharton's preference for this gender of narrator to three reasons; to follow an established literary tradition of male narration, to imbue her narrators with a certain credibility – it was far more likely for a man rather than a woman to have such a wide knowledge of life and literature- and to use her predominately male friends as models for her narrating consciousnesses (1992: 257). Haytock develops these points further in declaring that the proliferation of male narrators gives the telling of the stories greater authority (2008:89), overlooking the fact that they almost invariably misinterpret the situation they believe they are viewing and that their fallibility is often doubly signalled by a reference to a recent rest cure as in 'The Pelican' (1898), 'The Triumph of the Night' (1914) and 'Miss Mary Pask' (1925).

However, Haytock observantly makes the point that the men, unlike the women in her stories, have someone who will listen to them (2008:89) and as I discuss in more detail in my next chapter, Wharton frequently uses the classical trope of the blind man and voiceless woman to add an unseen, misunderstood, unspoken quality to her texts. Such a narrative combination often results in tension between a male narrator with flawed vision, albeit articulate and well attended, and a female focaliser, such as Mrs Amyot, who sees, but cannot explain in 'The Pelican' (1898), or Silvia Danyers who fights to escape from being 'contained, shut up [within the] margins' (Witzig 1992:267) of the narrator's text in 'The Muse's Tragedy' (1891). Wharton's tendency to blur, or at least complicate, the distinction between focalizer and narrator is also evidenced in her strategy of embedding her tales of events from the distant past within a modern context via a twentieth-century non-participant

[20] I am not including 'The Looking Glass' (1933), which begins in the third person, although the majority of the story is a first person account by Mrs Attlee. Neither do I include 'All Souls'' which Nettels reads as female narration, but which I view as an instance of the gender of the narrator being deliberately left unclear.

narrator, as in 'Kerfol' (1916) and 'The Duchess at Prayer' (1901). Her stories are simultaneously old and new, reliable and unreliable, realistic and mythical, told by a witness of the place but not the event, intimate in their first-person telling, distant in their historicity.

'The Pelican' (1899) is told by a narrator who participates in the last crucial scene of the story, but who otherwise acts as a witness to the events he relates. His disparaging humour certainly entertains but never endears him to the reader as he charts the progress of the widowed Mrs Amyot, who gives lectures to support her baby son. Whilst her actual financial need is implicitly questioned from the beginning by references to her family's comfortable situation, it is her blatant unsuitability for the task which irks the narrator. He describes her as having two fatal gifts: 'a capacious but inaccurate memory and an extraordinary fluency of speech. There was nothing she did not remember – wrongly' (*CS1* 77).

As in 'The Pretext', the title of 'The Pelican' colours, if not defines, the ensuing story. Thought to be a selfless creature, the pelican is often depicted piercing her breast with her beak so that her offspring can eat her own flesh and blood when food is scarce. In medieval times artists often placed the bird with its nest on top of the cross; Thomas Aquinas (who is mentioned later in the story) uses the pelican in his hymn *Adoro te Devote*, as does Shakespeare (also referenced in the story), in *Hamlet* and *King Lear*.[21] In fact, the bird beats its bill against its chest to get macerated food out for its young, which against its white feathers, creates the startling illusion it is harming itself. By referring to Mrs Amyot as a pelican, the 'actual suffering' (*CS1* 79) she claims she must go through by speaking in public

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[21] 'Pie Pelilicane, Jesu Domine,/ Me immundum munda tuo sanguine. (verse 3)
O loving Pelican, O Jesu Lord,/ Unclean am I but cleanse me in thy blood'

Hamlet Act IV, Scene V, lines 145-147Laertes says to the king :
'To his good friends thus wide I'll open my arms,
And like the life-rendering pelican,
Repast them with my blood'

King Lear Act III Scene IV Lear describes his daughter as 'Those pelican daughters' line 72

for the sake of the baby, is shown to be a fallacy before it is conclusively revealed to be so in the final scene. The question the reader asks is not whether she needs to give lectures, but why she actively chooses to do so.

The narrative drips with literary satire and intertextuality. Mrs Amyot's mother, the celebrated Irene Astarte Pratt, outdoes Darwin by writing a poem entitled 'The Fall of Man'; Mrs Amyot's own reading of Lewes's book on Goethe evokes an image of George Eliot, another woman who trespassed into the male sphere of learning and literature; and the suburb where Mrs Amyot lives, inhabited by university professors, is sarcastically referred to as 'the summit of a local Parnassus' (*CS1* 77). Comfortable in his derisive remarks about the pretty Mrs Amyot, the narrator obviously does not feel he needs to justify his clear belief that she is more suited to the domestic realm. He says:

> Her fluent generalizations about Goethe and his place in literature ... had the flavour of personal experience, of views sympathetically exchanged with her audience on the best way of knitting children's socks, or of putting preserves up for the winter. (80)

His ushering her into the kitchen with his scathing comments about the shallow nature of her knowledge reveals his need to magnify the extent of his own scholarship in comparison. He relishes the memory of her nervousness when she found out that someone of his learning was attending her lecture. He demonstrates his erudition by offering to help her in her research, listing books 'with a fatuity that became more obvious as time attenuated the remembrance of her smile' (81), and with a distinct sense of intellectual superiority, chooses to praise the mediocre verse of her growing son, Lancelot.

The narrator's obvious appreciation of her good looks is interlaced throughout the story, which itself begins with his description of her attractiveness. The story opens 'She was very pretty when I first knew her, with the sweet straight nose and short upper lip of the cameo-brooch divinity; humanized by a dimple that flowered in her cheek' (76). By

signalling the narrator's attraction towards the woman in this way, the reader is nudged towards supposing this is the source of his interest. Suitors are referred to, and the narrator muses that if she had married classical figures such as Plato might have escaped her 'treatment', 'but I handed over Plato as a hostage and escaped on the afternoon train' (81). If she had remarried she would not have continued lecturing; the narrator fails to realize that if she wanted to continue lecturing she could not remarry.

It is during their penultimate meeting that the narrator refers to the 'vast machinery of fraud' (86) he had agreed to put in motion by helping her write her next lecture and using his contacts to promote her talks. By this point in the narrative the reader is aware of the fraud that exists on a further diegetic level – that of his own interaction with Mrs Amyot. And one wonders if the fraudulent relationship might be with himself, given that his derogatory humour belies his clear interest in Mrs Amyot, an interest that develops into a real sympathy (both his and that of the reader) for the woman by the close of the story. For good measure his unreliability is further confirmed by his mention of his need to go south for a 'rest cure' as a result of overwork.

Dillard notes the particular suitability of the 'crank' narrator to modernist ends, commenting that it is modernist in its distance and irony (1981: 210-211). Wharton's irony here is twofold, manifest firstly in the narrator's wit and secondly in the irony that, supposedly repelled by this woman's lack of intellectual rigour, he has spent decades charting her lecturing career and has composed his story around her. Peel cites Wharton's abandonment of the reassuring figure of the reliable narrator as one of the factors that make *Ethan Frome* (1911) her most modernist pre-1914 work and discusses how this contributes to the inherent uncertainty about the story itself (2005: 153). 'The Pelican' demonstrates how she was using this technique twelve years earlier to create a story with multiple layers of

meaning and irony on different diegetic levels and a puzzling lack of closure so typical of modernist fiction.

The story ends with the narrator's attendance at an Amyot lecture near where he is convalescing. Staying behind to meet her again, he is present at her son's angry condemnation that she is still using him as an excuse for her lecturing, and people are buying tickets to hear her out of charity. Noting the signs of age in her face, a shift in narrative sympathy takes place, and the narrator finally defends her, partly fuelled by his rage at the rudeness of her son. Tellingly, Lancelot accuses his mother of making him party to fraud – a concept which has by now become a central theme in this story.

It is Lancelot who finally voices the reader's question, and asks why she is still doing this, a question the narrator had never considered in the decades he has known Mrs Amyot. Pointing to the lack of any financial need, Lancelot lists the unnecessary gifts she buys her grandchildren; 'lace christening dresses and life size rocking horses with real manes! The kind of thing children can't do without' (*CS1* 94). No clear answer is given to Lancelot or the reader. Left alone with Mrs Amyot after Lancelot has stormed out, the narrator's actions defy his words of the last twenty pages and he holds out his hand. She takes it and tearfully ends the story with the words 'I sent his wife a seal skin jacket at Christmas!' (*CS1* 94), highlighting her trespassing into the male territory of learning and financial independence, by linking her feminine judgment with female materialism and commodification, in what Huyssen would argue is a distinctly modernist presentation of women (1986: 47). By focusing on what was later seen to be modernist anxieties around the rapidly evolving material culture at the turn of the century, Wharton cleverly intertwines this with traditional resistance to a female attempt at independence, yet ends her tale with a distinct sympathy, if not understanding, of the woman who chooses to embrace it.

As I mentioned earlier, the unreliable narrator is a regular feature of Wharton's short stories, his unreliability often overtly signalled by reference to a recent rest cure, as in 'The Triumph of the Night' (1914) and 'Miss Mary Pask' (1925). Wharton frequently uses her first person narrators to present a contradictory view to that of the focalizer, as in 'All Souls'' (1937) and as a result to add another, often conflicting layer of meaning to the story. In this way 'The Pelican' can be seen either as a 'gently ironic account of a rattlebrained woman who lectures' (Lewis 1975: 81), or as a damning portrait of a society that would not let a woman do something 'unless it could be done in the name of maternal sacrifice' (Wolff 1977: 97), depending on whether one takes the narrator's version or considers the focalizer's experience. Wharton's creation of conflicting narratives within a single story, endows her short fiction with a particular form of ambiguity and uncertainty not found in her novels, and in terms of narrative vision and presentation, her short fiction often demonstrates a more detailed, modernist mapping of consciousness, which in turn poses more questions than it answers.

In terms of form, Wharton's writing is critically acknowledged as displaying various modernist features (Ware 2008: 18). The narrative strategies she employs such as subjective vision, a lack of a clear authorial or omniscient voice and her use of epiphany and inner monologue, certainly indicate modernist tendencies, as do her symbolic use of the everyday and the insertion of recurring motifs to indicate a further, hidden layer of meaning within her texts. Her often ironic, frequently humorous narrative tone also urges her readers to look beyond the surface semantics of her stories, sometimes to find new, completely contradictory meanings to her narratives. As I have also demonstrated, Wharton's narrative content and concerns mirror those of many modernist writers, such the commodification of women, and the subjective nature of experience itself, the latter having more in common with the

Nietzschian questioning of the notion of a single, communal truth typical of modernism (Childs 2000: 60), than the stable, omniscient narration of the Victorian era.

Wharton's respect for and adherence to some of the conventions of literary tradition, such as the need for order in art, has been cited by critics including Peel (2005: 277-8) to justify her exclusion from the modernist canon. However, many of the modernist features I have identified in this chapter have their roots in tradition, and as T.S. Eliot noted, the most original talent was not only bound within a tradition, but was also most likely to affirm it (Bell 1999:15). Indeed, as I discuss in my next chapter, Homer's *Hymn to Demeter* is itself an example of unreliable narration and as Stevenson notes this technique has been used by writers throughout history, including Dickens in *Great Expectations* (1860-1) and *David Copperfield* (1849-50). What is distinctly modernist about Wharton's own use of this technique, however, is her refusal to supply an 'authorial yardstick' by which to measure the account presented to the reader. Whereas the original singer of Homer's tale could convey his reading of the narrative via various paralinguistic markers, such as tone, pace and intonation; and Dickens mitigates the unreliable perspective of childhood experience by a mature, older narrating self, over the course of her short story career, Wharton increasingly shied away from any stable, reliable narrative stance or clear authorial voice, leaving the multiplicity of meaning in her narrative undisturbed.

Above all, it is Wharton's expectation of an active reader which is modernist. Her tendency to write increasingly open-ended, subjective, contradictory, gap ridden texts is similar to both Woolf's 'aversion to omniscient or determinate perspectives' (Hunter 1999: 71) and what Woolf described as Chekhov's 'note of interrogation' (Hunter 2007: 65), or Mansfield's conclusion that the writer should not solve, 'but ... put the question' (Hunter 2007:72). Thus much of the meaning of Wharton's narratives lies in their very absences, absences which create the gaps and questions for the alert reader who notices them. In terms

of narrative strategy, therefore, the most influential agent of Wharton's short stories is not the absent author, who arguably is somewhere behind the scene 'paring his fingernails' (Joyce 2004: 191), nor the flawed narrator or focalizer who invariably has imperfect vision and 'lack of insight' (Nettels 1992:251), but the reader whom Wharton urges to 'add [to and]modify' (Wegener 1996: 99) the text itself and actively assign meaning to her distinctly modernist, reader-led narratives.

Chapter 2: Demeter Forgiven: Wharton's Use of Myth in the Short Stories

In this chapter I discuss Wharton's treatment of myth in her short stories in comparison with both nineteenth century and modernist appropriation of Greek and Roman literary heritage. I look at Wharton's 'lifelong obsession with Persephone and her sojourn in the Underworld' (Lewis 1975: 495) and demonstrate how her apparently subversive representations of incestuous desire and female sexual awakening are in fact faithful readings of the original story found in the Homeric *Hymn of Demeter*.[22] I also consider the progressive sympathy with which Wharton depicts Demeter over the course of her writing career, and identify what I believe to be a hitherto unacknowledged radical shift in Wharton's presentation of this mythical mother figure. In addition I argue that over the thirty-three years in which Wharton incorporates Homer's narrative into her fiction, she gradually revises her early representations of Hades from that of a cold, decaying prisonlike realm into a tempting, subtly sexually charged territory, whose allure her characters find increasingly difficult to resist. In my exploration of Wharton's use of this myth I also demonstrate how Persephone is frequently associated with material wealth, in an allusion to the complex relationship between women and property. Finally I conclude with a consideration of how far her use of classical narrative can be considered modernist.

Despite Wharton's widely acknowledged predilection for male narrators (Nevius 1953, Donovan 1989: 45, Nettels 1992), suggestive of a narrative style belonging to a past era when 'the classics were kept as a masculine preserve' (Jenkyns 1980: 280), the prevalence of female deities and classical characters in Wharton's work, such as Persephone, Demeter, Circe, Antigone, Electra, Psyche, Andromeda, and Aphrodite in her typically woman-centred narratives highlights what appears to be a modernist focus on female experience (Bloomberg

[22] Foley 1994 *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Translation, Commentary and Interpretive Essays*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Foley writes that the single surviving manuscript (dated to the early fifteenth century) was discovered in 1777 (153).

2001: 14). However the female archetypes which Carpentier finds to be a characteristic of much modernist writing, that is, 'women rendered as symbols of power, both creative and destructive' (1998: 6) are to be found in Wharton's *novels*, in the form of figures such as *Custom of the Country*'s Undine Spragg (her first name being that of the water nymph), and *Twilight Sleep*'s Pauline Manford, *not* in her short stories. The shorter fiction is, rather, littered with mythical allusions to figures that symbolise female entrapment, widely acknowledged as a prevalent theme in Wharton's writing (Salmi 1991, White 1991, Fracasso 1994).[23] Wharton uses the figures of Electra, Antigone, and in particular that of Persephone as symbols of young women who are denied agency, and as a representation of the conflict between individual and society in terms of the stifling nature of social bonds, often in the form of filial obligation and female enslavement by conformity. These mythological figures are particularly apt as allusions to the confining nature of women's lives at the time Wharton was writing. Indeed, as Bloomberg notes, even though women were gaining more sexual freedom in this era their lives were still very much restricted by their continued financial reliance on men (2001:55).

In 'The Angel at the Grave' (1901), Paulina Anson's virtual imprisonment in the living tomb of the 'cold, clean ... family temple' of her grandfather's house (*CS1* 257), is reinforced by a comparison between her rejection of a suitor, who would involve a new life away from the Anson house, with Persephone *not* going to the Underworld, and therefore accepting imprisonment in Demeter's realm, forever to remain a virgin. In 'The Mission of Jane' (1902), the moribund state of Mrs Lethbury's marriage is implicit in the reference to the river in Hades, which forms part of her name. Wharton subverts Virgil's sibyl by creating the virtually voiceless, trapped Sybilla, in 'The House of the Dead Hand' (1904), whose dowry is spent by her father to procure a painting by Leonardo da Vinci. The extent of her sacrifice is

[23] Salmi writes 'The Andromeda myth and the theme of entrapment occupies the writer's mind novel after novel' (1991: 15) and White notes the theme of imprisonment in 'The Bolted Door' (1909) and 'Autre Temps (1916), (1995: 74-75). Fracasso's 1994 study is entitled *Edith Wharton's Prisoners of Consciousness.*

evident in her father's proud boast 'Could Antigone do more?'(*CS1* 525). The female archetype that Carpentier searches for *is* present in this last story, in the form of the subject of the painting itself: the goddess Circe, in a cruel irony which highlights Sybilla's own powerlessness.[24] Twenty-seven years later Wharton was still incorporating mythical references into her short stories, perhaps her most critiqued being 'Pomegranate Seed' (1931) (Gardner 1980, Sherman 1989, Donovan 1989, Singley and Sweeney 1991, Waid 1991, Young 1996). In this story the unhappy Charlotte Ashby, trapped by the presence of her husband's first, dead wife, has been read as a Persephone figure by Singley and Sweeney (1991:191), and her opening of a letter for her spouse symbolic of her eating the forbidden fruit referenced in the title.

Carpentier links the extraordinary prominence of women in the writing of the modern period with a heightened interest in anthropological scholarship, particularly that of George Frazer, Jane Harrison and Gilbert Murray, whose studies of the world of primitive myth and ritual had a strong focus on matriarchal religions (1998 : 6-7). Rainey also notes that the matrilineal culture of the chthonic cults so thoroughly studied by Harrison was well suited to the 'modernist rise of feminism and the crisis of marriage' (1993: 244). Yet as Sherman points out, the Greek goddesses, particularly the chthonic deities Persephone and Demeter, were very much part of a nineteenth-century tradition of using classical myth to consider women's place in society, from their use as a celebration of maternal instinct, evident in Higginson's 1869 conclusion that 'the Madonna is only a disguised Demeter' (Sherman 1989: 21), to Margaret Fuller's extensive use of myth 'to reassess the proper role of women' (Richardson 1978: 50).

In terms of subject matter, Wharton's classical intertextuality, her references to the Greek goddesses in particular, was not new, but in terms of the manner in which she used

[24] In Homer's Odyssey, Circe was a goddess who has the power to turn Odysseus' crew into pigs.

allusion and allegory, Wharton broke with a tradition of celebrating these female figures and presenting them as an extension of the conventional Victorian roles assigned to women. Her ambivalent, often hostile, representation of mothers and mothering represented by the figures of Aphrodite (Lily) in *The House of Mirth*, Electra in 'The Angel at the Grave' and Persephone/Demeter figures in 'Mr Jones', and her vision of female sexual awakening in the form of Psyche in 'The Lamp of Psyche', and Andromeda (Undine) in *The Custom of the Country* presented a new, rawer vision of these classical figures, quite distinct from their romanticized nineteenth century representations.[25] The figure of Antigone evoked in 'The House of the Dead Hand' enabled Wharton to allude to incest within the respected confines of classical literary tradition, but it was Persephone in particular who enabled Wharton to pose uncomfortable questions about complicity and consent, as well as to suggest the futility of female sacrifice, an act revered by nineteenth century sentimentalists. Whereas the Victorian poets such as Tennyson and Swinburne used the figure of Demeter to highlight the pain and suffering inherent in motherhood (Louis 2005: 354), Wharton used this goddess of fertility to represent the suffocating sexual stasis of the mother's realm.

Homer's *Hymn to Demeter,* the earliest known written account of the Persephone myth, is ambiguous both in its form and content. Narrated from Demeter's perspective it includes two different accounts of the extent to which her daughter Persephone was complicit in eating the pomegranate seeds which were to oblige her to return to the Underworld every year. In the *Hymn*, Persephone is in a meadow picking flowers when she is abducted by her

[25] Lily has both an unsatisfactory mother and unsatisfactory mother figure in the form of her unapproachable aunt, and Wharton's frequent allusions to Aphrodite in her depiction of Lily are significant in that the goddess had no mother. The evocation of Electra in 'The Angel at the Grave' is significant in that it is 'the only ancient text in which a daughter participates in mother murder' (Donovan 1989: 64), and, as I argue later, the two Demeter figures in 'Mr Jones', are both representations of inadequate mothering. In terms of the classical figures Wharton alludes to in her representations of female sexuality, the title of her short story 'The Lamp of Psyche' prompts associations with Psyche's own sexual awakening by Cupid, as outlined in the popular nineteenth-century version of the myth in *Bulfinch's Mythology* (Jones 1992: 81), and Wharton's choice to give Undine in *The Custom of the Country* the name of a water nymph (as well as a hair treatment), is significant as the nymph was a common figure in painting of the time that eroticized the feminine (Honey 1994: 430).

uncle, Hades, and taken down to the Underworld to become his wife. In her despair, Demeter neglects her duties as a goddess of fertility and agriculture and the world above is plunged into famine as the crops fail, and only begin to grow again when Persephone finally returns to her mother.[26] However, as a consequence of eating some pomegranate seeds in the Underworld, Persephone must return for a few months every year as its queen. In this way the Eleusinian myth of Demeter and Persephone accounts for the seasons: the barren months of the year Demeter's daughter is in the Underworld with Hades, and her return is marked by a return of fertility to the earth. Persephone belongs to both worlds, a daughter in Demeter's land of the living and a wife in Hades' kingdom of the dead. As Singley and Sweeney write, she is 'both dead and alive, both lost and found, both an absence and a presence' (1991: 177).

The central motif of this paradox is the pomegranate, which Wharton references more frequently than Persephone herself.[27] Foley notes the fruit's double association with sexuality and death – deriving from its blood-red colour and its multiple seeds, and suggests that the fruit may signify a consummation of Persephone's marriage to Hades (1994: 56). Foley's reference to the ancient Greek ritual of a bride eating food in her husband's house to signify her transition into her new life under his authority suggests that the eating of the seeds also signal Persephone's new allegiance to her husband; no longer a maiden daughter she is now a wife and queen.[28] If the pomegranate is the fruit of knowledge, which Donovan analogizes as the forbidden fruit in the Judeo-Christian myth of the Fall (1989: 43), it is 'the forbidden fruit of sexuality' (Zilversmit 1987: 299).

The eating of the pomegranate seeds is narrated twice in the *Hymn to Demeter*. Although Persephone is first seen in the Underworld as a 'shy spouse, strongly reluctant'

[26] Hades is both the name of the realm of the Underworld and its king.
[27] The word 'pomegranate' is used in 'The House of the Dead Hand' (1904), 'The Touchstone' (1900), 'Copy' (1900), the poem 'Pomegranate Seed' (1912). 'Persephone', by contrast is only referenced in 'The Angel at the Grave' (1901) and the poem 'Pomegranate Seed' (1912).
[28] This is reinforced by the change in her name; she is only known as Persephone from the time she becomes Hades' wife, before that her name is 'Kore', meaning maiden.

(line 345) on her husband's bed, the first account contains no suggestion of her being *forced* to eat the fruit. The impersonal narration contains no allusion to violence, the word 'stealthily' may suggest trickery, but the word 'gave' can also be read as implying acceptance. Homer writes:

> But he gave her to eat/ a honey-sweet pomegranate seed, stealthily passing it/ around her, lest she once more stay forever/ by the side of revered Demeter of the dark robe. (lines 371 –373)[29]

The second account is in the form of Persephone's words to her mother, explaining how she came to eat the pomegranate seed. Here, the far more subjective, first person narration contains a different version of events:

> He stealthily/ put in my mouth a food honey-sweet, a pomegranate seed,/ and compelled me against my will and by force to taste it. (lines 411-413)

In both accounts the fruit is described as 'honey-sweet' and obviously tempting. Persephone's suggestion that she had to eat it under duress is not in the omniscient narration in the first account, which appears a more objective version of events. In her analysis of the *Hymn*, Foley wonders if Persephone protests too much for the benefit of her mother. Or, she asks, does Persephone 'lift the veil from Hades' secrecy and expose the violence that she experienced beneath it?' (1994: 60). Another unresolved paradox here is the pleasure present in her description of being force fed, with its obvious sexual connotations.

Much of the contradictory and paradoxical nature of the *Hymn* is derived from its form. This is mainly third person omniscient narration, and although this is Persephone's story, it is told via Demeter's vision. Demeter does not see Persephone being abducted, she does not hear her daughter's cries for help, nor does she witness the eating of the

[29] Foley, Helene P. (ed) (1994) *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Translation, Commentary and Interpretive Essays.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. p.60

pomegranate seeds. The two versions of how Persephone comes to eat the pomegranate seeds highlight the differences between the two central figures, 'without explicitly questioning the truth of either' (Foley 1994: 60). This unreliability and therefore ambiguity suited Wharton's own narrative technique, and is undoubtedly one reason for the myth's frequent appearance in her multilayered, polyphonic short stories. As in many of Wharton's stories, the narrative lacks resolution, in this case this is the extent of Persephone's complicity, and it is left to the reader to decide to what extent Persephone is responsible for her yearly return to the Underworld. The fragmented nature of the original version of the myth makes it suitable material for what Bloomberg reads as the distinctly modernist use of myth in which 'readers become coauthors of the text they are reading' (2001: 121). Over the three decades in which Wharton incorporated this myth into her fiction, her readings of both the figures of Persephone and Demeter significantly change, and there is a distinct shift in authorial sympathy from Persephone to her mother by the time she writes her last Persephone story in 1931.[30]

The lack of omniscient narration concerning Persephone's eating of the pomegranate seeds leaves a gap between what the girl says happened and what the listener/reader is left to construe did occur. One such listener is Demeter, and the tale is structured in such a way to suggest her version of events might be unreliable. This distancing between narrator and the object of focalisation is a technique Wharton herself frequently employs in her own short stories, and is largely responsible for the reputation she earnt of being particularly cold towards her characters.[31] However this distancing not only allowed her to infuse considerable irony into her stories, but also to incorporate comedy into some of the darkest narrative situations which, as I argue later, sets her work apart from much modernist treatment of myth.

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[30] This is 'Pomegranate Seed' (1931).

[31] *The Spectator* (England) 117 (30 December 1916) carried an anonymous review, 'Fiction' pp. 836-7, discussing *Xingu* (1916), which stated 'there is something inhuman in the detachment of her method and her absolute self-effacement'. (Tuttleton et al 1992: 235)

Both the nineteenth and early twentieth century was a time of intense public interest in the ancient myths, as evidenced by the success of Pater's series of essays 'Greek Studies', which was first published in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1876, and then posthumously as a complete volume in 1895. As early as 1869 an *Atlantic Monthly* piece entitled 'The Greek Goddesses' began with an apology for writing about these deities once again; Higginson notes 'their genealogies have been ransacked, as if they lived in Boston or Philadelphia' (Sherman 1989: 16). It was also a time of a shift in interest from the seemingly heartless Olympian gods to the mystery cults of the chthonian deities, such as Demeter, who personified the emotional pain of motherhood, so attractive to the compassion of the age which abolished slavery (Louis 2005: 343). As nineteenth-century concerns moved towards a 'reviving reverence for the material world and its seasonal cycles' (Louis 2005: 329), the connection between nature and the individual present in the ancient fertility cults struck a chord with Victorian scholars. Evidence of this is in the enormous popularity (which developed into a virtual iconicity) of *The Golden Bough* (1890-1915) by Frazer, whose quasi scientific focus on ancient myth and ritual offended many by its inclusion of Christian religion alongside the fertility cult of Demeter.

In 'Gods and Mysteries: the revival of Paganism and the Remaking of Mythography through the Nineteenth Century' (2005), Louis concludes that Victorian sensibility and interest in spirituality were responsible for the popularity of the chthonic deities. She writes:

> As the century wore on, this insistence on a spiritual vision that acknowledged and incorporated pain, loss, and division grew and shifted the emphasis once more away from the gods of light, toward the chthonic deities and the gods of the mysteries, until even Ruskin turned from Athena to Persephone (341).

The interest in ancient myth and ritual which was to permeate early twentieth century politics, philosophy, and psychology via the work of Freud, Nietzsche and Wittgenstein, had

already been a driving force behind the artistic development of the previous century. By the time Wharton wrote her first Persephone story in 1898 ('The House of the Dead Hand' (1904)) the goddess and her mother were well known figures to the common reader. A plethora of poetry had already appeared decades earlier around the figure of Persephone, including Shelley's 'Song of Proserpine ' (1820), Swinburne's 1866 'Hymn to Proserpine' and 'The Garden of Proserpine', Tennyson's 'Demeter and Persephone'(1887), Meredith's 'The Appeasement of Demeter' (1887) and 'The Day of the Daughter of Hades' (1883), as well as Walter Pater's prose essay 'The Myth of Demeter and Persephone' which was first published in 1876. D.G. Rossetti compulsively painted and repainted Prosperine through the 1870s, Walter Crane in 1878, Arthur Hacker 1889, Frederic Leighton 1891 (Louis 2005: 351).[32] The turn of the century was a time when Greek mythology was no longer a masculine preserve which 'initiated young gentlemen into the mysteries discussed in the smoking room over the port before the company joined the ladies' (Jenkyns 1980: 280), but even with its potentially subversive storylines, it had become public currency.

This leads me to what I believe to be a second reason for Wharton's continued use of the Persephone myth in her writing: that is that the Queen of the Underworld was a figure well known to her reading public. As Honey notes in 'Women and Art in the Fiction of Edith Wharton', Wharton frequently references famous paintings and literature in her work, giving the example of Ralph's idealization of Undine as a water nymph in *The Custom of the Country* as 'marking him as a typical Victorian gentleman in addition to an appreciator of art, for [the] water nymph [was a] common ... figure ... in paintings that eroticized feminine passivity' (1994: 430). (Honey incorporates a reproduction of Pierre Dupuis' 'An Undine Playing in the Waves' to illustrate this (Fig 4).) A characteristic of Wharton's fiction is to incorporate images or texts (Lily is pictured reading part of

[32] See Fig 6 'Prosperine' by Dante Gabriel Rossetti 1874 , Fig 7 'Proserpine' by Walter Crane 1878, Fig 8 'The Return of Persephone' by Frederick Lord Leighton 1891

Fig 1: 'Prosperine' by Dante Gabriel Rossetti 1874

Fig 2: 'Proserpine' by Walter Crane 1878

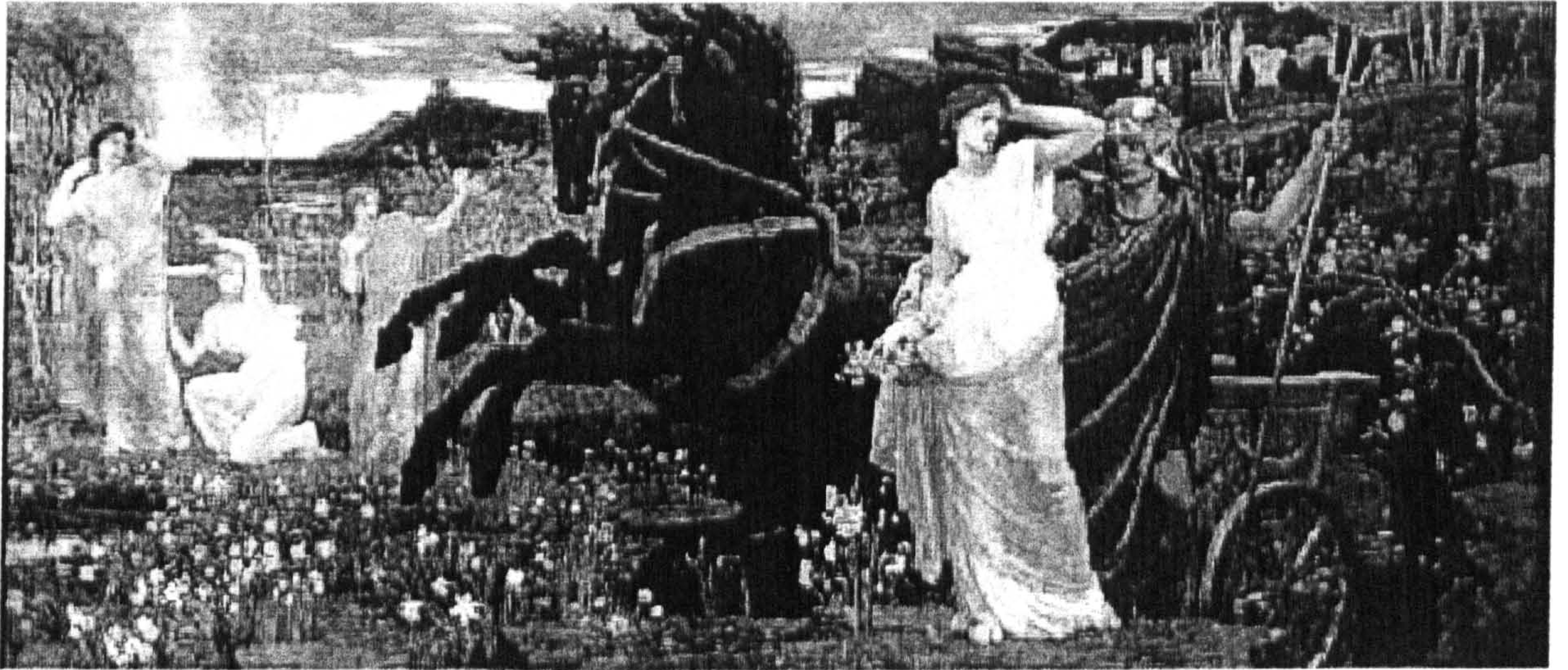
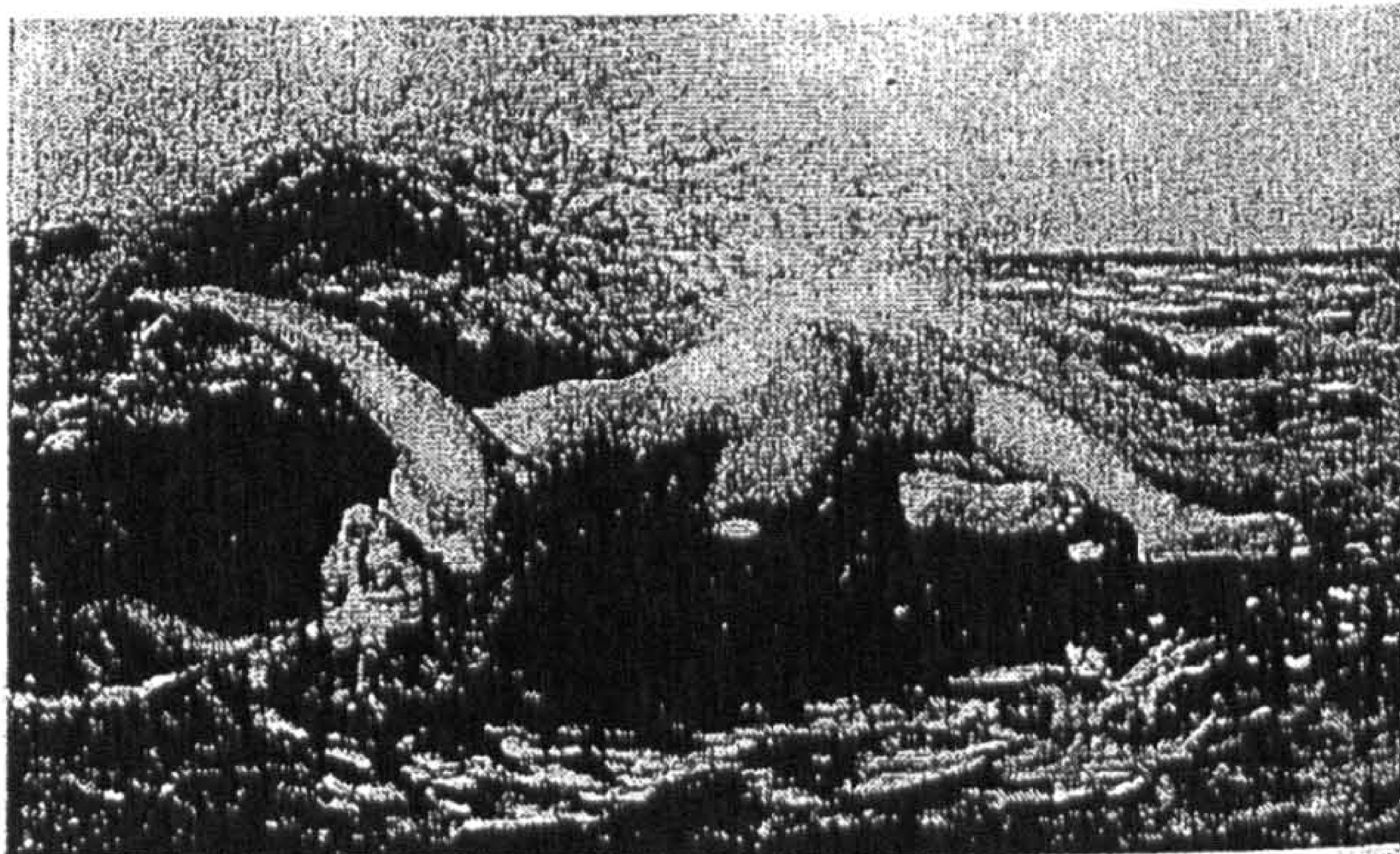


Fig 3: 'The Return of Persephone' by Frederick Lord Leighton 1891

Fig 4: 'An Ondine playing in the Waves' by Pierre Dupuis 1833.

Taken from Bijkistra, Bram (1986) Idols of Perversity: *Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture.* New York: Oxford University Press.



IV, 23. Pierre Dupuis (b. 1833), "An Ondine Playing in the Waves" (ca. 1896)

It is clear that few of the anti-feminine clichés which had become institutionalized by the 1890s have had a more immediately destructive influence on the daily lives of women throughout the twentieth century than this particular pair of male wishfulfilling items of late nineteenth century "scientific" knowledge. This is the period in which recourse to scientific truth rather than "faith" became the principal justification for the brutal and widespread oppression of human beings on the basis of race and sex, and for the institutionalization of concepts which ultimately led to the blanket justification of violence done to others because one group had decided that another had "asked for it." The women-want-to-be-raped theory is an integral part of the overall self-serving pattern of the rationalization of aggression which still dominates the world today, and which was crucial to the development of the imperialist mentality at the turn of the century.

It may seem a rather bathetic mismatch of causes to point to the supinely sprawling feminine nudes favored by the painters of the Paris salons as a contributing factor to the spread of the aggressive mentality in late nineteenth-century life. But inevitably the mentality of rape, whether it be personal and physical or cultural and intellectual, requires that

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IV, 24. Adolf Hirémy-Hirschl (1860–1933), "Aphrodite" (c. 1898)

Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, (*Eumenides*), in the *House of Mirth*), which are familiar to her wide reading public, as demonstrated by Killoran's book length study *Edith Wharton : Art and Allusion* (1996). (The *Oresteia* is significantly the only classical narrative of matricide.)

Wharton incorporated well known, usually female, classical figures into her fiction to align herself with her readers by presenting a common ground of reference. This is quite distinct from writers such as T.S.Eliot, who appears to reference myth in *The Waste Land* to demonstrate the scope and depth of his knowledge of the classics, with the purpose of separating himself from 'the masses', in terms of his superior intellect and learning, famously writing 'Poets in our civilisation, as it exists at present, must be difficult' (1951: 289). Wharton's choices of mythological reference in terms of their familiarity and gender indicate both the seemingly intimate relationship she strove to establish with her intended reader, and her active courtship of a wide readership. (The majority of readers of fiction at that time were female.) Indeed, the potential commerciality, and mass market appeal of Persephone, in particular, was not lost on Wharton.

Wharton's short story 'The House of the Dead Hand' (1904), written in 1898, is Wharton's earliest use of the Persephone myth in her short fiction. It derives its title from the name of the house in Siena visited by an American named Wyant, in order to see a painting owned by the Englishman, Dr Lombard. The interior of the house is depicted as a cavernous realm, and Wyant's journey through it, to view the Leonardo, in 'an atmosphere of mortal cold', past frescoed figures 'with the filmed melancholy gaze of shades in limbo' (*CS1* 522), *down* a narrow stone passage, through various locked doors, is suggestive of a descent into the Underworld. Significantly, he is led to the picture by Lombard's daughter, Sybilla, whose namesake took Aeneas to Hades (Morford and Leonardon 2007: 361).

Wharton's use of the Underworld is similar to the modernist appropriation of classical narratives to explore the murkier, often hidden sides of human nature. Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, which Eliot cited as a 'profound[] influence[]' on his generation, in the first prefatory paragraph to his notes on *The Waste Land*, derives its name from the branch Aeneas had to present first to the Cumaen Sibyl, and then to Proserpine to gain entry to the Underworld. In his study of the influence of *The Golden Bough*, Vickery notes the frequent allusions to the Underworld in modernist writing. He comments on Lawrence's representations of this realm in *Women in Love*, where the miners' world appears a ghostly replica of the real world peopled by ghouls and marked by sordidness (1973: 300-1), noting Lawrence's use of Hades to refer to the darker, hidden regions of his characters' minds. Indeed Gudrun's furtive nighttime gropes with a miner aptly illustrate the alluring yet repulsive nature of the Underworld as personified by its inhabitants, the miners. Lawrence writes of the colliers' district:

> To Gudrun, however, it was potent and half–repulsive. ... Now she realized that this was the world of the powerful, underworld men who spent most of their time in darkness. In their voices she could hear the voluptuous resonance of darkness, the strong, dangerous underworld, mindless, inhuman. (2000:115)

Wharton often incorporates tapestries into her depictions of the Underworld, suggestive of a musty, ancient depiction of a frozen scene. This motif is significant in that it has a hidden underside, where the 'Gobelins (sic) weavers [worked] on the wrong side' (*BG* 197), suggestive of a palimpsestic text. Such a notion urges readers to look for deeper, hidden meanings in a narrative, not unlike Freud's later excursions into the subconscious meanings of fictions, accessed via psychoanalytical study. In 'The House of the Dead Hand' Wyant passes tapestries, 'which had faded to the gray-brown tints of decaying vegetation, so that the young man felt as though he were entering a sunless autumn wood' (*CS1* 523), the season in

which Persephone leaves the world above. The connection between Persephone's residence in the Underworld and a sewn text was first made in the fourth century in Claudian's 'The Rape of Proserpine'. Centuries later, in his essay on the poem, Pater was to write of Proserpine's unfinished embroidery, that it was a 'pictorial representation' of the myth itself (1928:114).

The introduction of Proserpine's embroidery into the narrative (it is not mentioned in Homer), endows the goddess with a material artifice, and calls to mind the Philomela myth in which she communicates her own rape through needle and thread after her tongue has been cut out. (Circe, the subject of the painting Wyant has come to see, is depicted by Homer as working at a loom in *The Odyssey*.) Implicit in the sewn text is the notion that if the written word is a man's language, the needle and thread is a woman's. As a writer who denied resolution in her stories, Wharton would have been attracted by the notion that Proserpine's/Persephone's text remains unfinished, and must be completed by the reader/onlooker. Furthermore, the paradoxical nature of the text itself – made by a woman, and therefore a testament to her agency, whilst also serving as evidence of her role as a victim, is typical of Wharton's sympathetic but often damning presentation of the situations in which she places her fictional women.

Unlike her namesake, Sybilla is no oracle, and is almost mute in her father's presence. Next to Dr Lombard she either parrots a prepared speech about the painting or recites a verse from Dante's *Paradise*; in both cases the words are not her own. However, when her father is called away she finally speaks for herself and begs Wyant to return. She explains that she would use the distraction of his next visit to lock her father in the inner room and run away from the house. As the painting was bought with her legacy, she has the right to sell it against her father's will, and thus obtain a dowry, which would allow her to marry her sweetheart and

leave the House of the Dead Hand. Wyant refuses to help, explaining stiffly that it would be socially unacceptable, given that he is Dr Lombard's guest.

Little critical attention has been given to Sybilla's mother in this drama, other than as a device to illustrate her husband's cruelty, and as the object of the narrator's derision. She a comic stereotype of an Englishwoman abroad, who is 'so inconsciently and ineradicably English that even the silhouette of her cap seemed a protest against Continental laxities' (*CS1* 523). Carpenter sees Mrs Lombard's inability to appreciate her husband's sarcastic remarks about her character as poignant evidence of her victimization by her husband. She notes Lombard's deliberate choice to use a language he knows his wife will not understand, stating 'he invariably speaks to his wife in a language heavy with irony, and his wife invariably interprets him literally' (1992: 59). However, rather than sympathy, I believe there is an inherent aesthetic snobbery and therefore lack of compassion in Wharton's depiction of the woman. Mrs Lombard's particular fondness for Frith's 'Railway Station', one of the most popular, commercialised pictures of the late nineteenth century which had dramatically fallen out of fashion when Wharton wrote this story, firmly places her in the sphere of the unsophisticated masses.[33] This social categorization is doubly pronounced when one considers that 'The House of the Dead Hand' was published in *Atlantic Monthly*, one of the top magazines of the Gilded Age, produced by editors who took on a 'responsibility of cultural custodianship bestowed by "cultivated' readers"' (Mott 1957: 2). Whereas the other characters in this story are frequently associated with the art of Renaissance masters, Mrs Lombard brings the common-place, mass-marketed, distinctly unfashionable into the narrative to illustrate the marginality of her character.

Mrs Lombard's central function in this story is in conjunction with her daughter, as indicated by the clear focus in the narrative on the similarity between the two. When first

[33] Barriers were frequently put around Frith's paintings when exhibited in order to hold back the crowds.

introduced to Sybilla, Wyant remarks that she is 'a slim replica of her mother' (*CS1* 523). He comments on her prodigiously long blonde hair, a frequently referenced characteristic of Demeter. (Homer's *Hymn to Demeter* begins with the line 'I begin to sing of rich-haired Demeter, ... of her and her trim-ankled daughter' (line 1); later, in *Demeter: A Mask*, Bridge refers to Demeter's rage in terms of her 'golden-rippling hair upon her shoulders shaken' (1999: 336).) When Sybilla recites Dante while Wyant admires the painting, it is in 'a full round voice like her mother's' (*CS1* 526). Both Frazer and Harrison stress the remarkable pictorial similarity between the two, Frazer writing that they are 'almost indistinguishable' (Carpentier 1998: 95). Indeed, in ancient Greece, Demeter and Persephone were considered a dual goddess and were worshipped as one (Goodman 1992: 147). The fusion between mother and daughter is furthered by the girl's name; in Roman mythology 'sibyl' was a generic term for a prophetess (Morford and Leonardon 2007: 246) who was often stationed in a cave from which she made her pronouncements, the most famous being the Cumean Sybil, who communicates with Aeneas before his descent into the Underworld (Virgil, Aeneid 6. 42-51). Demeter, too, was known as 'the goddesses of dark caves' (Pater 1895: 110).

Whereas both Frazer and Harrison stress the remarkable pictorial similarity between Demeter and Persephone, it is (Jane) *Harrison*, not Frazer who underlines her observation that the duality of the goddesses makes this an incestuous narrative. Hades is Demeter's brother, Persephone's uncle. Despite the family connection, Frazer's discussion of the marriage of Persephone and Hades aims to clear it from the 'reverend Christian scandal-mongers'' accusations of incest, citing that '[Hades'] lawful wife [is] Persephone and not his sister and mother-in-law Demeter', apparently forgetting that he had earlier written that 'the two persons of the godhead were one in substance' (Carpentier 1998: 74). The incest that Harrison rightly signals is a frequent motif of Wharton's Persephone fiction and has been

found in 'The House of the Dead Hand' by various critics, including White (199: 40) and Dyman (1996: 131).

Wharton's interest in incest as a literary theme, as demonstrated by its frequent recurrence in a significant number of her fictions, such as in *Summer* (1917), *The Children* (1928), and *The Mother's Recompense* (1925), and most notably the 'Beatrice Palmato' fragment, explains, in part, her attraction to the Persephone myth.[34] Beyond simply representing female sexual desire in the form of the pomegranate seed, the Persephone myth enabled Wharton to explore literary representations of incest without offending her readers or editors. Given that Wharton began selling her work during the Gilded Age of American magazine publication, her stories first appearing in the very staid context of the pages of *Scribner's*, *Harper's* and *Atlantic Monthly*, it is hardly surprising that her references to incest in her early work, such as 'The House of the Dead Hand' are presented figuratively, in this case in the form of the Persephone myth.

Persephone's kingdom of the dead is recreated in the atmosphere of stasis in 'The House of the Dead Hand'. As I have mentioned, when Wyant revisits the house years later the two women are in the same positions; Sybilla is still working on her embroidery 'which might have been the same [needlework] on which Wyant had first seen her engaged' (*CS1* 545). There is no change except that both had grown 'oddly old ... in a dry, smooth way, as fruits might shrivel on a shelf instead of ripening on a tree' (*CS1* 545) in the same way in which Ovid's sibyl dries up and grows older, but never dies, as recounted in *Metamorphoses* (Parke 1988: 247). Sybilla is older, but she has not matured or ripened, symbolised by the pomegranate bud woven into the carpet in the locked room that contains Lombard's Da

[34] The 'Beatrice Palmato' fragment was posthumously published in Lewis, R.W.B., (1975) *Edith Wharton: A Biography*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc. p.p. 544-548

Vinci.[35] A ripe pomegranate, bursting with seeds, not a bud, represents Persephone's knowledge gained in the Underworld. Unlike Persephone, Sybilla never becomes a wife.

Although Lombard died years ago, the two women remain in the house with the painting. White reads Sybilla's reason that even after his death, her father 'was always in the room with me ... I can't lock him out; I can never lock him out now' (*CS1* 547), as indicative of memories of incest that the young woman can never erase. White also comments on the sexual imagery of the locking and unlocking of doors, Sybilla's keys and the parting of the velvet curtains which cover the painting, noting the similarity in the plot with that of the 'Beatrice Palmato' fragment (1991: 40). In her reading of this story, Dyman notes the depiction of Lombard as a vampire in 'an emphasis on male power and ... sexual ... imagery' (1996: 131) (as does Carpenter (1992: 64), a trope Wharton uses in a later Persephone story, 'Mr Jones' (1928).

Although Sybilla is presented as her father's victim in this story, her refusal to comply with her mother's clearly voiced desire to sell up and return to England suggests Sybilla is partly responsible for her situation. To all intents and purposes Sybilla is now free to leave, yet refuses to do so, and even defies her mother by her inaction. The extent of Sybilla's complicity is further blurred by the presence of an unreliable reflector in the shape of Wyant. The bumbling, insensitive tourist manages to mislay his letter of introduction in the opening of the story, to be used unwittingly as a go between by Sybilla and her sweetheart and to misread the title of the painting, when he understands 'Lux Mundi' as 'Luxuries of the world' (the correct reading is 'Light of the world') (*CS1* 528). Orlando also notes his sexually charged misreading of Sodoma's decidedly pious painting of Saint Catherine receiving stigmata, concluding that his attraction 'seems more salacious than spiritual' (2007: 134) (Fig 5).

[35] Lombard's command that visitors stand on the pomegranate bud before the curtains shrouding the painting are opened echoes the Duke's treatment of his deceased wife's portrait in Browning's 'My Last Duchess'.

Fig 5: ‘Scenes from the Life of Saint Catherine of Siena: The Swooning of the Saint’ by Giovanni Antonio Bazzi (called Il Sodoma) 1526

Wyant's refusal to affront Lombard's hospitality is presented negatively by the narrator, his lack of empathy compared to the Levite and the priest's excuses for not helping in the parable of the Good Samaritan, signalling a distinct narrative contempt for his inaction (*CS1* 543). Indeed he is later rebuked by Sybilla for not helping her that day, and even the marble hand above the door 'reach[es] out like the cry of an imprisoned anguish' (*CS1* 543) as he leaves the house. The distancing between the narrator and Wyant echoes the distancing between the narrative voice and characters in Homer's *Hymn*. In both texts this sense of separation from the narrator highlights his or her potential unreliability. Wyant is notably Wharton's first male narrator, and 'The House of the Dead Hand' can be viewed as a turning point in Wharton's short story career in that it marks the beginning of what can be seen as a lifelong pattern of an unreliable male narrator relating someone else's story (as in 'The Pelican' (1898), 'The Triumph of the Night' (1914),'Miss Mary Pask' (1925), 'All Souls'' (1937)).

The marble woman's hand above the door of the Lombard's house which is the title of the story can be seen as serving various purposes. The most obvious is a descriptive one; this is a traditional feature of Renaissance architecture and can still be seen in many ancient European towns and cities nowadays, as well as in what were wealthy colonial cities in the New World. Unlike much modernist writing, Wharton locates her narratives firmly in a particular place and time, and both spatial and temporal context contribute fundamentally to meaning in her narratives.[36] This type of realism, including elements such as architectural details, enabled her readers to visualise the context of her stories, perhaps even remembering places they themselves had visited.

[36] Wharton's realist narration and detailed contextualization aligns her work with what Bell regards as the nineteenth-century traditional interest in the historical, remarking that so many novelists of this era 'wrote at least one historical novel in the sense of the sub-genre created by Walter Scott' (1997: 300), and, indeed Wharton's first novel, *The Valley of Decision* (1902), was a historical one.

A second significance of the marble hand is its symbolic function. Notably female, the hand can be read as belonging to either of the female inhabitants. Donovan reads it as 'that of the mother, now moribund, whose effect in challenging the moral inequities of the public world is negligible' (1989: 57), yet the same may be said of the daughter Sybilla, who is dead, trapped in the Underworld realm of Dr Lombard. I believe the typical slimness of this type of ornamental hand suggests it belongs to the younger woman, highlighted by the fact that Mrs Lombard's own hands are described as 'swollen' (*CS1* 545). Wharton describes Lombard's da Vinci as a painting of a young woman, similar to Dossi's Circe, sitting with a lifeless hand 'dropped on the arm of her chair' (*CS1* 527), which Orlando reads as a reference to both Sybilla and the dead hand above the door. By linking the symbolic hand, and the title of the story to the daughter, rather than the mother, Wharton further dismisses her Demeter by denying her any complex symbolism in the narrative.

A third, more literal and particularly apt association is with that of the notion of the oppressive influence of the past over the present, derived from the legal term 'mortmain' or dead hand, in which property remains in the control of a deceased person, in the form of 'the posthumous control exercised by the testator of the uses to which the property is to be applied' (OED 2nd edition). (The term was first used in 1450). Longfellow writes in his poem 'Haunted Houses' (1858):

> We have no title-deeds to house or lands;
>
> Owners and occupants of earlier dates
>
> From graves forgotten stretch their dusty hands,
>
> And hold in mortmain still their old estates. [37]

The control from the grave is that of Dr Lombard, but the hand that now stops the painting from being sold is a female one, that of Sybilla. Wharton presents the past as a

[37] The complete poem is given in Appendix 1.

negative, oppressive influence, quite distinct from the nineteenth century's 'idealized evocation of Demeter and Persephone' (Bloomberg 2001:55), the distinction being that the women, in this case the Persephone figure, are both the victims and perpetrators of the crime of their own captivity.

The next significant reference to the Persephone myth in Wharton's short fiction is two years later in her story 'The Touchstone' 1900. This is the story of the posthumous publication of Margaret Aubyn's letters, a writer whose works include a novel entitled *Pomegranate Seed.* Wharton continues the theme of a woman's letters, present in 'The House of the Dead Hand' in the form of the letter Sybilla sends to her sweetheart via the oblivious Wyant and in both cases the romance itself does not develop as the women wished. Aubyn's love for Stephen Glennard is unrequited and here we have another example of a Persephone figure who is denied a conclusion or physical expression of her amorous desire.

Two months after the publication of 'The Touchstone' (1900), *Scribner's Magazine* ran another Wharton story which also dealt with the danger of letters falling into the wrong hands. 'Copy' (1900) is written in the form a dramatic dialogue between the novelist Mrs Dale and the poet Paul Ventor, about what should be done with the love letters they had sent each other during their affair twenty years earlier. Each refuses to return their cache and decide the only solution is to burn the letters. Mrs Dale's fame, which would make the letters of such public interest, was gained through a series of bestsellers, including the novel *Pomegranate Seed.* Wright makes the connection between this title and Wharton's short story of the same name, written in 1929, as evidence of a twenty –nine year gestation period (1998: 50). I argue, as does Lewis (1975: 495), that Persephone and the pomegranate is a constant theme in Wharton's work. The next time she uses it is only a year later, in her 1901 story 'The Angel at the Grave'.

1901 marks a turning point in Wharton's use of the Persephone myth in her short fiction, as it is the first time her Persephone figure is presented with a real choice. This is also the first time that the Underworld is presented as a temptation, rather than a prison. In 'The Angel at the Grave' (1901), Wharton's Persephone, Paulina, '[hangs] over the black gulf of temptation' for a moment, and then holds back (*CS1* 529). Eleven years later, in her poem 'Pomegranate Seed' (1912), Persephone is faced with the same decision but this time chooses the Underworld, even though her mother begs her to remain with her on the 'ample earth'(*PS* 290).[38]

Benstock suggests that the short story 'The Angel at the Grave' (1901) is based upon the experience of Wharton's lifelong friend Sara Norton, who devoted her life to editing her father's manuscripts and letters, and who never left the family home, despite receiving a marriage proposal as a young woman (1994: 112). Orlando wonders if the narrative was inspired by the example of Mary Berenson, whose notes formed the basis of Bernard Berenson's book, *Venetian Painters* (1894), which established his reputation as a leading authority on Italian painting (2007: 151). The narrative also echoes the fate of Milton's daughters, a favourite theme of George Eliot, a novelist closely read by Wharton (Nardo 2003). Enlisted as readers for the blind poet and scholar, Milton's daughters were denied their own personal development in the same way Paulina Anson gives up her own life to venerate her grandfather's. This story concerning women and writing focuses on the choices that are inevitably made and the turning point of the narrative is when Paulina decides not to accept the marriage proposal. This is the point when Wharton asks 'Did Persephone, snatched from the warm fields of Enna, peer half consentingly down the abyss that opened at her feet?' (*CS1* 259), leaving the reader to decide the answer. Here Wharton equates the Underworld with the sexual maturity associated with marriage.

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[38] Wharton, Edith (1912) 'Pomegranate Seed' (poem) *Scribner's Magazine* 51 (March 15) pp 284-91 All page references which appear hereafter in the text are to this edition.

The oppressive nature of her grandfather's legacy is depicted through the shrine-like presentation of his house as a 'cold, clean ... family temple', and Paulina's sibylline role as 'interpreter of the oracle' (*CS1* 257). But when describing Pauline's choice not to marry, and therefore not to leave the family home, Wharton writes 'She would have found it easy to cope with a deliberate disregard of her grandfather's rights' (*CS1* 259), implying Paulina chooses the more difficult path, and suggesting a certain authorial respect for this decision.

Having rejected her suitor, Paulina throws herself into writing the 'Life' of her grandfather, Orestes Anson. By the time she has finished Paulina realises 'it was not so much her grandfather's life as her own she had written' (*CS1* 260). White makes the flawed argument that it is from the moment that her manuscript is rejected by the publishers that the Anson house becomes a tomb (1991: 55). Wharton writes that after this rejection 'the house did not immediately dominate her' (*CS1* 257), but rather 'After [giving up her suitor] the house possessed her' (*CS1* 259). Her prison is sealed by her sacrifice, not her publisher's refusal.

Unsurprisingly 'The Angel at the Grave' contains no positive representations of mothering. Paulina's own 'unworthy' (*CS1* 257) mother had married a distant cousin, and had been excluded from the family's fame; Paulina's two aunts are unmarried and in rejecting a marriage proposal Paulina denies herself the possibility of motherhood. Her grandfather's name, Orestes, brings to mind his sister Electra, who was responsible for the murder of their mother, and also evokes Frederick Leighton's 1869 painting 'Electra at the Tomb of Agamemnon' (Fig 11), which would have been well known to her 1901 readers.[39] By referencing both Electra and Persephone in this story, Wharton underlines the denial of mother inherent in both myths, a theme often found in Wharton's fiction.[40]

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[39] Frederic, Lord Leighton was an important and influential Victorian artist. One of the most fashionable and significant painters of his time, he was made President of the Royal Academy in 1878.
[40] (And arguably in her autobiographical writing *A Backward Glance* and 'Life and I'.)

A second motherless goddess whom Wharton incorporates in her writing is Aphrodite. Bloomberg notes that while Demeter and Persephone were often depicted as powerful mother and sheltered daughter in late nineteenth-century American fiction, Aphrodite was the goddess of choice and used to represent the new woman emerging at the beginning of the next century (2001: 54-56). Citing Aphrodite as symbolic of a woman who struggles to forge an existence in the world of men, she convincingly reads Lily in *The House of Mirth* (1905) as a character closely aligned with the goddess. Significant in Wharton's choice of this mythical figure is that Aphrodite, born when Uranus was castrated by his son and his severed genitals thrown in the ocean, has no mother. Bloomberg writes that Aphrodite's rejection of a maternal parentage 'echoes the position of early-twentieth-century daughters who distanced themselves from their mother in order to move from one century into the next' (2001: 56). It is notable that the female classical figures Wharton chooses to incorporate in her fiction, in the form of Electra, Antigone (with her cursed parentage), Persephone and Aphrodite all present a challenge to sentimental visions of mothers and mothering, and present the writer with a means of challenging, even subverting conventional representations of the mother whilst remaining within the respectable literary environs of classical allusion.

The third and final part of 'The Angel at the Grave' is the happy ending Lewis finds quite unpersuasive (1975: 99) and Dyman pathetic (1996:138). This is the arrival of the young George Corby, searching for an important discovery of Anson's, written down in a forgotten pamphlet. It finally seems that Paulina's sacrifice was worthwhile. When she tells Corby of her lonely lifetime's work, however, his apparently comforting reply holds sinister echoes of Sybilla's lament. He tells her that even after Anson's death, her grandfather never left the house: 'You're not alone, my dear lady. He's here with you' (*CS1* 269). The two arrange to meet early the next morning to start their work on Anson's

Fig 6: 'Electra at the tomb of Agamemnon' by Frederick Lord Leighton 1869

documents with the aim of making his discovery public. As Corby leaves the house, Paulina, now in her forties, looks out of the window, looking 'as though youth had touched her on the lips'(*CS1* 270). Wharton's use of 'lips' rather than 'cheeks' gives a paradoxical quality to the final sentence, in that 'youth' suggests innocence, but 'lips' imply the potential of sexual maturation with Corby.

The ending of 'The Angel at the Grave' endows the story with a Whartonian multiplicity of meaning. White finds this 'turn of the wheel of fortune' uplifting, as Paulina is finally given a form of self-determination, and concludes that Paulina 'will be published – and she controls the House of Anson' (1991:55). Dyman, on the other hand, views Paulina's fate differently: she sees it as an 'enslave[ment] to a fruitless life of sacrifice ministering to the preservation of patriarchal authority and law' (1996: 137). Donovan notes that although Anson's work is rescued by Corby's arrival, it is the young man's writing, not Paulina's manuscript, that will be published, stating she 'has served as a vehicle for the transmission of a patriarchal tradition; her own work remains ... silent' (1989: 53). Wharton's ending is both uplifting and damning, and Paulina's fate is aptly paralleled with Persephone's, who is both damned and set free by her yearly return to the Underworld. In this story female caretaking inspires both pity and even a poignant bitterness in the reader at the very end, when the middle-aged Paulina's hopes are raised by the young Corby whose only interest is in her deceased grandfather.

Over the last twenty years, Wharton scholars have convincingly presented Persephone as representative of the woman writer in a patriarchal sphere (Donovan 1989, Waid 1991, Singley 1991, Young 1996, Wilson-Jordan 2007) and, indeed, each time her image is evoked in the six short stories I consider in this Chapter ('The House of the Dead Hand', 'The Touchstone', 'Copy', 'The Angel at the Grave', 'Mr Jones' and 'Pomegranate Seed') it is in association with a woman writing. Donovan suggests the figure of Persephone can be found

in other fictions by Wharton of women who write, citing 'Bunner Sisters' (1917) as an example, in which she reads Evelina as Persephone, who sends letters to Ann Eliza/Demeter during her 'captivity' in the form of her marriage to Mr Ramy (1989: 45). Many of Wharton's female characters write, from Undine in *The Custom of the Country* (1913), who writes in white ink, to Mrs Anerton who edits the poet Rendle's letters in 'The Muse's Tragedy' (1899). Wharton's persistent link between woman and text, be it a letter, an inscription or a tapestry is well suited to the Persephone myth after Claudian's fourth-century insertion of her unfinished embroidery. Perhaps more important than the writing or text, however, is who reads it and how it is read. Nobody will read Paulina's manuscript and Mrs Dale's love letters will lose their meaning if they become public property.

Wharton's changing representation of Persephone signalled in 1901 by her presentation of the underworld as an alluring place in 'The Angel at the Grave', is reinforced by her 1912 poem 'Pomegranate Seed'. Here Persephone is presented with the same choice as Paulina, and rejects her mother in order to return to the Underworld. Written in the form of a dramatic dialogue, when Demeter and Persephone are finally reunited, their speech is a fragmentary series of freestanding utterances, no longer dialogic, as the two women are now apparently unable to understand or respond to each other. Persephone's last words are 'I hear the voices of my dead'; Demeter's non sequitur (after a 'long silence'), is 'I hear the secret whisper of the wheat' (*PS* 291). The form of the poem evolves into one of 'very modernist fragmentation' (Louis 1991: 343), creating a multiplicity of meaning, which the reader is left to resolve.

Perhaps the most significant change in Wharton's rewriting of the Persephone myth here is her presentation of Demeter, whose supremacy over her daughter has been defeated. Persephone is now more knowledgeable than her mother, and Demeter declares, 'Stand off from me. Thou knowest more than I' (*PS* 291). Although the poem ends in Persephone's

rejection of her mother, Demeter has the last word, and Louis notes that Demeter's 'powerful and wide-ranging sympathies make her a more touching ... character than her ghostly, bitter daughter' (Louis 1999: 343). Whilst Goodman (1992) and Donovan (1999) read this as a poem about daughters who are '[lured] out of their mothers' gardens into the patriarchal symbolic' (1999: 49), the lack of monolithic vision in the text also enables it to be read as a mother's sacrifice, in which the concluding sibilant softness of Demeter's wheat whisper overrides Persephone's apparent authority. Wharton's rejection of the mother is imbued with a distinct sympathy for her.

In the poem Persephone speaks almost longingly of her 'dark' experiences in the Underworld, and her mother notes this, saying 'loving thy doom, more dark thou mak'st it seem' (*PS* 289). Acknowledged by Pater in his 1876 essay, the pomegranate is symbolic of sexual desire in that the ripe fruit denotes 'that other seed sown in the dark Underworld' (1895: 154). The incestuous connotations of such forbidden pleasure are used again in Wharton's writing of her own childhood and adolescent experiences in her father's library. In 'Life and I' (written in 1923), she remembers:

> But this increase of knowledge was as nought compared to the sensuous rapture produced by the sound and sight of words ... they sang to me so bewitchingly that they almost lured me from the wholesome noonday air of childhood into the strange supernatural region where the normal pleasures of my age seemed as insipid as the fruits of the earth to Persephone after she had eaten of the Pomegranate seed. (*LI* 10)

Wharton's decidedly sexual imagery in her depiction of the pleasure of reading in her father's private library has been much commented upon. Waid notes that 'insipid' not only means tasteless, but also a lack of sapience or wisdom, suggesting that the pomegranate seed represents forbidden knowledge (1991: 199-200). The allure of the father is further associated with a rejection of the mother by Singley and Sweeney's observation that much of the

reading Wharton did secretly in her father's library, was of books forbidden by her mother (1991:185).

Wharton's next Persephone story appears sixteen years after her poem 'Pomegranate Seed' was published, in the form of her short story 'Mr Jones' (1928). The three Demeter figures presented in this story illustrate the shifting nature of Wharton's depiction of both mothers and mothering, and the female role of caretaking. Her first, distinctly modern, Demeter figure is Lady Jane Lynke, a writer who bears a striking resemblance to Wharton herself (now in her sixties) (Wilson-Jordan 2007:64). On inheriting the country house of Bells, Lady Jane takes on her new role as owner and custodian with gusto, appearing to be someone who can overcome the oppressive legacy of the past, in a story which 'turns a new spin on the theme of women's relationship to an old vault-like house' (Orlando 2007: 162).

Lady Jane is placed in direct opposition to Wharton's second, more obvious, Demeter figure, the housekeeper Mrs Clemm, who receives her orders from the ghostly Mr Jones, a shadowy manservant 'between life and death' (*CS2* 506). Mrs Clemm has 'eyes like black seeds' and skin 'as wrinkled as a piece of old crackly' (*CS2* 503), recalling Wharton's earlier evocations of the Sybil in both 'The House of the Dead Hand' and 'The Angel at the Grave'. Wharton assigns her the sybilline role of acting as a medium through which Mr Jones can send his orders (Carpenter 1992: 73). The third Demeter figure is Lady Jane's own mother, a relic of Wharton's typically absent mother figures, who does not come to her daughter's aid for more than one afternoon, only to declare that her busy social schedule prevents her from visiting again until the next summer.

Bells is an English Hades, whose very shabbiness makes it seem full of 'people long dead' (*CS2* 502). The Persephone figure in this narrative is the Viscountess Juliana, the deaf and mute wife of the fifteenth Viscount, whose body is now lying alone in her husband's tomb, under the scant inscription 'also his wife', in small, cramped characters. This

remembrance of the late Juliana is in direct contrast to the wordy, elegiac 'tedious enumeration of [her husband's] honours, titles', underneath his magnificent bust 'with a fine arrogant head' (*CS2* 498-499). Ironically, the Viscount died of the plague in Aleppo, in some 'Syrian drain', and his body was never placed in this ornate sarcophagus.

Lady Jane unearths the facts around Juliana's life: her marriage was one of convenience; her dowry funded her husband's gambling and womanizing abroad, whilst she remained a prisoner at Bells, forbidden to communicate with anyone other than the servants. The Viscount's absence and the lack of offspring suggest the marriage was never consummated, unlike Persephone's. When Lady Jane finally locates Juliana's unsent letters to her husband, begging to be allowed contact with the outside world, Mrs Clemm is found murdered in her bedroom. Suspecting Mr Jones, Lady Jane demands to speak to him, only to be told he died years ago.

No pomegranate is mentioned in this story, but other clues indicate its connection with Persephone. One of the motifs that directly connect Mr Jones with the Underworld is that of a tapestry. There are three moments in the story when Lady Jane believes she may have seen Mr Jones. Each sighting is signalled by a movement, be it 'the slightest stir' (508), or a fancy that it stirred (513) or 'a faint tremor' (517) in the tapestry hanging directly behind his desk. Juliana's role as Persephone is also signalled by the winter setting of her portrait, the season of Demeter's loss. The 'bud' motif present in 'The House of the Dead Hand' is also used in 'Mr Jones', in the description of Lady Jane's forbears, 'the unchronicled lives of the great-aunts and great-grandmothers buried there so completely that they must hardly have known when they passed from their beds to their graves, 'piled up like dead leaves ... to preserve something forever budding underneath' ' (503), reminiscent of the cyclic nature of the seasons, the need for death to sustain new life, as envisioned by Frazer's and Harrison's account of the Eleusinian rites.

This cyclic vision that death predicates new life can be read into the death of Mrs Clemm. It seems that the old Demeter must be sacrificed for the new one to take control. The housekeeper's death, caused by Lady Jane in her challenge to Mr Jones' authority is the necessary price to be paid for the female solidarity between the new owner and her ancestor Juliana, the former insisting that the latter's story be heard.

The lack of voice Wharton associates with Persephone here and in 'The House of the Dead Hand' is a theme that permeates Wharton's writing, both in her fiction, as in Mrs Manstey's inability to voice her dying wish to have her window opened (' Mrs Manstey's View' (1891)), to her autobiographical confession of her 'long ache of pity for animals, and for all inarticulate beings' (*BG*4), and the experience she recounts of being at the death bed of someone who is unable to speak (*BG* 88).[41] Indeed, the countess Juliana in this story is deaf and mute. At the moment of separation from her mother, Persephone is voiceless; she calls out, but is not heard, in the same way that Juliana's letters are written, but never read by their intended recipient. Juliana's voice is finally heard, a century later by another woman who also writes. Whilst Waid finds the rediscovery of the silenced Juliana's words by a sympathetic reader a reassuring motif, she also recognises that in the end they only tell the story of her 'repression and unutterable loneliness' (1991: 192), highlighting the paradoxical nature of the female voice in this story. Furthermore, the price of gaining a voice is paid by another female sacrifice in the form of Mrs Clemm – whose death, significantly by strangulation, implies lack of breath and therefore voice (Waid 1991: 190).

Notable in Wharton's representations of Demeter in this story is the fact that only one has offspring. Furthermore, her portrayal of this figure is not romanticised or a straightforward celebration of female caretaking: the two elder Demeters are either absent or

[41] Wharton writes 'Twice in my life I have been at the death –bed of someone I dearly loved, who has vainly tried to say a last word to me; and I doubt if life holds a more subtler anguish' (*BG* 88).

oppressive, and the third, Lady Jane, whilst painted sympathetically, appears to be responsible for the death of another woman.[42] Such appropriation of this mythical figure breaks not only with the traditional presentations of Demeter at the turn of the century (which I discussed earlier), but also is quite distinct from the modernist vision of the goddess in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse.* Woolf, who personally knew both Jane Harrison and Gilbert Murray, develops Demeter's role as goddess of fertility in her creation of Mrs Ramsay. Barr notes how this character (with her eight children) is frequently depicted with fruit, in the same way Frazer pens epithets associated with fruit for Demeter, such as 'She of the Green Fruits', 'Heavy with Summer fruits' and 'Fruit-bearer' (1993: 133). Barr refers in particular to the dinner scene, in which the fruit on the table is described in detail. Woolf writes:

> And in the middle a yellow and purple dish of fruit. What had she done with it, Mrs Ramsay wondered, for Rose's arrangement of the grapes and pears, of the horny pink-lined shells, of the bananas, made her think of a trophy fetched from the bottom of the sea, of Neptune's banquet, of the bunch that hangs with vine leaves over the shoulders of Bacchus (*TL* 146).

The grapes, an emblem of a Greek harvest scene, are clearly identified as belonging to Mrs Ramsay, who had been keeping guard over them before the meal (Barr 1993: 134).

Modernist appropriations of Demeter often focus on her positive qualities as mother. Forster, whose interest in the classics culminated in 'a private cult' of Demeter (Furbank 1977: 103), wrote an essay about the Cnidian Demeter in the *Independent Review*, describing her as a benevolent mother goddess who had transcended sex (Rainey 1993: 293). Vickery finds a Demeter figure in Lawrence's short story 'The Prussian Officer', in which 'the woman, the golden wheat, and the green corn coalesce into an image reminiscent of Frazer's

[42] Wilson Jordan comments on the sacrifice of Mrs Clemm in the pursuit of knowledge by noting the reference to her head as ' a red apple on a white plate' which invokes images of 'Eve, the woman beguiled by evil, as well as John the Baptist, a victim of the legendary practice of killing the messenger' (2007: 76).

Corn Goddess' (1973: 318). Indeed the green associated with Demeter is also found by Barr in *To the Lighthouse* in the form of Mrs Ramsay's green shawl.

Fertility and association with fruit is not present in Wharton's Demeter figures; Mrs Clemm is first presented with a heavy watch-chain, a 'pursed-up mouth' (*CS2* 503), and a 'clink of keys' (*CS2* 506), and Mrs Lombard, also with a watch-chain upon her bosom (*CS1* 523), firmly ensconced in her wheelchair, bears the epithet 'dull' (539), rather than 'fruitful'. Although Woolf's Demeter is distinct to that of her Victorian predecessors in terms of her much commented upon ambivalence towards the mother in *To the Lighthouse* (Carpentier 1998:184, Barr 1993: 126), Wharton's early Demeter figures have no positive 'mothering' features whatsoever. Paulina's 'unworthy' mother is notably absent (*CS1* 256), Lady Jane's mother provides no comfort, and Mrs Lombard is a figure of fun. Perhaps the first instance of some female solidarity can be found in Lady Jane's unearthing of Juliana's voice, but this is only via the death of another woman, in this case Mrs Clemm, a second Demeter figure who represents the old order. In her study 'Images of Persephone', Hayes writes that the myth symbolizes the experience of women under patriarchy, and concludes that it 'highlight[s] the women's valuing of relationship, of unity' (1994: 31). This is simply not the case in Wharton's early Persephone stories, and such unity bears a heavy price in 'Mr Jones'.

In both 'The House of the Dead Hand' and 'Mr Jones', the Underworld is ruled by a dead father figure, signalled in the latter story by Wharton's decision to give Juliana's jailor her father's name. Although this Underworld is not the inviting one presented in Homer's *Hymn to Demeter*, there is an undertone of a forbidden sexuality in the two stories. White reads Mr Jones as a figure of incest. Noting the story was originally called 'The Parasite' she concludes:

One does not need to be an analyst to wonder about these daughters with guilty secrets being preyed upon by parasitic fathers who can never be locked out. (1991: 40)

Orlando notes that the manservant shares the same name as that of the painter Burne Jones, whose wife complained bitterly of her mistreatment by him (2007: 164-5), suggesting that the name choice may not refer to incest, but an instance of female oppression. It is notable that, despite the multiple references to locks and keys that White astutely notes, there is none of the submerged physicality of desire in the description of the characters in 'The House of the Dead Hand'. Indeed, in direct contrast to her first Persephone story, 'Mr Jones' does not leave the reader with the pressing question of the nature of the relationship between the young woman and her jailer.[43]

Whatever conclusions are to be drawn from Wharton's depiction of the Underworld in these two stories, it is clear than much lies beneath the shadowy, hidden surface, either locked away in a room, desk or tomb, or hidden by the blinkered vision of an often obtuse spectator. Wharton uses the Persephone figure in the Underworld 'to plumb contemporary depths (and shallows)' (Ammons 1980: 190), and her use of Greek myth here demonstrates what Peel recognises as the common desire of modernism and ghost stories to 'go beyond the familiar and material world' (2005: 22).[44] Von Hendy comments on the effect of the 'new matrix of affective theory in anthropology and psychology' (2001: 135) on modernist use of myth, and how writers of this era searched for 'buried connections between modern humanity and 'primitive' myth' (2001:136). He notes the modernist Frazerian misreading apparent in the belief in the universal, in the notion that myth communicates permanent truth, when the purpose of *The Golden Bough* was to unearth geographical and historical differences (135).

[43] In 'The House of the Dead Hand' Wharton directly asks her reader 'What were the relations between Miss Lombard and her father?' (*CS1*: 532).
[44] Peel notes that all Wharton's ghost stories deal with psychological subjects (2005: 109).

Wharton's representation of the Underworld and Persephone's relation to it certainly is open to psychoanalytical readings in terms of female complicity in their own entrapment, but as I argue later, Wharton is not so much writing about the subconscious as the individual's relationship with society, particularly the situations in which her women find themselves.

The Persephone story that has attracted the most critical attention to date is Wharton's last, 'Pomegranate Seed' (1931).[45] This story, which caused consternation even before it was published, (her publishers demanded the original narrative was more explicitly rewritten (Balestra 1996: 22)), contains a multiplicity of meaning that continues to keep critics in disagreement as to which character is the Persephone figure. After a lifetime's experience as a published writer, and transatlantic recognition of her literary achievement, Wharton had both the confidence and kudos to take more liberties with her readers. Genders are merged, information is withheld, and explanations are denied in this story riddled with blank spaces and contradiction.

At first glance 'Pomegranate Seed' appears to be a straightforward love triangle, charting the rivalry between the current and former wife of Kenneth Ashby, Charlotte and the deceased Elsie Ashby. Even before the first, faintly written letters arrive, Elsie's dominant presence still pervades in the Ashby house, from the interior design, to her children in the nursery, to the blank space where Elsie's portrait used to hang in the drawing room. Charlotte's confidence that theirs is a happy marriage is shaken by the arrival of a series of mysterious letters sent to her husband. These apparently hand-delivered missives (there is no stamp), are addressed in an androgynous handwriting, which is 'visibly feminine' but with 'masculine curves' (*CS2* 679). Desperate to know the identity of their sender, Charlotte spies on Kenneth opening, and kissing one of the letters, but when confronted he refuses to reveal

[45] Such critics include McDowell 1970, Smith 1980, Zilversmit 1987, Murray 1989, Donovan 1989, Singley and Sweeney 1991, Waid, 1991, Young 1996, Balestra 1996.

who the letter is from. Needing to take action of some sort Charlotte successfully persuades Kenneth to go away with her on a month's holiday à deux.

The ninth letter arrives the day before the couple is due to sail. When Kenneth does not return from work that evening Charlotte commits the transgressive act of opening the envelope and attempting to read the letter inside. At her side is Kenneth's mother, the third Mrs Ashby, who recognises Elsie's handwriting. This climatic act signals both Kenneth's death (Singley and Sweeney 1991: 188) and the sealing of a 'tacit bond' between Mrs Ashy senior and Charlotte (Zilversmit1987: 344). Singley and Sweeney argue that by opening the letter Charlotte becomes Persephone positioned in Demeter's realm, '[gaining] a mother, but [losing] a husband' (1991: 177). Their reading supports Young's vision of this being a story which begins with the female rivalry or 'repudiation of sisterhood' (Young 1996) between Elsie and Charlotte and ends in a clear solidarity between the two living Mrs Ashbys.

In the same way that Homer's *Hymn*, in the form of Demeter's version of events, demands an imaginative response, Wharton's readers, and, often her characters, such as Lady Jane and Charlotte Ashby, must work as detectives to reach their own conclusions. Mrs Ashby senior does not say her deceased daughter-in law's name out loud, her eyes, rather, are drawn to the blank wall where Elsie's portrait used to hang and when Charlotte finally reads the enclosed letter, the sheet of paper is almost blank. Charlotte believes she can make out the words 'mine' and 'come' (*CS2* 706). As Singley and Sweeney note, these two words demand the reader constructs hypothetical sentences and the possibilities are endless, from a command to Kenneth, to Elsie's victorious message to Charlotte (1991: 189). The narrative permits either interpretation, as it does various readings of who is the Persephone figure in this story.

McDowell (1970: 140) and Lewis (1977: xvi) read Kenneth as the Persephone figure who is called to the realm of the dead by his deceased wife. He is lured by the temptation of

Elsie into the Underworld. Rather than a symbol of male patriarchy, the kingdom of the dead appears to represent the dark, enticing realm of female sexuality presented in Wharton's 1912 poem of the same name. In Blum's words, the letters are 'sexually charged, tainted epistles from the other-world, redolent of forbidden things' (Singley and Sweeney 1991: 191). Young, by contrast, identifies Elsie as the Persephone figure here, her journey to the forbidden Underworld an allusion to her trespassing into the male realm of authorship (1996: 4).

I tend to agree with McDowell and Lewis; 'Pomegranate Seed' is a story in which gender roles are blurred, where Kenneth can be read in a female role, and Elsie, with her 'masculine handwriting' and dominant nature, has become the king of Hades. Charlotte is one of the two Demeter figures in the narrative. She is Wharton's negative vision of the controlling, staid, unsatisfactory (step) mother found in much of her early fiction and her distinct lack of fertility and sexual desire is typical of Wharton's early depictions of this figure. Charlotte's motivation for marrying Kenneth is very much connected to the New York townhouse which she would acquire, and the story opens with her smug remembrance of the 'innocent envy' (*CS2* 678) she had felt when she visited the first Mrs Ashby in a drawing room she would have liked for herself. Having been married for almost a year there is no suggestion that they will ever have children and Charlotte takes on the role of caretaker of Elsie's house, husband, son and daughter. Zilversmit suggests that Charlotte's frigid nature is the very cause of Kenneth's disappearance, concluding she has ' driven [her] husband away' into the arms of a more attractive woman (1987: 299).

The second, strikingly positive vision of Demeter is Kenneth's mother, the connection between the two indicated by their shared name, their shared role as caretaker of the children and, as Young observes, the contract between the two is sealed by the opening of the letter (1996: 9). Narrated from Charlotte's perspective, this story is deeply sympathetic to Mrs

Ashby, who constitutes a radical revising of Wharton's representation of Demeter. She is portrayed as a maternal, comforting presence, whose 'mere bodily presence [gives] reassurance to Charlotte' (*CS2* 701). When Kenneth does not return, Charlotte's instinct is to contact Mrs Ashby, whom she significantly calls 'mother'. At her mother-in-law's house she is given toast and sherry, evoking Demeter's role as goddess of the Wheat and her frequent depiction with symbols of fruitfulness such as grapes and as 'mother of the vine' (Pater 1928:87). This is significantly the first time Demeter is associated with any symbol of fertility; Wharton's previous depictions of the figure invariably carry the epithet 'dry'. Needed by Charlotte, Mrs Ashby is described with a distinct admiration. Wharton writes:

> The light of the lamp fell directly on her old face, and Charlotte reflected what depths of the unknown may lurk in the clearest and most candid lineaments. She had never seen her mother-in-law's features express any but simple and sound emotions – cordiality, amusement, a kindly sympathy; now and again a wholesome flash of anger. (*CS2* 707)

Elsie, on the other hand, rejected her. Kenneth's unreasonable objections to leaving the children with his mother, which he tells his new wife not to even try to understand (*CS2* 695), suggests that it is Elsie who wanted to keep them away from their grandmother. Although this is a story of loss, it is also one of victory. Mrs Ashby will now bring up the children with Charlotte. Her caretaking role as grandmother and mother-in-law is valued, and she symbolises the comfort and wisdom of the maternal. Whereas Charlotte is materialistic and naive, Elsie cold and domineering and Kenneth weak-willed, Mrs Ashby is the only character in this story who is presented in a wholly positive manner and one of the very few female figures Wharton spares her ironic detachment. It appears Wharton has finally forgiven Demeter and allowed her to be a mother again.

The female solidarity which Hayes (1994: 31) associates with the myth of Demeter and her daughter is present in Wharton's last two Persephone stories ('Mr Jones' and 'Pomegranate Seed'). Here, whilst acknowledging the loss and sacrifice inherent to the mother, Wharton finally becomes kinder to her and endows the goddess figure with greater narrative importance. Although the inherent sexuality in Demeter's role as goddess of fertility is not presented in Wharton's Persephone stories, her role as caretaker is radically revised by the writer over the thirty-three years in which she incorporates the myth into her fiction. The wheelchair-bound 'idiot' (*CS1* 537) Mrs Lombard evolves into the victorious, 'sound' (*CS2* 707) Mrs Ashby, who will be raising Persephone's children and will never experience the loneliness of female old age (the subject of Wharton's first and last story). No longer a figure of ridicule, rejection or pity, Wharton's Demeter is finally vindicated and her reinterpretation of this mythological figure mirrors the increasingly sympathetic portrayal of both older women and mothers in her later work, evident in fictions such as 'The Old Maid' (1924), 'Miss Mary Pask' (1925),'and *The Mother's Recompense* (1925).

Not only did Wharton's vision of Persephone and Demeter radically alter over her writing career, but also the publishing context of her appropriations of the myth changed dramatically. Whereas 'The House of the Dead Hand' was published in the 1904 August edition of the Gilded Age's *Atlantic Monthly,* 'The Touchstone' and 'The Angel at the Grave' also appearing within another prestigious periodical: *Scribner's Magazine*, 'Mr Jones', by contrast was first published in the 1928 April edition of *Ladies' Home Journal* and her 1931 story 'Pomegranate Seed' first met its public in the pages of the Progressive era's *Saturday Evening Post,* complete with accompanying illustrations. The importance of the influence of Wharton's changing readership on the development of her narrative style, particularly on her use of myth, cannot be ignored. Whereas her Gilded Age stories assumed an educated reader, who would recognise classical figures such as Circe, and Aesculapius (whose statue stands at

the entrance of Lombard's house) and know of the cult of Dionysus, when reading 'The House of the Dead Hand', such an extensive frame of mythical reference is not present in her later stories. Here Wharton's classical allusions are less wide ranging, the well known figures she uses are often those who appear in particularly fashionable paintings of the time, as noted by Honey in 'Women and Art in the Fiction of Edith Wharton' (1994).

One such classical figure is Andromeda, whom Wharton frequently appropriates in her depiction of Lily in *The House of Mirth* (1905). Wharton's references are explicit and evoke images such as Leighton's 1891 painting 'Perseus and Andromeda' (Fig 7). Wharton writes:

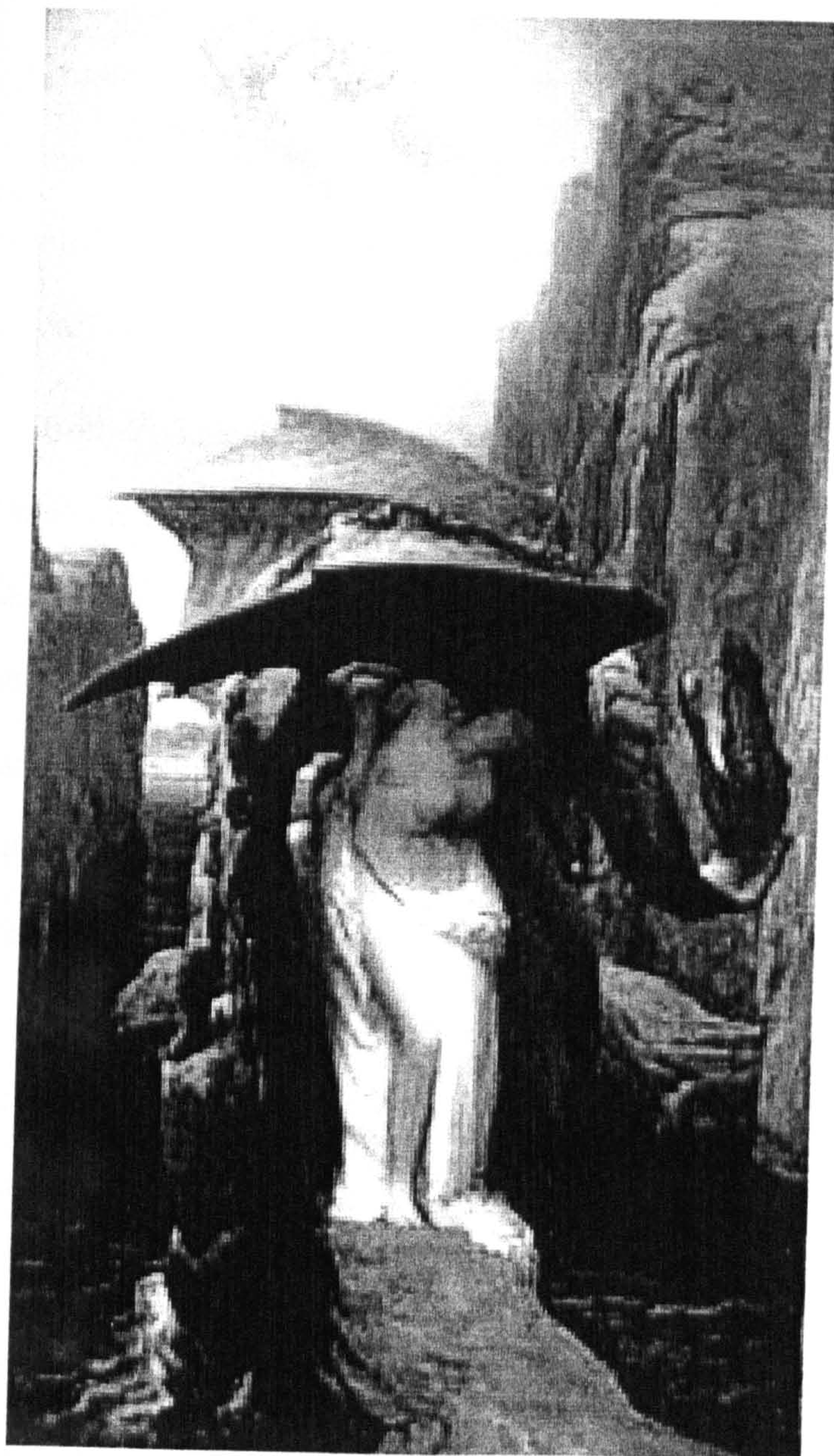
> He [Lawrence Selden] seemed to see her like a lovely rock-bound Andromeda, with the devouring monster Society careering [*sic*] up to make a mouthful of her; and himself whirling down on his winged horse – just Pegasus turned Rosinate for the nonce – to cut her bonds, snatch her up, and whirl her back into the blue ... (52)[46]

Unlike modernist authors, Wharton does not appropriate classical figures to make statements of universality; the conflicts she describes are those between the individual and society rather than the individual and self. The monster that threatens Andromeda is society, not her subconscious. Eliot's subscription to the notion that myth is 'produced by a permanent stratum of the human mind' (Von Hendy 2001: 146), is not a belief endorsed by Wharton in her use of myth.

Eliot's 'mythical method' is very much associated with structure. In his 1923 review of Joyce's *Ulysses* he outlines the way in which the new writers use myth to create order out of the chaos of modern existence. He writes:

[46] Rosinante is the name of Don Quixote's horse

Fig 7: 'Perseus and Andromeda' by Frederick Leighton 1891



> It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history....psychology ... ethnology, and *The Golden Bough* have concurred to make possible what was impossible even a few years ago. Instead of narrative method, we may now use the mythical method. It is, I seriously believe, a step toward making the modern world possible for art, toward that order and form Mr Aldington so earnestly desires. (1975: 177-8)

Both Von Hendy (2001:46) and Brooker (1994: 111) argue that Eliot's definition of a new 'mythical method', that is, a way of ordering, giving shape and significance appears to describe Eliot's own technique in *The Waste Land,* rather than Joyce's method in *Ulysses*. In his poem Eliot uses myth to give some significance to what he recognises to be the 'immense panorama of futility' of modern life. This nostalgic use of myth is remarkably similar to the nineteenth century appropriation of myth found in American literature, in which classical allusion 'provided a counterpoint to [the] stringent puritanical Christian ideologies [of the time]' (Bloomberg 2001: 22). The modernist recourse to myth is not simply a return to ancient narratives, but in many ways, a return to previous attitudes towards and visions of these ancient narratives.

In terms of composition, although Wharton does not write male centred 'epics' in the style of Pounds's *Cantos,* or Eliot's *The Waste Land,* she does often use mythical structure as means of creating subversive narratives. Lily is not rescued by her Perseus in the form of Lawrence Selden, Persephone decides she would rather not go to the Underworld in 'The Angel at the Grave' and Undine in *The Custom of the Country* is anything but the submissive nymph playing in the waves. Such 'alternative' versions of these myths rest upon a knowledge of the original, which create certain reader expectations, in order to subsequently challenge them. Unlike modernist authors, however she does not use the mythical as an

alternative to narrative, that is as an 'atemporal, alogical juxtaposition', which Brooker neatly sums up as a method that is not ' a means of holding on to narrative, but ... a means of avoiding it' (1996: 112). All her stories are firmly rooted in a temporal context; the one time this is not the case is her singularly unsuccessful 'The Valley of Childish Things, and Other Emblems' (1896), which is written in a timeless fable-style, never to be repeated in the course of her writing career.

Brooker describes Eliot's 'mythical method' in terms of a narrative technique other than simply an overall structure, and suggests it is a type of temporal juxtapositioning. Brooker writes that in order to be true to its time, a work using such a method 'must consist of juxtaposed fragments – fragments of contemporary life, fragments of past life, fragments of myth' (1996: 120). Bloomberg's consideration of Eliot's mythical method centres on reader experience, and she notes how even a relatively oblique reference to myth can add further meaning or diegetic levels to a narrative. She writes:

> [Mythical method is used by writers who] bring a reference myth to their work, and keep it in the reader's mind throughout the narrative by use of parallel story structure or characters, title, or fragments of the myth within the text in the form of literary trope, symbolism or metaphor. (2001: 11)

This second description of modernist use of myth by Bloomberg is an accurate description of the way in which Wharton creates classical allusions in her short story 'The Lamp of Psyche' (1895). The title alludes to a myth that had become particularly fashionable in the nineteenth century, partly as a result of the attractiveness of its sensual nature to painters of the time, and Thomas Bulfinch's well-known account of the myth in his 1881 *Mythology* (Jones 1992:81). [47] This is the story of Psyche's decision to use her lamp to watch her lover as he slept, after his express order than she should never attempt learn his identity,

[47] See paintings by Bouguereau, Leighton, Burne Jones and David Figs 8-12

an identity which until this point had been hidden in the darkness of his night-time visits to her bed. In Wharton's short story, the truth that is illuminated is that Delia Corbett's husband refused to fight in the civil war as a young man. Symbolic of her shattered illusion is the antique miniature of a Union officer, which she drops when she calls her husband a coward (*CS1* 41). The crystal which shatters is replaced by a much cheaper piece of clear glass, and in the same way that the ignorance in which Psyche existed can never be regained, Delia's love for her husband 'had undergone a modification which the years were not to efface' (*CS1* 41). Whereas the subject of the painting reminds the reader, and Delia, of her husband's cowardly actions, the glass, which receives considerable focus in the story, alludes to the notion of clarity of vision, and its consequences. This complex allusion stems from one single mythological reference in the story – that of the title.

Eliot's 'Ulysses, Order and Myth' and 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' both serve to illustrate what Brooker regards as 'a defining feature of modernism, namely the tendency to move forward by spiralling back and refiguring the past' (1994: 1-2). Von Hendy cites modernist writing's recourse to myth as one of its best known characteristics (2001: 134), and Schneidau notes that Pound's choice of Odysseus for a figure in the *Cantos* is particularly significant in that the episode of his descent to the Underworld was the oldest part of Homer's work, and therefore the oldest part of the oldest work in western literature. The essential paradox of modernism is that its frequent recourse to myth shows that it was not an unprecedented break with the past, but was rather deeply responsive to the allure of an ancient literary heritage (Rainey 1993: 289).

Wharton displays many modernist tendencies in her use of myth, such as her interest in the hidden, murkier side of human interaction, and her deep respect for classical literary heritage, whilst making her appropriation of myth very much her own. Despite the similarities between Wharton's own 'mythical method' and that of Eliot, Lawrence and

Woolf, one notable difference is her extraordinary ability to combine comedy with darkness, to present an almost irreverent admiration for ancient narrative. Rather than simply providing a dark irony, Wharton's humorous use of myth presents what were many concerns of modernist writers in an inescapably entertaining manner. Her ironic reference to the summit of a 'local Parnassus' in 'The Pelican' (1898) (*CS1* 77) adds a seemingly playful veneer to her probing social commentary. In her longer fiction Wharton takes on an almost Olympian mercilessness in her comic appropriation of myth, as demonstrated by the moment Undine, the sensual water nymph of Ralph's dreams, explains she was named after the hair curling tonic upon which her father made his fortune. In *The House of Mirth*, Wharton appropriates a vision of Venus, in the very modern form of some ornament 'impaled and shown under glass' in her description of Mrs Hatch. Wharton writes:

> It was, however, only figuratively that the illumination of Mrs. Hatch's world could be described as dim: in actual fact, Lily found her seated in a blaze of electric light, impartially projected from various ornamental excrescences on a vast concavity of pink damask and gilding, from which she rose like Venus from her shell. The analogy was justified by the appearance of the lady, whose large-eyed prettiness had the fixity of something impaled and shown under glass. (*HM* 239)

Myth appealed to Wharton not simply for its literary heritage, but the relationship it allowed her to construct with her intended reader. Here was a common field of reference which she could safely assume was familiar to her readers. Always conscious of her readership, these ancient narratives enabled her to create shared ironies and write about unmentionable subjects such as incest and female sexuality within the well-respected environs of classical literary tradition. As her readership became an increasingly female one, in terms of the popular press in which she published her stories during the second half of her career, the chthonic deities in particular provided a means of writing about women's

experience, whilst often subverting the very ethos of the magazines in which they were published, with their presentations of inadequate mothering, empty marriages and Oedipal desire.

Whilst acknowledging that Wharton's use of myth bears many similarities to modernist use of classical narrative, her writing is distinct from that of Joyce and Eliot in its prevalence of female mythological figures. Furthermore, the nineteenth-century idealisation of the goddesses which can still be found in modernist writing of the twentieth century is certainly not present in Wharton's fiction, unless in an ironic mode. Wharton eschews romanticised visions of female sacrifice and suffering, so often associated with female mythological figures, for the darker, murkier sides of human interaction. Myth, so often at the foundation of modernist fiction, is undeniably a constant feature of the narratives Wharton produced over her forty-six year writing career. And whilst her allusions move from the dim, dirty, faded, ghostly surroundings of the 'House of the Dead Hand' (1904) to the decidedly fashionable surroundings of the Ashby home, with its telephone in 'Pomegranate Seed' (1931), her recourse to classical narrative never diminishes. However, it is Wharton's detached, often humorous use of myth to question the effect of society on the individual, rather than abstractedly charting conflicts of inner consciousness, and her lifelong use of realist poetics which, whilst displaying clearly modernist tendencies, makes her use of myth distinctly her own.

Chapter 3: Wharton, Ellipsis and Modernism

In her article 'Iconic Punctuation: Ellipsis marks in a historical perspective' Henry writes that it is possible to place a work within a specific historical period or literary genre solely by examining a writer's use of ellipsis points (2001: 136). She successfully supports this claim with a detailed outline of the evolution of this punctuation mark in relation to different literary eras, citing the philosophical and practical imperatives behind the various stages in its development. Arriving at the twentieth century, she concludes that the ellipsis is an icon of modernist writing, suggesting that its prevalence in this era, particularly to signal gaps, indefiniteness, fragmentation and absence is a manifestation of this new writing's direct attack on the normative values of the earlier Victorian period (2001:151-153). Considering the importance Wharton gave to punctuation, both in terms of the meticulous checking of the galleys of her work, which she insisted on doing personally, and the various instances in which punctuation itself is the subject of her writing, her own crafted use of ellipsis points certainly merits investigation, and perhaps presents scholars with a means by which to assess Wharton's poetics in relation to the contrasting literary eras in which she wrote.[48] In this chapter I investigate the various ways in which Wharton uses ellipsis points, and consider how they frequently align her work with modernist writing in terms of the often disunifying effect of this punctuation mark and the demands it can place on the reader. I explore what can be learnt of Wharton's often contradictory relationship with her reader through her use of ellipsis points, and suggest that she creates a pseudo-intimacy via a device

[48] Levy notes her concerns around the typography of her published texts from the spaces between ellipsis points to her regular requests for changes in covers and jacket blurbs (1993: 60). Wegner notes that 'Writing a War Story' (1919) makes 'diabolical fun [of the] posturings and eccentricities of modernism', quoting the advice Miss Spang is given on improving her poems: 'that they would 'gain incommensurably in meaning' when she abandoned the superannuated habit of beginning each line with a capital letter'' (*CS2* 247). Wharton was later to comment that dropping out capital letters and punctuation 'is only a symptom of poverty of imagination' (Carroll 1936:6).

that paradoxically imbues her stories with an orality of tone, whilst often essentially being a gesture of evasion.

Frequently creating stories centred around absence, such as 'A Bottle of Perrier' (1932) and 'Pomegranate Seed' (1931), and regularly presenting her readers with gaps to fill in, it is hardly surprising that a single Wharton story can contain as many as seventy-three sets of ellipsis points.[49] Yet whilst the architecture of Wharton's short stories in particular has undergone detailed studies in its own right (Vita-Finzi (1990), White (1991), Fracasso (1994), Beer (1997), Ware (2004) and Sterling (2007)), the only developed study of Wharton's use of punctuation is Blackall's 'Edith Wharton's Art of Ellipsis', published over twenty years ago in 1987. Although the modernist tendencies in Wharton's work have fuelled much recent scholarship (Bauer 1994, Singley 1995, Waid and Colquitt 2005, Kim 2006, Peel 2005, Beer and Horner 2009), the widely acknowledged association between modernist writing and a prevalent use of ellipsis points has not, to my knowledge, prompted to date a study of her use of this punctuation mark with the purpose of clarifying the extent of her modernist poetics.

Ellipsis points are frequently referenced in discussions of modernist fiction; in her chapter on the modernist short story, Hanson notes the way in which Joyce uses ellipsis in 'The Sisters' to place the reader in the same position as the character-observers, writing 'like them we only half comprehend, are compelled to guess and piece together the man's story from the odd images and half finished phrases' (1985: 60). In his study of Mansfield's fiction, McRae acknowledges her use of this device to create a 'musical punctuation' in her stories (2000: viii). In *Influencing America's Tastes* Thompson writes of Joyce's use of ellipses in 'Eveline' to heighten the hesitation and indecision of the narrative (2002: 92), and in *Modernist Fiction* (1992) Stevenson aligns the use of ellipsis with Free Indirect Style,

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2. 'The Day of the Funeral' published in *Woman's Home Companion* as 'In a Day' in February and March 1933 contains 73 sets of ellipsis points.

citing Dorothy Richardson's use of this punctuation mark in the development of a 'new subjective method' (1992: 37). Contemporary critics also acknowledged the marked use of this punctuation device in the new wave of modern writing, Elizabeth Drew wrote in 1926 that:

> The twentieth century novel, indeed, might also be identified with the device of punctuation so liberally employed by its creators, and called the Novel of the Three Dots. (Stevenson 1992: 37).

Dorothy Richardson chooses to write about Wells' use of ellipsis in her essay 'About Punctuation', decrying the way in which his 'experiments' in usage have been 'dragged into the market-place and lynched' (1990: 415), and Ford famously remarked that the 1901 novel he wrote in collaboration with Conrad, *The Inheritors*, was received by the English critics with 'a paean of abuse for the number of dots it contained' (1924: 279). He writes:

> One ingenious gentleman even suggested that we had cheated Mr Heinemann and the public who has paid for a full six-shilling novel with all the words solid on the page (1924: 149).

In terms of the ellipsis points in particular, to my knowledge there have only been four developed studies of its usage in English texts in the last century (Summey (1919), Thorndike (1948), Blackall (1987), Henry (2000, 2001)), and of these four, two discuss Wharton's writing. As early as 1948 Thorndike singled out Wharton for displaying the modern 'veritable mania' for the punctuation mark, ascribing its excessive usage to a 'fondness for novelty' (1948: 223,225). In his article 'The Psychology of Punctuation', Thorndike appears to echo the reaction of Ford's early critics, equating the rising use of ellipsis among modern writers with a lowering of literary standards. In his article he contents himself with the belief that what these modern, populist writers do makes little difference to the higher 'class' of writer, who 'tolerated' middlebrow deviations like these 'because the

consequences to them are so slight' (1949: 226). Although writing sixty years apart, Thorndike and Henry use the same hypothesis that the use of a punctuation mark alone can align a writer with a particular genre or era. By simply focusing on use of ellipsis Thorndike swiftly shifts Wharton out of the frame of the grande dame of nineteenth-century American literature, through which her work had been extensively marketed in the last few decades of her career, into the sphere of the new, modern writers, aligning her with younger contemporaries, such as Wells. He also insightfully notes that Wharton's usage not only demonstrates her own predilection for this punctuation mark, and modern style of writing, but in addition indicates something of her intended readership.

In terms of Wharton's pattern of use of ellipsis over her forty-six year writing career, her first short story, 'Mrs Manstey's View' (1893) contains none whatsoever, but from 1912 onwards her narratives usually have at least twenty, often over thirty. Her use of ellipsis continued to rise over the next decade and from 1925 onwards it was not uncommon for her to use over forty ellipses in a story. In terms of her readership, at the beginning of her career Wharton wrote almost exclusively for the top four 'quality magazines', *Scribner's, Century, Harper's* and the *Atlantic*, which catered for a cultivated body of readers (Mott 1938:717). In the last twenty years (1919 onwards), however, she sold her stories exclusively to the popular magazines, the one exception being 'Her Son', published in *Scribner's Magazine* in 1932. Various critics have equated this shift to a wider reading public with a lowering of literary standards (Balestra 1996:22); Nevius acidly wrote in 1953 that this move 'encouraged certain weaknesses in her writing that she had once managed to control' (1953: 244). Whilst Wharton's increased use of ellipsis reflects the literary trends of the time, it also perhaps, as Thorndike suggests, is symptomatic of her change of intended readership, although I strongly contend that this resulted in a lowering of literary standards. As her readership widened the

multilayered, ambiguous, polyphonic nature of her texts increased, an effect often either achieved through, or at least supplemented by, her crafted use of ellipsis.

To credit Wharton's increasing use of ellipsis over the span of her writing career as simply a reflection of literary trends is an oversimplification that belies the innovative, sometimes subversive ways in which she uses this device. As I discuss in 'Breaking the Frame: How Edith Wharton's short stories subvert their magazine context' (2008), her work rarely fitted neatly into the magazine context in which it was published. While Wharton was liberally dosing her stories with ellipses towards the end of the first half of her career, the Scribner's pages in which her work was published rarely contained any other incidences of this punctuation mark whatsoever. This is the case in 'The Bolted Door' (*Scribner's* March 1909) and 'The Eyes' (*Scribner's* June 1910) which contain fifty and twenty ellipses respectively whilst there is not one in any of the other seventeen accompanying texts. Rather than following a trend, Wharton's use of this punctuation mark at this point in her career situates her at the vanguard of her time; four years later the ellipsis is filtering into the other texts in the 1914 August edition of the same magazine. Here, Wharton's story 'The Triumph of the Night' contains thirty-eight ellipses and this time there are three other texts in the magazine which contain this device, although none on Wharton's scale.[50]

As regards the later publishing context of the popular magazines which carried her stories, Wharton's use of ellipsis does not stand out to the extent it did in the Gilded Age magazine's pages. Here Wharton's ellipses echo those on the same pages in advertisements for cruises to Europe, wool blankets, talcum powder and candy, albeit to a more subtle purpose.[51] A feature that had initially distinguished Wharton from her contemporary

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50 These three texts are Rudyard Kipling's 'The Vortex' (1 ellipsis), Helen Stirling Winslow 'The Wonder Worker' (3 ellipses), Katherine Fullerton Gerould's 'The Straight Tip' (14 ellipses).

51 These examples of Wharton's use of ellipsis points compared with the number used in the advertisements published on the same pages as the stories, are taken from 'Bewitched' (51 ellipses) *Pictorial Review* March 1925 p. 63, 'Miss Mary Pask' (48 ellipses) *Pictorial Review* April 1925 p.76, 'Diagnosis' (46 ellipses) *Ladies'*

Fig 8: *Pictorial Review* March 1925 p. 63.

Doctors say

—that people would be a great deal healthier at this season if they managed to eat some kind of greens every day.

One of the easiest, most economical ways to do this is to serve DEL MONTE Spinach.

Rich in iron! Rich in all those tonic salts so important in keeping the whole family active and fit.

Good, too—a treat to add to any meal.

But above all, convenient! DEL MONTE Spinach is free from all grit—ready to serve right from the can.

Why not have it often? You'll find it always welcome —if you insist on this dependable brand.

California Packing Corporation
San Francisco, California

DEL MONTE SPINACH

Bewitched

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 62

favorite. But Ora never married. She was away three years, during which Venny ran wild on the slopes of Lonetop; and when Ora came back it was only to sicken and die—poor girl! Since then Brand had grown more savage and morose. He was a hard-working farmer, dogged and unyielding; but there wasn't much to be got out of those barren Bearcliff acres. He was said to have taken to drink since his wife's death; now and then men ran across him in the "dives" of Stotesbury. But not often. And between times he labored hard on his stony acres and did his poor best for his daughters.

In the neglected graveyard of Cold Corners there was a slanting headstone marked with his wife's name; near it, a year since, he had laid his eldest daughter. And sometimes at nightfall, in the Autumn, the village people saw him walk slowly by, turn in between the graves, and stand looking down on the two stones. But he never brought a flower there, or planted a bush; nor Venny either. She was too wild and ignorant.

Mrs. Rutledge repeated "That's in Exodus."

THE three visitors remained silent, turning about their caps in reluctant hands. Rutledge faced them, still with that empty, pellucid gaze which frightened Bosworth. What was he seeing?

"Ain't any of you folks got the grit— ?" his wife burst out again, half hysterically.

Deacon Hibben held up his hand. "That's no way, Mrs. Rutledge. This ain't a question of having grit. What we want first of all is proof——"

"That's so," said Bosworth, with an explosion of relief, as if the sober words had lifted something black and crouching from his breast. Involuntarily the eyes of both men had turned to Brand. He stood there, smiling grimly, but did not speak.

"Ain't it so, Brand?" the Deacon prompted him.

"Proof that spooks walk?" the other sneered.

"Well—I presume you want this business settled too?"

The old farmer squared his shoulders. "Yes—I do. But I ain't a sperritualist. How the —— is nonsense of this kind settled?"

Deacon Hibben hesitated; then he said in a low, incisive tone: "I don't see but one way—Mrs. Rutledge's."

There was a silence. "What?" Brand said suddenly. "You mean spying?"

The Deacon's voice sank lower. "If the poor girl *does* walk—wouldn't you be the first to want her laid quiet? We all know there've been such cases—dark visitations. God moves in a mysterious way. Can any of us here deny it?"

"I seen 'em," Mrs. Rutledge interjected.

There was another heavy pause. Suddenly Brand fixed his gaze on Rutledge. "You've got to clear up this——calumny, or I'll know why. You say my dead girl comes to you." He labored with his breath, and then jerked out: "When? You tell me that, and I'll be there."

Rutledge's head drooped a little, and his eyes wandered to the window. "Round about sunset, mostly."

"You know beforehand?"

Rutledge made a sign of assent.

"Well, then—to-morrow, will it be?"

Rutledge made the same sign.

Brand turned to the door. "I'll be there." That was all he said. He strode out between them without another glance or word. Deacon Hibben looked at Mrs. Rutledge. "We'll be there too," he said, as if she had asked him; but she had not spoken, and Bosworth saw that her thin body was trembling all over. He was glad when he and Hibben were out again in the snow.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 64

"Laura—*don't you just love this new way of serving candy?"*

"Oh," cried Laura, surprised, "it's Oh Henry! isn't it? *Sliced!* Well, I wonder who ever thought of that!"

Oh Henry! was no stranger to Laura. Many a time, motoring, golfing, at the seashore, she had eaten this famous candy . . . but she had just never thought of *slicing* it at home.

Other women had, though . . . women in Chicago. Two years ago, we found them slicing and serving Oh Henry! as a home candy, and at teas, bridge and Mah-Jongg games and other informal affairs. And now, in many, many homes, you will find *sliced* Oh Henry! as often as chocolates.

And what *delicious* candy it is! Imagine a rich, butter cream, dipped in a creamy, chewy caramel, rolled in crispy, crunchy nutmeats, and then thickly coated with the mellowest milk chocolate. Sounds *good*, doesn't it? Well, that's Oh Henry! . . . a new taste in candy!

No $1.25 chocolates are finer in quality than Oh Henry! or made with more infinite care. The difference is that Oh Henry! is a *fine* candy, made in a bar for the convenience of the millions of people who want just a taste of *good* candy at a time.

Telephone your grocery, drug or candy store to deliver a few bars. Slice it and serve it at home. It is not expensive . . . a 10¢ bar cuts into 8 liberal slices. And everyone likes Oh Henry!

Oh Henry!
SLICED

Write for a clever, little booklet, in colors, on serving Oh Henry! sliced. Williamson Candy Co., Chicago, Ill.

Home Journal October 1928 p. 159, 'Poor Old Vincent' (later published as 'Permanent Wave') (39 ellipses) *Red Book Magazine* April 1935 p. 117 and are reproduced in Figs. 8, 9, 10 and 11.

Fig 9: *Pictorial Review* April 1925 p.76.

No more trouble than a kitten

WHEN everything is right—food, sleep, skin—baby is no more trouble than a kitten. But neglect the Mennen Talcum showers for even a day and he will show the difference—so cross and chafed and fretful. No wonder baby loves Mennen's. Each downy fleck is like a little fairy sponge. Swiftly ...ever so gently... it absorbs all irritating *moisture*—all the perspiration, urine and bath-water which lodges in the chubby folds of baby's skin.

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P.S. For the most helpful book that ever guided a mother through the trials of baby care, mail the coupon below with only 25c.

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Name ....

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Miss Mary Pask

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 75

sha'n't! Or else, why did you come? It's cruel. I used to think I knew what loneliness was—after Grace married, you know. Grace thought she was always thinking of me, but she wasn't. She called me 'darling,' but she was thinking of her husband and children.

"I said to myself then: 'You couldn't be lonelier if you were dead.' But I know better now—there's been no loneliness like this last year's—none! And sometimes I sit here and think: 'If a man came along some day and took a fancy to you?'" She gave another wavering cackle. "Well, such things *have* happened, you know, even after youth's gone—a man who'd had his troubles too. But no one came till to-night—and now you say you're going!" Suddenly she flung herself toward me. "Oh, stay with me, stay with me—just to-night. It's so sweet and quiet here! No one need know—no one will ever come and trouble us."

I ought to have shut the window when the first gust came. I might have known there would soon be another, fiercer one. It came now, slamming back the loose-hinged lattice, filling the room with the noise of the sea and with wet swirls of fog, and dashing the other candle to the floor. The light went out, and I stood there—we stood there—lost to each other in the roaring, coiling darkness. My heart seemed to stop beating; I had to fetch up my breath with great heaves that covered me with sweat.

The door—the door—well, I knew I had been facing it when the candle went. Something white and wraith-like seemed to melt and crumple up before me in the night, and, avoiding the spot where it had sunk away, I stumbled around it in a wide circle, got the latch in my hand, caught my foot in a scarf or sleeve trailing loose and invisible, and freed myself with a jerk from this last obstacle. I had the door open now. As I got into the hall I heard a whimper from the blackness behind me; but I scrambled on to the door, dragged it open, and bolted out into the night. I slammed the door on that pitiful low whimper, and the fog and wind enveloped me in their healing arms.

WHEN I was well enough to trust myself to think about it all again I found that a very little thinking got my temperature up, and my heart hammering in my throat. No use—I simply couldn't stand it, for I'd seen Grace in crape, weeping over the cable, and yet I'd sat and talked with her sister on the same sofa—her sister who'd been dead a year!

The circle was a vicious one; I couldn't break through it. The fact that I was down with fever the next morning might have explained it; yet I couldn't get away from the clinging reality of the vision. Supposing it *was* a ghost I had been talking to, and not a mere projection of my fever? Supposing something survived of Mary Pask—enough to cry out to me the unuttered loneliness of a lifetime, to express at last what the living woman had always had to keep dumb and hidden? The thought moved me curiously—in my weakness I lay and wept over it. No end of women were like that, I supposed, and perhaps, after death, if they got their chance they tried to use it. Old tales and legends floated through my mind; the bride of Corinth, the mediæval vampire—but what names to attach to the plaintive image of Mary Pask!

My weak mind wandered in and out among these visions and conjectures, and the longer I lived with them the more convinced I became that something *which had been Mary Pask* had talked with me that night. I made up my mind, when I was up again, to drive back to the place (in broad daylight this time), to hunt out the grave in the garden—that "shady corner where the sun never bothers one"—and appease the poor ghost with a few flowers. But the doctors decided otherwise; and perhaps my weak will unknowingly abetted them. At any rate, I yielded to their insistence that I should be driven straight from my hotel to the train for Paris, and thence transshipped, like a piece of luggage, to the Swiss sanitarium they had in view for me.

Of course I meant to come back when I was patched up again, and meanwhile, more and more tenderly, but more intermittently, my thoughts went back from my snow-mountain to that wailing Autumn night above the Baie des Trépassés, and the revelation of the dead Mary Pask who was so much more real to me than ever the living one had been.

AFTER all, why should I tell Grace Bridgeworth—ever? I had had a glimpse of things that were really no business of hers. If the revelation had been vouchsafed to me, ought I not to bury it in those deepest depths where the inexplicable and the unforgetable sleep together? And, besides, what interest could there be to a woman like Grace in a tale she could neither understand nor believe in? She would just set me down as "queer"—and enough people had done that already.

My first object, when I finally did get back to New York, was to convince everybody of my complete return to mental and physical soundness; and into this scheme of evidence my experience with Mary Pask did not seem to fit. All things considered, I would hold my tongue.

But after a while the thought of the grave began to trouble me. I wondered if Grace had ever had a proper gravestone put on it. The queer, neglected look of the house gave me the idea that perhaps she had done nothing—had brushed the whole matter aside, to be attended to when she next went abroad. "Grace forgets," I heard the poor ghost quaver. No, decidedly, there could be no harm in putting (tactfully) just that one question about the care of the grave; the more so as I was beginning to reproach myself for not having gone back to see with my own eyes how it was kept.

Grace and Horace welcomed me with all their old friendliness, and I soon slipped into the habit of dropping in on them for a meal when I thought they were likely to be alone. Nevertheless my opportunity didn't come at once—I had to wait for some weeks. And then, as I sat alone with Grace one evening, my glance lit on a photograph of her sister—an old, faded photograph which seemed to meet my eyes reproachfully.

"By the way, Grace, I don't believe I ever told you: I went down to that little place of—of your sister's the day before I was taken ill."

At once her face lit up emotionally. "No, you never told me. How sweet of you to go!" The ready tears filled her eyes. "I'm *so* glad you did." She lowered her voice and added softly: "And did you see her?"

The question sent one of my old shudders over me. I looked with amazement at Mrs. Bridgeworth's plump face, smiling at me through a veil of tears. "I do reproach myself more and more about darling Mary," she added tremulously. "But tell me—tell me everything," she entreated.

There was a knot in my throat; I felt almost as uncomfortable as I had in Mary Pask's own presence. Yet I had never before noticed anything uncanny about Grace Bridgeworth. I forced my voice up to my lips.

"Everything? Oh, I can't!" I tried to smile.

"But you did see her?"

I managed to nod, still smiling.

Her face grew haggard—yes, haggard! "And the change was so great that you can't speak of it? Was that it?"

I shook my head. After all, what had shocked me was that the change was so slight—that between being dead and alive there was, after all, so little difference, except that of an increase in reality. But Grace's eyes were still searching me insistently. "You must tell me," she reiterated. "I know I ought to have gone there long ago——"

"Yes, perhaps you ought," I hesitated. "To see about the grave, at least."

SHE sat silent, her eyes still on my face. Her tears had stopped, but her look of solicitude grew into a stare of something like terror. Slowly, almost reluctantly, she stretched out her hand and laid it on mine for an instant. "Dear old friend—" she began.

"Unfortunately," I interrupted, "I couldn't get back myself to see the grave—because I was taken ill the next day."

"Yes, yes; of course, I know." She paused. "Are you *sure* you went there at all?" she hazarded abruptly.

"Sure? Good Lord—" It was my turn to stare. "Do you suspect me of not being quite right yet?" I asked with an uneasy laugh.

"No—no—of course not—but I don't understand."

"Understand what? I went into the house. I saw everything, in fact, *but* her grave."

"Her grave?" Grace jumped up, clasping her hands on her breast and darting away from me. At the other end of the room she stood and gazed and then moved slowly back.

"Then, after all—I wonder?" She held her eyes on me, half fearful and half reassured. "Could it be simply that you never heard?"

"Never heard?"

"But it was in all the papers! Don't you ever read them? I meant to write. I thought I *had* written—but I said: 'At any rate, he'll see it in the papers.' You know, I'm always lazy about letters."

"See what in the papers?"

"Why, that she *didn't* die. She isn't dead! There isn't any grave, my dear man! It was only a cataleptic trance. An extraordinary case, the doctors say. But didn't she tell you all about it—if you say you saw her?" She burst into half-hysterical laughter. "Surely she must have told you that she wasn't dead?"

"No," I said slowly, "she didn't tell me that."

We talked about it together for a long time after that—talked on till Horace came back from his men's dinner after midnight. Grace insisted on going in and out of the whole subject, over and over again. As she kept repeating it, it was certainly the only time that poor Mary had ever been in the papers. But tho I sat and listened patiently I couldn't get up any real interest in what she said. I felt I should never again be interested in Mary Pask, or in anything concerning her.

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A little book of etiquette
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10 cents

Fig 11: *Red Book Magazine* April 1935 p. 117

VINCENT!

page 23)

ing! Slowly her stunned brain began to take it in. And when the time came for the start, and she was not there—what then? Wouldn't he have rushed to the house, or sent a message, or a telephone-call? They avoided as much as possible telephoning in the mornings, because her husband was always in his study till twelve, and likely to emerge suddenly on the landing and unhook the receiver himself. But in any case, unless Phil decided to miss the train, there would be no time for all that. She was so notoriously unpunctual that till the very last minute he would be fuming up and down the platform, or leaning out watching for her; and when the train started, he would start with it. Oh, she knew that as well as she knew her own name!

And how indeed could he do otherwise? The train they had fixed upon was the last which would get them to New York in time to catch the steamer—and the steamer was the only one to sail that month for Progreso. Dates and hours had been fitted together with the boyish nicety which characterized Phil when he was dealing with anything connected with his travels. Bent above maps and timetables, his face grew as round and absorbed as a schoolboy's. And in New York, she knew, there would be just time to pick up his outfit: he'd talked to her enough about that famous outfit! Just time for that, and a taxi-rush to the steamer. And the expedition came first, in his mind—that fact had always been clear to Nalda. It was as it should be, as she wanted it to be. . . . And if a poor little woman, who had imagined she couldn't live without him, had got cold feet at the last minute, and failed to turn up—well, with the exploring fever in him, he'd probably take even that with a shrug. At any rate, he was committed to the enterprise, and would have to go without her if she failed him.

And she *had* failed him—through sheer muddle-headedness, through unutterable stupidity, the miserable little blunder of mistaking one day of the week for another, she had failed him; and he would always think it was because she hadn't had the courage.

"You'll see, my girl—you'll funk it at the end. No woman really likes hardships; and this trip isn't going to be any season at the Lido," he had warned her, laughing and throwing out his chest.

SHE found herself on her own doorstep, and fumbled for her latchkey. It was not in her bag, and she rang the bell furiously.

"Is there a telegram?"

No; the maid who opened the door said there was none. Of course there was none; how should there be?

"I've mislaid my key," she said, to say something.

The maid smiled. "Here it is. The Professor picked it up on the doorstep."

Of course—how like her again! Lucky she hadn't dropped the passport and the travelers' checks while she was about it.

She started up the stairs to her room. She thought: "If I hadn't mistaken the day, I should have gone up these stairs

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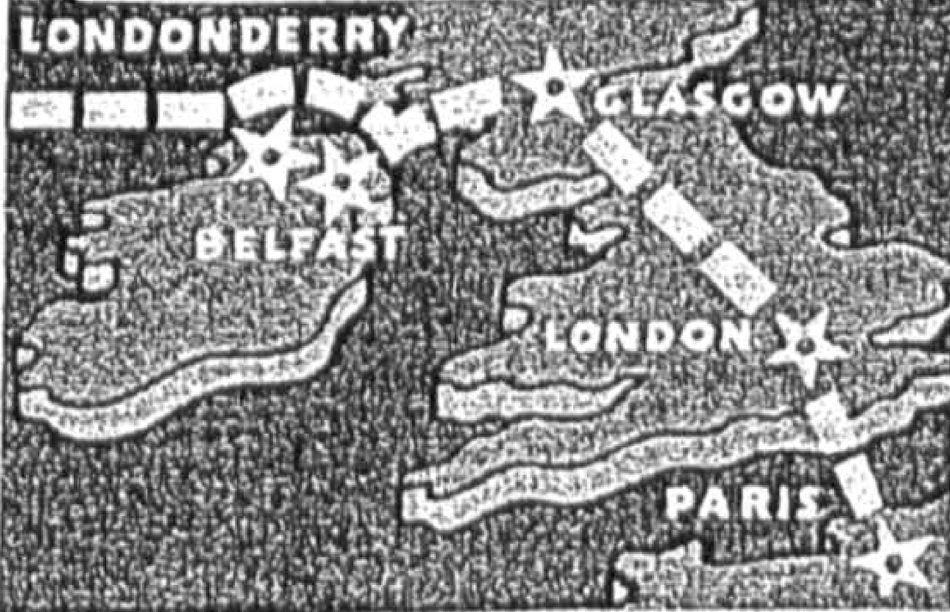

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ANCHOR LINE

7½% REDUCTION ON FIRST CLASS ROUND-TRIP FARE

Fig 10: *Ladies' Home Journal* October 1928 p. 159.

(Continued from Page 156)

The old Paul Dorrance who had made his will, wound up his affairs, resigned from his clubs and directorships, pensioned off his old servants and married his old mistress—that Dorrance was as dead as if he had taken the final step for which all those others were but the hasty preparation. He *was* dead; this new man, to whom the doctor had said: "Cancer? Nothing of the sort—not a trace of it. Go home and tell your wife that in a few months you'll be as sound as any man of fifty I ever met ——" this new Dorrance, with his new health, his new leisure and his new wife, was an intruder for whom a whole new existence would have to be planned out. And how could anything be decided until one got to know the new Paul Dorrance better?

Conscious that his wife was waiting for his answer, he said: "Oh, this fellow here may be all wrong. Anyhow, what he wants me to do is to take a cure somewhere first—I've got the name written down. After that we'll see. . . ."

IV. THE cure was successful; the Viennese specialist's diagnosis proved to be correct; and the Paul Dorrances celebrated the event by two years of foreign travel. But Dorrance never felt again the unconditioned ecstasy he had tasted as he walked out from the doctor's door into the lamp-lit summer streets. After that, at the very moment of reëntering his hotel, the effort of readjustment had begun; and ever since it had gone on.

For a few months the wanderers, weary of change, had settled in Florence, captivated by an arcaded villa on a cypress-walled hill, and the new Paul Dorrance, whom it was now the other's incessant task to study and placate, had toyed with the idea of a middle life of cultivated leisure. But he soon grew tired of his opportunities, and found it necessary to move on, and to forget in strenuous travel his incapacity for assimilation and reflection. And gradually, before the two years were over, the old Paul Dorrance, who had constituted himself the other's courier and prime minister, discovered that the old and the new were one, and that the original Paul Dorrance was there, unchanged, unchangeable, and impatient to get back to his old niche because it was too late to adapt himself to any other. So the flat was reopened and the Dorrances returned to New York.

The completeness of his identity with the old Paul Dorrance was indelibly impressed on the new one on the first evening of his return home. There he was, the same man in the same setting as when, two years earlier, he had glanced down from the armchair and seen the diagnosis of the consulting physicians at his feet. Two years ago—and nothing was changed, after so many changes, except that he should not hear the hesitating ring at the door, should not again see Eleanor Welwood, pale and questioning, on the threshold. Eleanor Welwood did not ring his doorbell now; she had her own latchkey; she was no longer Eleanor Welwood, but Eleanor Dorrance, and asleep at this moment in the bedroom which had been Dorrance's, and was now encumbered with feminine properties, while his own were uncomfortably wedged into the cramped guest room of the flat.

YES—that was the only change in his life; and how aptly the change in the rooms symbolized it! During their travels, even after Dorrance's return to health, his wife's presence had been like a soft accompaniment of music, a painted background to the idle episodes of convalescence; now that he was about to fit himself into the familiar furrow of old habits and relations, he felt as if she were already expanding and crowding him into a corner. He did not mind about the room—so he assured himself, though with a twinge of regret for the slant of winter sun which never reached the guest room; what he minded was what he now recognized as the huge practical joke that fate had played on him. He had never meant, he the healthy, vigorous, middle-aged Paul Dorrance, to marry this faded woman for whom he had so long ceased to feel anything but a friendly tenderness. It was the sudden bogy of death, starting out from the warm folds of his closely curtained life, that had tricked him into the marriage, and then left him to expiate his folly.

Poor Eleanor! It was not her fault if he had imagined, in a moment of morbid retrospection, that happiness would transform and enlarge her. Why had he not trusted to that instinct which had warned him she was the woman for a sentimental parenthesis, not for the pitiless continuity of marriage? Why, even her face declared it. A lovely profile, yes; but somehow the full face was inadequate.

Dorrance suddenly remembered another face; that of a girl they had met in Cairo the previous winter. He felt the shock of her young fairness, saw the fruity bloom of her cheeks, the light animal vigor of every movement; he heard her rich beckoning laugh, and met the eyes questioning his under the queer slant of her lids. Someone had said: "She's had an offer from a man who can give her everything a woman wants; but she's refused, and no one can make out why. . . ." Dorrance knew. . . . She had written to him since, and he had not answered her letters. And now here he was, installed once more in the old routine he could not live without, yet from which all the old savor was gone. "I wonder why I was so scared of dying," he thought; then the truth flashed on him. "Why, you fool, you've been dead all the time. That first diagnosis was the true one. Only they put it on the physical plane by mistake. . . ." The next day he began to insert himself painfully into his furrow.

V. ONE evening some two years later, as Paul Dorrance put his latchkey into his door, he said to himself reluctantly: "Perhaps I really ought to take her away for a change."

There was nothing nowadays that he dreaded so much as change. He had had his fill of the unexpected, and it had not agreed with him. Now that he had fitted himself once more into his furrow all he asked was to stay there. It had even become an effort, when summer came, to go with his wife to their little place in the country. And the idea that he might have to go away with her in mid-February was positively disturbing.

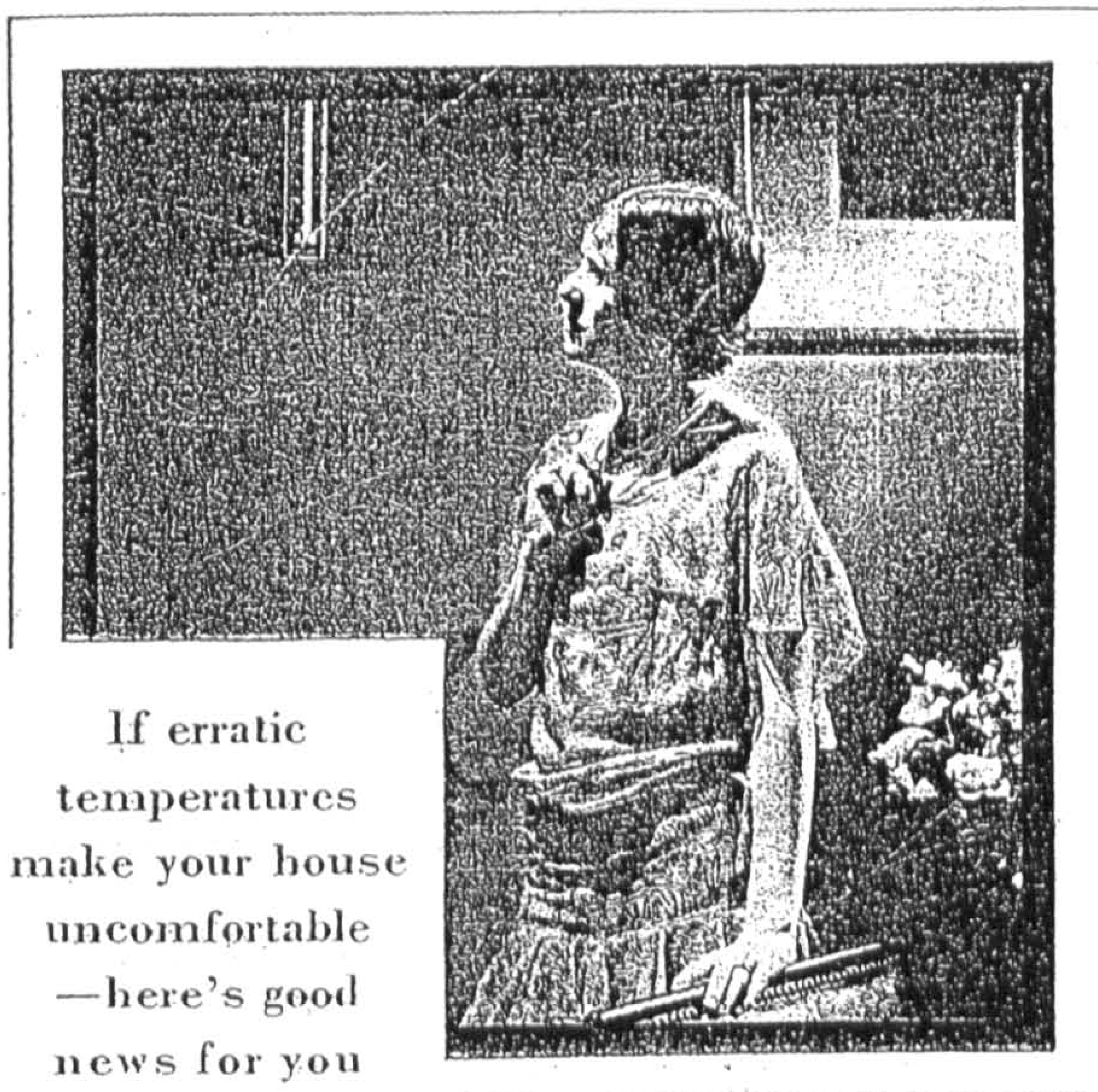
For the past ten days she had been fighting a bad bronchitis, following on influenza. But "fighting" was hardly the right word. She, usually so elastic, so indomitable, had not shown her usual resiliency, and Dorrance, from the vantage ground of his recovered health, wondered a little at her lack of spirit. She mustn't let herself go, he warned her gently. "I was in a good deal tighter place myself not so many years ago—and look at me now. Don't you let the doctors scare you."

As he opened the door of the flat a strange woman in a nurse's dress crossed the hall. Instantly Dorrance felt the alien atmosphere of the place, the sense of something absorbing and exclusive which ignores and averts itself from the common doings of men. He had felt that same atmosphere, in all its somber implications, the day he had picked up the cancer diagnosis from the floor.

The nurse stopped to say "Pneumonia," and hurried down the passage to his wife's room. The doctor was coming back at nine o'clock; he had left a note, the butler said. Dorrance knew what was in the note before he opened it. With the vertical drop of a bird of prey, death was descending on his house again. And this time there was no mistake in the diagnosis.

The nurse said he could come in for a minute; but he wasn't to stay long, for she didn't like the way the temperature was rising . . . and there, between the chalk-white pillows, in the green-shaded light, he saw his wife's face. What struck him first

now too hot . . *now* too cold !



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Scribner's writers was now part of the popular magazine writer's repertoire, and superficially suggests a shared ethos with that of the fashionable editors and aspiring readers. However, as White notes, these later stories, with inappropriately romanticised illustrations, belied their subversive contents such as 'a Christian missionary losing his faith and a shabby farmer having sex with a ghost' (1991: 3). Much of the uncomfortable subject matter of these later stories is camouflaged by ellipsis, such as the incest Fedorko finds in 'Bewitched' (1926) (1995: 366), indicated in the telling remark 'They don't ever make old bones on the mother's side of the family . . .' (*CS2* 366). Thompson argues that Wharton uses the ellipsis to satiate her need to 'subvert Victorian repressions' (2002: 91, 102) and, indeed, such a device was often a means of saying the unsayable in the popular, mass marketed magazines in which she published. Acutely aware of the range of her readers' sensibilities, Wharton used the ellipsis as a means to cater for all tastes, whilst offending few.

Blackall finds at least seven different functions of the ellipsis in Wharton's writing, the most straightforward being its mimetic use to signal the tone and pace of a character's speech or thoughts. Although often used by modernist writers, frequently to intimate a confused, hesitant manner of internalized speech, the use of punctuation to recreate the rhythms of speech is certainly not a modernist innovation. In his study of the history of punctuation, Parkes cites Samuel Richardson who drew upon his experience of printing plays to introduce various punctuation marks including 'a series of points to indicate those hesitations and sudden change in the direction of thought associated with spoken discourse', and claims that *Clarissa* was especially influential on the practice of later authors (1992: 93). Henry looks further into the past and finds ellipses used in almost all dramatic texts printed in Britain from 1588 onwards (2001: 143). She also notes that George Meredith, a writer Wharton particularly admired, used ellipsis extensively to 'naturalise' dialogue, in his

characters' conversations, citing *The Ordeal of Richard Feveral* as an example of this technique (2000B: 294).

Wharton certainly uses ellipsis to suggest paralinguistic features of a character's speech, such as a trailing off or a tone of voice, which in itself carries further semantic value. In 'The Looking Glass' (1933), the ellipses in Mrs Attlee's speech suggest that she is not convinced by her own words, and imply a faltering, defensive tone of voice as she relates a scam she ran, supposedly communicating with a dead admirer of one of her rich clients:

> How could I help it? For I *did* see things, and hear things, at that time . . . And of course the ladies were supposed to come just for the face treatment . . . and was I to blame if I kept hearing those messages for them, poor souls, or seeing things they wanted me to see? (*CS2* 768).

The insertion of two sets of ellipsis points in this speech makes it less convincing. The pauses act against her words; the verbal meaning of the passage justifies her actions, but the pauses indicate she cannot deceive herself. Rather than a defence of her actions, her speech is effectively a confession. The confessional nature of her story is reinforced by Mrs Attlee's advanced age, which suggests an implicit desire for atonement.

In 'Edith Wharton's Art of Ellipsis', Blackall notes Wharton's marked use of this device in her representations of consciousness. Wharton's technique of using ellipsis to 'emulate the rhythms of thought' (Blackall 1987:145), develops into an increasing use of internal monologue in her later short stories (Fracasso 1994: 127), in which thoughts take on many of the trappings of dialogue with self, often in the form of questions and advice. Wharton's presentation of a wife's confused state of mind in 'A Journey' (1899) is heightened by the prevalence of this punctuation mark. Wharton writes:

> Now all at once everything was still – not a sound, not a pulsation . . . She was dead in her turn, and lay beside him with smooth upstaring face. How quiet it was!- and yet

> she heard feet coming, the feet of the men who were to carry them away . . . She could feel too- she felt a sudden prolonged vibration, a series of hard shocks and then another plunge into darkness: the darkness of death this time – a black whirlwind on which they were both spinning like leaves, in wild uncoiling spirals, with millions and millions of the dead ... (*CS1* 75)

The ellipses add to the confusion and horror of her thoughts, merging the reality of the train entering into a tunnel with a Virgilian depiction of the underworld. The ellipses serve to fuse literal experience with figurative symbolism, as the woman hovers between the border of consciousness and nightmare, depicted by what is often thought to be a typically modernist technique of entering the semi-conscious, or even the sub-conscious of a character. In his discussion of modernist poetics, Stevenson points to Lawrence's 'innovative' representations of 'the mind within' (1992:29) in *The Rainbow* (1915) and *Women in Love* (1920) and notes his use of free indirect style to transcribe unspoken thought, typically 'where characters experience crises or strong desire' (1992:29, 32). The example he gives is from Chapter 15 of *Women in Love*, in which the narrative 'follow[s] thoughts in their drift towards the very edge of consciousness' (1992: 33), and significantly has three sets of ellipsis points. Lawrence writes:

> She sat crushed and obliterated in a darkness that was the border of death . . . Darkly, without thinking at all, she knew that she was near to death. She had travelled all her life along a line of fulfilment, and it was nearly concluded. She knew all she had to know, she had experienced all she had to experience, she was fulfilled in a kind of bitter ripeness, there remained only to fall from the tree into death. And one must fulfil one's development to the end, must carry the adventure to its conclusion. And the next step was over the border into death. So it was then! There was a certain peace in the knowledge . .

Of the next step we are certain. It is the step into death . . . (2000: 214-15)

In both the Lawrence extract and the passage from 'A Journey', the ellipses contribute to create a dreamlike quality to a character's thoughts, taking the reader to another level of consciousness. The modernist concern with consciousness, 'particularly the workings of the subconscious or unconscious' (Bradbury and McFarlane 1976:481), is served well by this punctuation mark. Indeed, Henry notes Freud's repeated use of this device in Freud's 'The Dream Censorship' in the first British edition of *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (2000A: 287).

Published a year after 'A Journey', 'The Touchstone' (1990) contains representations of far more lucid trains of thought. Rather than nudging towards a dreamlike symbolism, Wharton employs ellipses in the distinctly modernist use of an unresolved, insecure inner voice. As the protagonist of the story, Glennard, considers how he can conceal the recent publication of some love letters he sold, he wonders if it really would matter if his wife read the collection. Wharton writes:

> Well, and what if she did see it? It would signify nothing to her; the chances were that she would never even read the book. . . . As she ceased to be an element of fear in his calculations the distance between them seemed to lessen and he took her again, as it were, into the circle of his conjugal protection. . . .Yet a moment before he had hated her! . . . He laughed aloud at his senseless terrors. . . . He was off his balance, decidedly. . . . (*CS1* 189)

The ellipsis points mark both progressive the shifts in his attitude to his wife and marriage, and the shift from internal questioning, to the public action of laughing, and then back to private thought. Although this passage has a fragmentary quality, it is due to the inconsistencies in the direction it is taking the reader, rather than incomplete sentences. Here

her use of ellipsis certainly has modernist tendencies, but her sentence structure conforms to the traditional rules of grammar.

Over the forty-six years in which Wharton develops her increasingly subjective narration in her short stories, her representations of thought become more aligned to speech, taking on the register of the character concerned and sometimes in the form of utterances rather than complete sentences. By 1928, her characters are silently talking to themselves, as does the elderly Anson Waverley in 'After Holbein', as he determinedly goes out one evening to dine, against his doctor's advice. Wharton writes:

> Where the dickens was he going to dine? And with whom was he going to dine? God! But things didn't happen in that way; a sound strong man didn't suddenly have to stop in the middle of the street and ask himself where he was going to dine. . . . (*CS2* 489)

The questions he asks himself forces him to recognize that he is no longer a strong young man. The ellipsis heightens the way in which an acknowledgement of his deteriorating state is forced upon him.

Aware that he must make allowances for his age he gives himself advice and tries to calm himself. Wharton writes:

> In future he must try to remember not to hurry. . . . Hang it – one more thing to remember! . . . Well, but what was all the fuss about? Of course, as people got older their memories were subject to these momentary lapses; he'd noticed it often enough with his contemporaries. And, brisk and alert though he still was, it wouldn't do to imagine himself totally exempt from human ills . . . (*CS2* 490)

Still unable to remember the name of the person he is dining with, Waverley reassures himself that there is nothing to worry about. As he walks down the New York streets the question of his host's name repeatedly interrupts his thoughts, and even by the time he arrives at the doorstep he cannot remember who it is. Here, and in the examples above, Wharton uses

ellipses to signal the interruption of his thoughts and refusal to accept his own condition, in what Blackall describes as a 'mental wrestling match' (1987:150). Still firmly in the third person, Wharton incorporates Ansley's idiolect, with expressions such as 'Where the dickens' and 'Hang it', to hover on the border of direct internalized speech and narrated thought. In this way, Ansley's outburst, 'Well, but what was all the fuss about?' appears to be a direct transcription of his thoughts, with no narrative intervention.

When a character's speech is internal but narrated in the third person, the ellipsis points can function on different diegetic levels. On one level the reader is presented with a character's indecision and confusion, often in the form of questions followed by ellipses, and on another these dilemmas are not resolved in the text itself, leaving the reader to find answers beyond the narrative, between the lines, perhaps in the three dots themselves. In 'A Glimpse' (1932) the reader is presented with the wealthy pampered bachelor, John Kilvert, who believes he is an artist at heart who has no need for comfort, despite the fact that his tours of French architecture are always in a commodious motor, with stops at reputed restaurants and in the company of a guide who 'saves him the labour of reading all the books he bought on the subject' (*CS2* 610). At the beginning of the story the reader is presented with questions Kilvert asks himself but cannot answer. Wharton writes:

> Camping for an hour on this populous garlicky boat would be almost the equivalent of walking from Padua to Fusina instead of gliding there in the commodious Fiat he had hired at Milan. And to begin with, why had he hired it? Why hadn't the train been good enough for him? What was the matter with him, anyhow? . . . He hadn't meant to include Venice in his holiday that summer. (*CS2* 609-610)

The third question is followed by ellipsis, implying a pause as Kilvert grapples for an answer and emphasizing its function as a frame for the story as a whole. Not only signalling Kilvert's confusion, the ellipsis serves to put the question to the reader, who searches in the text that

follows for an answer. No explicit cause is given, and as the story unfolds the reader becomes increasingly aware of Kilvert's inability to read himself and other people, indicating that any answer to this question must be found outside the focalizer's consciousness, and therefore the text itself. In this way, the ellipsis points can work to encourage an active reader, who must 'mould' the text in the creation of meaning, following Wharton's dictum in 'The Vice of Reading' that 'the greatest books ever written are worth to each reader only what he can get out of them' (Wegener 1999: 99).

As I have shown, ellipsis can function to signal a quality of a character's thoughts, the reliability of that character, and direct the reader towards meaning beyond the text itself. Much of the ambiguity in Wharton's short fiction is created via an unreliable focalizer (as in 'A Glimpse (1932)), or narrator (as in 'The Pelican' (1899)). Often associated with modernism, this style of impressionistic narration is employed not only by Joyce, Woolf and Mansfield (Hanson 1985: 56), but also Henry James, who writes of his instinctive disposition for the subjective vision of an 'intense perceiver' as the structural centre of his narratives (Stevenson 1992:19). In his discussion of the modern short story, Head writes that this style of narration encourages the reader to 'observe the scene instead of participating in it' (Head 1992: 192), and combines a certain detachment with subjective vision. In 'Joy in the House' (1932), the inadequacies of the two men Christine Ansley must choose between become increasingly apparent, but it is her hesitant, contradictory thoughts, seasoned with ellipses, that highlight her glaring flaw of an inability to think for herself. As she muses over the two men, her thoughts are self-contradictory, and her opinions her husband's. Wharton writes:

> Poor Jeff! He would never be anything but a roamer... With whom would he roam next, she wondered? But that speculation did not detain her long. She wanted to turn her thoughts away from Jeff, not to follow him through his subsequent divagations...

> She supposed all artists were like that; he said they were. Painters especially . . . Not that she had ever thought of him as a great painter – not *really*... (*CS2* 633)

The use of the third person urges the reader to consider not only Christine's dilemma, but Christine herself. While she believes she does not speculate long on Jeff, he is, precisely, the subject of her drawn out consideration. Unable to look at her surroundings through her own eyes, she falls back on her husband's judgments about artists to try to arrive at some sort of conclusion.

A focalizer's inability to see is often signalled via ellipsis. In Katherine Mansfield's 'Bliss' (1920), Bertha accepts what appears to be her good fortune as the true reflection of her own life. The illusion Bertha lives under is hinted at by the three dots following her grateful assessment, an illusion that is later confirmed by the revelation of her husband's infidelity and her own unresolved sexuality. Mansfield writes:

> They had this absolutely satisfactory house and garden. And friends–modern, thrilling friends, writers and painters and poets or people keen on social questions–just the kind of friends they wanted. And then there were books, and there was music, and she had found a wonderful little dressmaker, and they were going abroad in the summer, and their new cook made the most superb omelettes. . . . (123).

Revelation in the modernist short story often functions at different diegetic levels. In Joyce's 'Eveline' (1914), as the young woman realizes that she can not go to Buenos Aires with Frank, the reader concludes that she was never going to leave Dublin. In 'Joy in the House', whilst Christine believes she has lived recklessly by eloping with her lover, the reader realizes that she was simply following her husband's orders by returning within the six month allotted time he had given her, and will always do what he tells her. Kilvert's imaginings of an artist's life in 'A Glimpse' are just that, and serve to add imaginary colour and purpose to an otherwise empty existence. In this way an ellipsis can serve to indicate

there is something beyond the focalizer's consciousness, which the reader must search for in what Todorov terms as the 'quest for meaning' (1973: 79).

In terms of using ellipsis to beckon the reader beyond the text, Wharton often uses this punctuation mark to say the unsayable, refer to the indelicate or indicate the unpalatable. An example of this is the opening of 'The Day of the Funeral' in which a wife commits suicide by throwing herself from the roof. In the description of her body after her fall Wharton writes 'Her face had been spared . . . .' (*CS2* 588). The ellipsis here serves to direct the reader towards imagining the state of the rest of her body, whilst not having to provide a graphic description of the corpse herself. Her subtle manner of dealing with the unpleasant earned Wharton the accolade from an anonymous reviewer that 'nobody else, except perhaps Henry James, can present a revolting scene with more social delicacy' (*Independent* 56, 1904, Tuttleton et al 1992: 79).

The ellipsis also allowed Wharton to allude to 'difficult' subjects such as incest, female sexuality and homoeroticism without upsetting reader sensibilities, or resorting to a Joycean 'school boy pornography' that she found so offensive (Lewis 1988: 461). Thompson writes of Wharton's use of metaphorical language in *Summer* (1917) to describe female sexuality, and notes her heavy use of ellipsis 'to postpone her (and our) own pleasure by never fully inscribing sexual desire' (2002: 96). Thompson writes 'Charity cannot fully express her desires, but the ellipsis serves as the mark of what she cannot say and suggests as well to the reader that desire always overflows expression' (2002: 102). Sensibar reads Wharton's story 'A Son at the Front' (1923) as a pioneering narrative in terms of the way in which it confronts (incestuous) homoeroticism, demythologizing the modernist's representative man by showing how hurtful his behaviour is both to himself and the women he uses as screens of his homosexual secret (1988: 164). In her critique of Wharton's war writings, Olin-Ammentorp observes that much of the strength and credibility of these stories

lies in the writer's reticence (2004: 52); Wharton leaves the reader to make explicit what the ellipsis implies.

In her study of its history, Henry locates the roots of the ellipsis points in the signalling of an omission or gap. When copying from defective exemplars medieval scribes would often leave blank spaces to indicate places which were lost, torn, worn or otherwise illegible. By the first century these blanks had become a series of asterisks which evolved into the ellipsis points we use today (2000: 136-139). Henry notes that as written text became increasingly aligned to direct speech, the ellipsis began to be used to signal a second type of omission, the type typical and inherent to everyday speech (2000: 139), which Ford Madox Ford describes as the 'allusions and unfinished sentences ... characteristic of all English conversations' (Ford 1924: 135). The difference between these two gaps is how easily they are filled in. The conversational gap involves little effort on the part of the reader in contrast to the gap at source which cannot be so easily bridged. It is this, latter, original, sometimes unfillable gap that urges the reader to continue into the text in the search for meaning, and as Todorov notes, once it has been filled, the story ends (1973:79).

By creating gap-ridden stories, in what is often seen as a modernist tendency to deny closure (Lodge 176: 481), Wharton's narratives continue beyond the text itself. Perhaps the most obvious example of this technique is the use of a final ellipsis, suggesting there is more to come. Eight of Wharton's short stories end in ellipsis, but unlike the general pattern of an increasing use of ellipsis in her stories, this practice stops, mid career in 1916, and is never used again in her writing of the next twenty-one years. Perhaps one reason for this is the change in her readership at this point in her career, and the demands the editors of the Progressive Era were to make on her. Balestra notes that Wharton was asked to rewrite 'Pomegranate Seed' (1931) and 'All Souls'' (1937), making both more explicit for the 'type of readers who had wondered about the end of "Mr Jones"' (Balestra 1996: 15), which might

explain why the former stands out as having only ten sets of ellipsis points, compared to an average of thirty in all her other stories of that decade.

An example of a final ellipsis which creates a plurality of meaning can be found in Wharton's 1916 story, 'Kerfol', in which the narrator considers buying a chateau haunted by the dogs of a woman who was kept virtual prisoner there centuries ago. The narrator learns more of her story; that she was romantically involved with a local man, Hervé de Lanrivain, and despite her literal imprisonment after her husband is killed (supposedly by the ghosts of her slaughtered dogs) it is Lanrivain the narrator muses on at the end of his tale. His sympathies are clearly with the 'poor' young man, who managed to escape and became a Jansenist in a 'grey ending' to his life (*CS2* 111). In a final twist, the narrator declares he envies Lanrivain. Wharton writes:

> After all, in the course of his life two great things happened to him: he had loved romantically, and he must have talked with Pascal. . . .(*CS2* 111)

The sympathy created for Anne de Cornault, which has been the driving force of the narrative until this point, is dismissed by the narrator's admiration for her lover and the story finishes in homage to Pascal. The final remark figuratively locks Anne away in the same manner as her husband literally did. The reader is left to reconsider the narrator, and therefore story as a whole, finding meaning beyond what appears to be the patriarchal confines of the text.

Many of Wharton's short stories centre on absence. In ' The Muse's Tragedy' (1899) Mrs Anerton doctors the letters the poet Rendle sent her by inserting lines of asterisks (the precursor to the ellipsis), suggesting that they needed to be censored before publication. By adding a signalled absence she alters the meaning of the text in much the same way a set of ellipsis points can. 'The Muse's Tragedy' is a fragmented text itself, riddled with gaps and defiant of conventional structuring. The first two sections are third person narrative, but the final part appears to be the text of a letter although it has no addressee, salutation, signature

or any evidence that it has been sent or received. The last word of the letter is 'missed', which is followed by an ellipsis. This is presumably written by the muse, Mrs Anerton, to the reflector of the story, Danyers. She refers to their month together in Venice, writing a 'It was so good, for once in my life, to get away from literature . . .' (*CS1* 64), using ellipsis here to suggest information outside the text, which Witzig concludes, coupled with the phrase 'our balcony', is that their relationship was consummated.

It is in the letter which constitutes the final section of the story that all the ellipses occur. This third part is the only time the woman's voice is heard, and the only time the narrative is in the first person. Any omissions here are Mrs Anerton's, not those of some extradiegetic narrating consciousness. In her study of the story Witzig describes this final section as having 'a language which contradicts and doubles back on itself through its punctuation, in parentheses and dashes, colons and ellipses, making sense through a strategy of non-sense' (1992:266). Mary Anerton explains that she needed the month in Venice with Danyers to prove he wanted *her*, rather than Rendle's muse, contradicting herself by writing 'It was not a mere psychological experiment. And yet in a sense it was that' (*CS1* 63). The tragedy is that, now the experiment is over, Danyers has fallen for her, which makes her farewell even more painful. She writes 'And it will hurt me horribly (as much as, in your first anger, you may perhaps wish), because it has shown me, for the first time, all that I have missed...' (*CS1* 64). The final ellipsis not only invites the reader to consider what Mary Anerton has lacked in her life, but also reinforces the fragmented style of the text, in terms of all that has been left out, from a mention of an addressee to how Mr Anerton fitted in to the poet-muse relation.

Henry notes the signalling of a gap or an absence via ellipsis can often function to imbue a point in a text with multiple significance in the way a word alone cannot and that the use of absence as a narrative theme is one often associated with modernism (Henry 200B :

134). Kelleher writes of Joyce's 'rhetoric of silence' (1965), and Gordon notes the significance of the 'gnomon in the Euclid' in the first page of 'The Sisters', signalling the boy's search for 'something that is not there' (1995).[52] McCarthy notes the strikingly large number of ellipses in the dialogue in this story and muses of the many 'missing' things that are mentioned in the collection as a whole: two missing pages of correspondence in 'Counterparts', in 'Clay' the plumcake, the nutcracker, a corkscrew, and the second verse of Maria's song are as conspicuously absent as Alphy (1988:3-4). Wharton not only uses absence in the construction of her stories, but channels the power of silence into her narratives. In 'The Touchstone' (1900) Wharton writes of pauses as 'a subterranean level of communication' (*CS1* 232) and in this story the conversations between Glennard and his wife contain 'silences as fertile as rain-clouds' (*CS1* 232). Very often, it is the unsaid that is the most powerful element of her stories.

The ellipsis points are an appropriate symbol for such Whartonian absences, given their often subversive nature (as in the case of the asterisks in Rendle's letters) yet their firm foundation within literary tradition as a punctuation mark that has been part of a writer's repertoire for centuries. Instead of inventing new words as Joyce does in *Ulysses*, or presenting pages of ellipsis points on Ford's scale in *Parade's End* (Stevenson 1992: 27-28), Wharton remains within the bounds of literary convention, using punctuation and white space as an integral part of her crafted narrative technique. Whilst at her most experimental in the short story genre (Beer 2002: 36, Ware 2004: 18, Peel 2005:43), she does not junk literary tradition in a modernist attempt to 'make it new', in Pound's words.[53]

Whereas the ellipsis points were uncommon in the often third person omniscient narration of the Victorian era, they were prolific in the Gothic mode. Gothic novels, often in

[52] The gnomon in Euclid is two things. It is the sign of an absence, and the product of a process, the process of subtraction. To make a gnomon, you take a rectangular piece of paper, crease it in half along width and length, then cut out one of the four smaller rectangles marked by the creases. (The map of modern-day Ireland, properly rendered, approximates such a figure.) A gnomon illustrates engineered absence, a sign of something subtracted.
[53] Pound, Ezra (1934) *Make It New: Essays*. London: Faber and Faber.

the form of first person testimonies, commonly contained ellipses at crisis points in the narrative, particularly in moments that transcend everyday consciousness, such as extreme passion or pain, or supernatural experience or death (Henry 2000A: 154). Wharton's use of Gothic trope and structuring, particularly in her ghost stories has been well documented (Murray 1989, Singley 1992, Fedorko 1994, Beer and Horner 2003, 2007), and her use of ellipsis to highlight moments of crisis founded in mystery and the unfamiliar is very much part of this Gothic tradition. In 'Mr Jones' when Lady Jane discovers that the eponymous manservant who rules over the inhabitants of Bells died years, if not centuries ago, the uncanny, unexplainable notion that he murdered the housekeeper is augmented by the fragmentary, unresolved nature of the final paragraph. Wharton writes:

> 'He's in his grave in the church-yard – these years and years he is. Long before ever I was born ... my aunt hadn't ever seen him herself, not since she was a tiny child ... That's the terror of it ... that's why she always had to do what he told her to ... because you couldn't ever answer him back ...' (*CS2* 523).

Henry concludes that the Gothic interest in the uncanny, the unseen, the unspeakable was particularly suited to ellipsis, noting that the fiction of this era was 'a celebration of the invisible, the unknown and the alien, a rejection of light and revelation' and cites the marked use of this punctuation mark to narrate supernatural experience in Ireland's *The Abbess* (1799). She states that writers of Gothic fiction:

> looked increasingly beyond knowledge to the profoundly unknowable .... building literary scenarios around the subjective consciousness of a narrator or narrators, but in newly extreme or fantastic circumstances. (2000A: 153)

This interest in the inexplicable, the uncanny and the supernatural has much in common with modernist interest in 'questions about perception, uncertainty and the unconscious' (Peel 2005: 121) and modernism, as Virginia Woolf pointed out, was in many ways a revival of the

Gothic. She asserts that the supernatural hauntings presented to readers by the likes of Matthew Lewis and Horace Walpole continue to horrify their twentieth century audience in their representation of the murky, mystical side of human consciousness. She writes:

> It is at the ghosts within us that we shudder, and not at the decaying bodies of barons or the subterranean activities of ghouls. Yet the desire to widen our boundaries, to feel excitement without danger, and to escape as far as possible from the facts of life drives us perpetually to trifle with the risky ingredients of the mysterious and the unknown. Science, as Miss Birkhead suggests, will modify the Gothic romance of the future with the aeroplane and the telephone. Already the bolder of our novelists have made use of psychoanalysis to startle and dismay (1971: 133).

This modification of the Gothic supernatural, turning its focus inward to explore the territory of psychoanalysis is regarded by many critics as a feature of modernist writing: Bradbury and MacFarlane identify 'the representation of inward states of consciousness with a sense of nihilistic disorder behind the ordered surface of life and reality' (1976: 393) as one of the four preoccupations of the modernist writer. In his study of Wharton's ghost fiction, Gardner-Smith notes how Wharton fuses the realistic with the fantastic to create the unfamiliar, or uncanny, describing this territory as 'the area that her society preferred to be unable to see, or to construe defensively as super (i.e. not) natural' (1980: 149). Wharton's representations of the uncanny, a notion very much associated with Freud after the publication of his 1919 essay of the same name, are therefore fittingly linked with her marked use of ellipsis, a punctuation mark which serves to hide, or repress its own referent in the creation of a reader-led text typically associated with modernist writing.

Beer and Horner (2003, 2007), who observe Wharton's regenerative use of the genre to create a 'parodic gothic', cite 'Miss Mary Pask' (1925) as an example of a story in which 'the idea of the supernatural, rather than the supernatural itself is used ... to question values at

the heart of American culture and civilization [and] draw attention to the politics of representation and narration' (2003: 270). Here the ageing Mary Pask, aware her visitor believes her to be a ghost, entertains herself (and the reader) by playing the part, and taking on a quasi-vampiric role, telling the visitor she sleeps during the day to avoid the light, and hence rarely sees her maid (Beer and Horner 2003: 273). Wharton writes:

> 'The old woman goes away at night. She won't stay after dark ... she says she can't. Isn't it funny?'. (*CS2* 317)

Unconventional, certainly, but Mary Pask's habits do not conclusively prove she is a ghost. The ellipses in this story represent all the gaps the visitor must fill in, which he does by assuming this is an apparition, rather than a forgotten woman expressing her desire for some male company. We laugh at the narrator's reaction and admire Wharton for writing about the older woman's sexuality.

Perhaps Wharton's most beguiling use of ellipses in her short stories is in the creation of an orality of tone. Her stories often appear to be written to be heard, in the same way that Ong imagines the transcribers of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* writing for listeners rather than readers (1987: 407). Rather than the Jamesian method of creating stories 'of cold artistic calculation ... to catch those not easily caught (the 'fun' of the capture of the merely witless being ever but small)' (James 1934: 172), Wharton enters into a dialogue with her reader, mimicking what Ong describes as the 'two way street [of] oral storytelling'(1987: 412). In the same way that the ancient teller of tales would elicit and react to audience response, Wharton's readers are urged to actively participate in the development of her stories. Wharton uses the informal, usually uninterrupted reading experience of the short story, to create the illusion of intimacy in which her knowing reader finishes her sentences, uncovers her irony and recognizes the layers of meaning and significance in her narratives.

She creates alliances with the reader in her signalling of an unreliable focalizer or narrator. Wharton smirks, with the reader, at Mrs Nora Freeway in 'Atrophy' (1927) who, on hearing her lover is in a critical condition, throws all caution to the wind and takes the train to visit him. The ellipses in the text show how little she knows herself; her carefully thought out excuse that she has gone to visit her old governess, who luckily lives nearby, demonstrates she is still very much bound by social convention. Wharton writes:

> Not that she cared, now; not that anything mattered except the one overwhelming fact which had convulsed her life, hurled her out of her easy velvet-lined rut, and flung her thus naked to the public scrutiny . . . Cautiously, again, she glanced about her to make doubly sure that there was no one, absolutely no one, in the Pullman whom she knew by sight. (*CS2* 436)

The ellipsis immediately after Nora 'fl[i]ng[s] her[self] thus naked to the public scrutiny' signals that the reader should consider whether this is really what she is doing. The answer is in the next sentence : a description of her cautious looks and fear that someone she knows might be on the train, shows this is not the case. In this way two layers of narrative can be found in the text: these are what Nora Freeway believes, and what the narrator and reader recognize to be a clearer, wider vision of the situation.

The use of ellipsis to distance the reader from characters in the narrative and create an alliance with the narrator, creates the illusion of a shared understanding with the reader and the intimacy of a private dialogue, quite distinct from modernist elitism manifest in a disdain for the middlebrow, or wide readership (Huyssen 1986, Carey1992). Whilst writers such as Lawrence were writing 'I loathe the book [*The Trespasser*], because it will betray me to a parcel of fools' (Worthen 1996: 112), Wharton was selling her short stories exclusively to the popular magazines to reach the widest possible reading public. Wharton's choice to enter the

arena of popular magazine publication further heightened the intimacy engendered by the spoken quality of her short stories.

The ellipses Wharton uses to add an orality of tone to her narratives often signal gaps which she expects her reader to fill, in the same way a listener would in a conversation. However these gaps are not easily fillable, and are more akin to the omissions at source rather than the gaps that Ford finds inherent to conversation. Furthermore it is often the not knowing itself which is the basis of Wharton's narrative. By refusing to fill these lacunae, Wharton creates both ambiguity and polyphonic narratives operating at different diegetic levels, creating stories that do not end when the text does and consequently much of the depth of her writing lies in what is left unsaid. By refusing to indicate authorial sympathies, by denying closure, by creating stories formed of competing narratives, Wharton creates evasive, fragmented texts which paradoxically engender the intimacy of a private conversation. In this way her use of ellipsis creates the guise of an implicit understanding with the reader, which I believe is a pseudo intimacy. In the same breath that she refers to the importance of her co-operative, understanding readers who fill in her gaps in her preface to *Ghosts*, she laments that their 'creative faculty (for reading should be a creative act as well as writing) is rapidly withering, together with the power of sustained attention' (*G* 2). Perhaps her attitude to her readers is not that distinct from the modernist disdain for the masses; however she undeniably wrote to be widely (sold and) read and, as I discuss in my final chapter, this accounts for much of the contradictory nature of both her attitudes to her readers and the stories themselves.

Stevenson states that one of the defining characteristics of modernist writing is not so much the techniques employed, but the scale on which they are used (1992:5). He notes that although Dickens uses stream of consciousness as early as 1837 in *Pickwick Papers*, the extent to which it is used by writers such as James Joyce and Dorothy Richardson was

unheard of in English literature before the 1920s. He concludes 'If not totally new in kind, modernist innovation was spectacularly, inescapably new in extent' (1992: 5). Wharton does *not* use the ellipsis on the scale practised by Dorothy Richardson or Ford in *Parade's End*, but does often use it for similar effect, particularly in her representations of consciousness. She uses ellipsis points for the modernist end of creating fragmentary, often contradictory texts, in which the many gaps in her narratives are left open for the reader to fill. Such usage displays what we now recognize as a distinctly modernist demand for an active reader, albeit that her deceptively intimate conversational style belies her 'rhetoric of evasion' (Nettels 1997: 95) and her narrative detachment ultimately constitutes a refusal to reveal herself.

Wharton's respect for literary tradition does not set her apart from modernism, especially since the recent recognition of this era's roots in a traditional literary heritage. Indeed, in his book *The Paradoxy of Modernism*, Scholes argues that the modernist way of thinking, absolutes such as Pound's defence of originality and keeping it new, is precisely what needs to be undone in order to understand modernism (2008: 218). Wharton's regenerative use of literary tradition in terms of her use of ellipsis displays certain modernist tendencies; rather than breaking with the past, Wharton develops it. Her use of ellipsis points echoes that of centuries ago, from its mimetic function in Richardson's *Clarissa*, to its allusions to absence and the unexplained typical of the gothic text. The subtlety of Wharton's craft lies in her ability to work innovatively within tradition, using the full arsenal bequeathed by her literary predecessors, from narrative reference and structure, down to three dots on a page.

Chapter 4: Narrative Gaps, Meaning and Modernism

In this chapter I discuss the way in which Wharton uses gaps in her short fiction at both story and discourse level in order to write for an increasingly wider reading public over the course of her career. I use the term 'gap' to refer to the unknown qualities, or unexpressed elements in a text which prompt a filling-in of 'missing' information by readers in order to 'complete' a narrative, in what Bell describes as the reader's 'ineluctable compulsion to gestalt' (1986: 89). My analysis here of Wharton's narrative method rests on the central distinction between gaps at story level, connected with literal meaning, such as how a ghost could send a letter in 'Pomegranate Seed' (1931), and those which exist at discourse level via the telling of the tale, such as the reliability of a narrator. Gaps on these two levels provoke two distinct reader questions, the first being 'What happens?', the second, as Wharton herself phrases it, that 'unconscious but insistent inner question: 'What am I being told this story for? What judgment on life does it leave for me?' (*WF*23). I argue that whilst Wharton closes many of the gaps she creates in her narratives at story level, in what appears to follow a nineteenth-century tradition of resolute plotting and determinacy, the gaps she creates, and leaves open, at discourse level bear a distinct similarity to modernist poetics of indeterminacy: ambiguity and a rejection of a monolithic, absolute truth. I conclude that this intertwining of two quite distinct narrative strategies allows Wharton to cater for both the 'mechanical' reader, of whom she complains in 'The Vice of Reading' (Wegener 1996: 99), and the 'happy few' (Wegener 1996: 105), who infer and discern meaning from the absences in her texts.

In this chapter I identify and investigate the different types of gaps Wharton creates in her short fiction. I distinguish between her prospective, or announced gaps, which present the reader with an enigma to solve, and her retrospective gaps which only become apparent after

they are filled in by the text. I consider the gaps that Wharton closes retrospectively via 'analepsis' (Genette 1980: 51), and the manner in which she does this: either explicitly through a determinate explanation or implicitly via textual clues left for her reader. Finally, focusing on the gaps at discourse level which Wharton chooses *not* to close, I consider the 'interrogative' (Belsey 1980:92) nature of Wharton's narratives, which appear to ask more questions than they answer, and demonstrate the similarity of her method to that found in the short stories of modernist writers such as Woolf, Mansfield and Joyce.

The two most obvious problems with any discussion of the narrative gap lie in its nature and its name. In the first case, the narrative gap is notoriously difficult to define because its existence cannot be recognised without ambiguity (Hardy 2005: 363), the paradox being that although all texts have gaps (Iser 1971: 13), the gaps themselves depend on individual reader recognition. And if a gap *is* detected, its importance or centrality to the narrative again depends on the reader. The second difficulty lies in the wide variety of terminology that has been used to refer to such absences, indeterminacies or discontinuities in a text. Bell (1986) and Abbott (2002) are content with the term 'gap' but other scholars employ a range of nomenclature, including 'blanks' (Iser 1971, Blackall 1987), 'nonnarrated' and 'unnarrated' (Prince 1988), 'marks of elision' (Smith 1980),'lacunae' (Chatman 1978), 'crux' (Abbot 2002) and 'ellipsis' (Chatman 1978, Genette 1980, Toolan 2001), to describe the different types of gaps employed by writers and recognised by readers. Indeed Middleton even finds herself compelled to leave the field of the Arts to borrow the scientific term 'vacuole' in her study of Willa Cather's modernism (1990:11). For the purposes of this chapter I will use the term 'gap' to refer to a point in a narrative where the reader is nudged or encouraged to provide information to satisfactorily 'complete' a reading of the text.

I avoid the term 'ellipsis' for two reasons, firstly because it involves a measurement of the centrality of the gap to the text, in that 'ellipsis' refers to the omission of unimportant

material, whereas the term 'gap' suggests something more significant has been left out. Such a classification rests on reader judgment, and as Hardy clearly demonstrates, finding a line between the two 'is probably impossible' (2005: 365). My second reason is that I use the term 'ellipsis' exclusively in my earlier chapter to refer to the punctuation mark and I wish to keep this distinction.

Many, if not the majority, of the gaps Wharton creates in her narratives are a direct result of her use of unreliable narration, the perceived absences in the text being a result of a reflecting consciousness's literal, intellectual or emotional lack of vision. In 'Telling a Story' (1924) Wharton defends her strategy of never straying outside the mind or vision of the reflector of a story. She writes:

> It should be the story-teller's first care to choose this reflecting mind deliberately ... and when this is done, to live inside the mind chosen, trying to feel, see and react exactly as the latter would, no more, no less, and, above all, no otherwise (*WF* 36).

Wharton's rejection of the omniscient narration typical of the nineteenth century in favour of an impressionistic, fragmentary style inevitably produced by remaining within a single narrating consciousness indicates a distinct affinity with modernist poetics. So does her consequent expectation of an active reader, who will infer and discern meaning from the absences in her texts. In practical terms, her use of gaps also gave Wharton a certain subversive freedom in the editorially prudish eras of both Gilded Age and mass market publishing. By saying less, Wharton was able to say more, as noted by her critics as early as 1899. F.J.G. wrote in the *Book Buyer*:

> Each tale is mainly told between the lines. By a touch here and a touch there you are enabled to construct a prelude for yourself, and when you come to the last page you have no difficulty in carrying on the action to its remote possibilities, or to its inevitable subsequent proceedings. Mrs Wharton makes you wonder again at the truth

of the old axiom that, after all, there is nothing so eloquent as silence. (Tuttleton et al. 1992: 15).

Erza Pound famously wrote that 'The art of popular success lies simply in never putting more on any page than the most ordinary reader can lick off his normally rapid half-attentive skim-over' (Middleton 1990:62), and in comparison to much modernist fiction the conventional Victorian short story, that is, the novel in 'miniature' (Harris 1994:187), certainly asked little from its readers, resting on the 'limiting of interpretative uncertainty' (Hunter 1999:30). Such Victorian resistance to plurality of meaning was often achieved via neat closure, in a distinctly teleological narrative with clearly signalled authorial sympathy. Particularly popular in the nineteenth century were the detective or enigma stories in which readers were presented with a gap which would be explicitly filled in by the narrator at the end of the tale. This type of short fiction was often given a clear factual base; Orel cites Hardy in particular as an example of a writer who frequently framed his stories with declarations of their historicity. Orel points to Hardy's identification of the historical basis of 'The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion' in his preface to *Life's Little Ironies* (1894) (1986:102),[54] and indeed, twelve years earlier in 'The Three Strangers' (1883), Hardy concludes in a similar vein, with the current location of the characters, most of whom are in their graves, except the baby who is now 'a matron in sere and yellow leaf' (1986: 38-9), lending further credibility to his tale. Hunter concludes that Hardy's historical and topographical contextualization serve to reinforce his often deterministic plots and that such fusion of fact and fiction is typical of many Victorian short fictions (2007: 18).

One of the most successful short story writers of the 1890s was Arthur Conan Doyle, whose detective fiction inspired such a loyal readership that when Holmes met his demise young men in the city wore crepe in their hats to mourn his passing (Orel 1986: 190). Doyle's

[54] Orel refers to the edition which was printed as volume XIV of the Osgood, McIlaine and Co. edition of the Wessex Novels (1895-6)

stories followed in the distinctly Victorian fashion of clear 'documentation of fictional setting and ... verifiable detail' (Orel 1986: 190). The London setting of *The Sign of Four* (1890) is given in both highly evocative, yet factual detail, with its 'mud-coloured clouds droop[ing] sadly over the muddy streets' and 'the yellow glare from the shop-windows [throwing] a murky, shifting radiance across the crowded thoroughfare [of the Strand]' (2001: 21). Whereas Ackroyd claims that the names of the streets that Holmes recognises as he is driven to a mysterious location are 'anonymous' (2001: ix), I would contend that, on the contrary, they are specific locations, the majority of which can still be visited today. Doyle writes:

> 'Rochester Row,' said he. 'Now Vincent Square. Now we come out on Vauxhall Bridge Road. We are making for the Surrey side apparently. Yes, I thought so. Now we are on the bridge. You can catch glimpses of the river.' ... 'Wordsworth Road,' said my companion. 'Priory Road. Lark Hall Lane. Stockwell Place. Robert Street. Cold Harbour Lane. Our quest does not appear to take us to very fashionable regions.'(2001: 22-3)

A doctor himself, Doyle uses prose which is often scientific in tone 'omitting nothing, elaborating upon nothing' (Ackroyd 2001: ix) and the reader is invited to join Holmes in unravelling a mystery via a 'clear[] and sequential[]' (Orel 1986: 190) exposition of the detective's reasoning process. Indeed, Ackroyd claims that 'the reader becomes like Sherlock Holmes, too, scrutinizing each page with attention and speed' (2001; xi). Implicit in this form of storytelling is the close association between the reader and the self-assured narrator, and the flattering notion that the former may be equally intelligent and observant.

Wharton's later quasi-detective stories 'The Young Gentlemen' (1926), 'A Bottle of Perrier' (1926) and 'Mr Jones' (1928), first published in the popular mass magazines of the Progressive Era, bear distinct similarities to the Victorian 'enigma' fiction typical of writers such as Doyle and Hardy. Wharton designates each story with a clear historicity in the form

of detailed, realist descriptions via contemporary narration which lend further credibility to the tale. In 'The Young Gentlemen', set on the coast of New England, between Salem and Newburyport, the narrator discovers the reclusive Waldo Cranch's closely hidden secret. In 'A Bottle of Perrier', with its detailed, architectural descriptions of a castle in the North African desert, the quest is to discover what has become of Medford's inexplicably absent host. Unusually for Wharton the reflector in the third story of this type, 'Mr Jones' (1927), is a woman, Lady Jane Lyncke who sets herself the task of finding out the secret history of her ancestor, Countess Juliana. In all these stories the narrator/reflector is a contemporary, educated, well-travelled individual positioned in a distinctly unusual, if not uncanny setting, in a manner that distinctly echoes typically Victorian detective fiction.

Wharton gives explicit closure in each story, yet unlike Doyle's and Hardy's assured, determinate narration, the tales are impressionistic in their telling, and reveal the insecurities and weaknesses of the reflecting centres of consciousness. The first person narrator of 'The Young Gentlemen', who discovers Cranch's handicapped children, admits that, even though he was appointed as their guardian after Cranch's suicide, he has never yet had the courage to see them again (*CS2* 346). Medford, who unconsciously prompts Gosling to admit he murdered Almodham, in 'A Bottle of Perrier', is still 'in [a] stage of convalescence' from malarial fever (*CS2* 449-50). And Lady Lyncke, the successful writer, is not only 'afraid' of her house's mysterious manservant Mr Jones (*CS2* 501), but also feels that the place is 'too much withdrawn into its own secret past, for her poor little present to fit into it without uneasiness' (*CS2* 509).

Much of the uncanny and disjointed in these three stories results from the narrator's either incomplete or erroneous view of the situation. The narrator in 'The Young Gentlemen' believes the story that a rocking horse was delivered to Cranch's mansion is a figment of his elderly aunt's imagination and cites another anecdote of hers which is equally untrue to prove

his point. Medford, after a few days at Almodham's desert residence, in which his host's body is beginning to decompose, decides it is a wonderful refuge, where 'fret and trouble vanish' and declares he would stay a year if he could (*CS2* 454), signalling his inability to 'read' the environment he is in. In the same way, Lady Jane Lyncke's early impression that the house she inherits 'smiles' at her, its windows 'look[ing] at her with friendly eyes' (*CS2* 506), highlights her insensibility to the horror that awaits her there. As narrative events begin to discredit the narrator's view of a situation, readers are urged to look beyond the text, beyond the narrator, to find another, more satisfactory understanding of the story, in a manner unasked by Doyle's detective fiction or Hardy's mystery stories.

Wharton certainly enjoyed enigma stories, as did her reading public, and one of her most successful was 'Xingu' (1911) (the critic for *The Spectator* singled out the story for its 'delicate irony' (Wright 1998:265)). In this story she presents the reader with explicit analeptic closure to the gap of the unknown meaning of the word which constitutes the title, without doubt chosen for the unlikelihood of it being familiar to her readers. Only one lady in the Lunch Club, Mrs Roby, knows what this word means, yet the other members of the group attempt to talk persuasively on the subject, when it is brought up during the visit of the celebrated writer, Osric Dane.

Wharton uses the collective perspective of the ladies, rather than a single reflector, as the angle from which to tell the story. When they learn that Xingu is a river in Brazil, the ladies mirror the reader's actions of reinterpreting the previous action and dialogue of the story. Mrs Roby's earlier remarks that Xingu is 'very long' (*CS2* 13) and that it goes 'swimmingly' (*CS2* 14) seem particularly apt for a description of a river rather than a book, and particularly comic to the reader, although perhaps not so to the victims of Mrs Roby's wordplay, the ladies themselves. This temporary gap is not paralepsis, as Blackall suggests (1986: 156), in that this information is not withheld by the narrating consciousness but by

another character in the story. The central narrative gap is duly closed when the women find an encyclopedia after Mrs Roby's departure, and a neat, entertaining conclusion is given in which these superficial women appear to receive their just deserts.

The structure of 'Xingu' bears a certain similarity to Thomas Hardy's 'The Three Strangers', first published in *Longman's Magazine* March 1883, in that both stories contain a central prospective gap which is explicitly filled by the end of the narrative. Set in Wessex, 'The Three Strangers' recounts the arrival of a series of unknown men at a christening party on an isolated farm. The first is a rough looking man, who after joining the party asks for some tobacco and then asks if he may borrow a pipe to smoke it. The second is a man clad in a grey suit who is very partial to the home-made mead he is offered and reveals through a song that he is the new hangman on his way to Casterbridge. The third is a small, meek man, who knocks on the door asking for directions only to stop mid sentence and turn and run when he sees the other two strangers. The party is then interrupted a fourth time by the ringing of the prison bell in nearby Casterbridge, and the guests assume that the man who disappeared was none other than an escaped prisoner, who on seeing the hangman had fled in terror.

Reluctantly the host and invited guests leave the warmth of the house to search in the rain for the third man. Once caught, he reveals himself to be the prisoner's brother, on his way to visit the condemned man; the escaped prisoner was in fact the first stranger, who is by now safely on his way in another direction. By the end of the story the information gap as to the identity of the three strangers is neatly closed. 'Closure, coherence and unity' (Hunter 1999: 34) govern this cleverly plotted story; every gesture, every detail points to the final filling in of the narrative gap. The first stranger thirstily drinks some water from the bucket left outside to collect rainwater before he knocks on the door, signalling the great distance he has run. When the discussion inside turns to professions he hides his smooth hands and

declares he is a wheelwright, when it is known to all that the condemned man is a clock maker. The hangman is greedy and lazy, overindulging in the mead provided, and returning to the house to finish it off when the search party has left. Hardy's unsympathetic portrait of the hangman reflects a lack of sympathy for his trade, which symbolizes the unjust laws imposed upon the country folk of Hardy's tale.

The last paragraph of the story is a reflective one. Hardy writes that whilst the people at that party are long buried, and the young baby is now 'a matron' (1986: 38-9), the events of that night continue to be as well known as ever in the local community. Thus the story reaches a neat, considered conclusion via a plot which Hunter recognizes to be 'structured on the basis of a disruptive enigma, progressing towards resolution and the reinstatement of a recognizable order' (1999: 36). Little, if nothing is left unclear; Hardy's dislike of the hangman, and his criticism of the inhumanity of the law, becomes increasingly evident as the narrative develops. Hardy indicates that the prisoner had stolen a sheep to feed his starving family, his narrator adding 'the intended punishment was cruelly disproportioned to the transgression, and the sympathy of a great many country-folk in that district was strongly on the side of the fugitive' (1986:38). That he was never found constitutes a poetic justice and the 'recognizable order' Hunter identifies as typical closure in a Victorian short story.

Whereas 'Xingu' also explicitly fills a narrative gap, making sense of earlier clues such as Mrs Roby's comment that one of Dane's last novels went into and was 'saturated' in Xingu (*CS2* 12-13), Wharton's choice to write satirically, to distance herself from the narrating consciousness, creates various gaps at discourse level. While Hardy's details such as the ill fitting boots of the first stranger lead the reader towards the final conclusion that he is an escaped prisoner, Wharton's decision to give her celebrity writer such an unusual, memorable name as 'Osric Dane' leads the reader in another direction. Why a man's name? Why the reference to a character in *Hamlet*? Unlike Hardy's structuring, Wharton leaves

open the gaps she presents in the details of the tale. Osric Dane's role in this story remains unclear. Her haughty looks suggest she is everything Wharton loathes in the fashionable authoresses of the time (and in Shakespeare's play Hamlet declares that Osric is typical of the flock of frothy, superficial people fashionable in these frivolous times)[55], yet towards the end of her visit Wharton paints an increasingly sympathetic portrait, writing that her 'impassive features softened to an expression of the warmest human sympathy' (*CS2* 14). Furthermore, Dane's polite request that she may walk a little way alone with Mrs Roby suggests she might well have more in common with this unconventional woman than with the other members of the Ladies Lunch Club. Although Wharton solves the enigma of the meaning of the word 'Xingu', and therefore explicitly closes the central narrative gap, the narrative presents a disjointed, inconclusive portrait of celebrity authorship, which in turn creates further gaps at the level of the telling of the tale, such as whether the celebrity author should be pitied or ridiculed.

'Xingu' (1911), 'A Bottle of Perrier' (1926), 'The Young Gentlemen' (1926) and 'Mr Jones' (1928) are all also enigma stories in which Wharton provides explicit closure to the central narrative gap offered to the reader. In other stories, however, Wharton fills in a prospective gap via *implicit*, rather than explicit, analepsis. An early example of such implicit analepsis is her rewriting of Balzac's 'La Grande Bretèche' (1842), in the form of her 1900 story 'The Duchess at Prayer' (1900). In Wharton (and Balzac's) story the fate of the duchess' lover is never explicitly stated, although it is clear that he has been buried alive in the walled up crypt. The illustration of the story (Fig 12) suggests that the implied closure sat uncomfortably with the magazine conventions of the time. In the same way that Victorian writers were restricted by the periodical frame in which they published, in that their material

[55] In Act V Scene II, lines 165-170 Hamlet declares 'Thus has he, and many more of the same bevy that I know the drossy age dotes on, only got the tune of the time and outward habit of encounter, a kind of yeasty collection, which carrres them through and through and through the most fanned, winnowed opinions; and do but blow them to their trial, the bubbles are out.'

Fig 12 Illustration from 'The Duchess at Prayer' by Maxfield Parrish in *Scribner's* August 1900 p. 163

should be suitable for family reading, Wharton's implicit filling of narrative gaps did not suit editors who sought clear 'explanation[s]' (Balestra 1996:22). One of the three illustrations that accompany 'The Duchess at Prayer' in the August 1900 edition of *Scribner's Magazine* thus is of the very scene Wharton chose not to narrate. Maxfield Parrish's picture of the young man prostrate in his shadowy tomb fills in the gap Wharton purposely left her readers to bridge. Indeed, in a 1909 letter to R.W. Gilder (editor of the *Century*), Wharton writes of her short stories ' I can only ask you to believe that the part I leave out is *always* what constitutes for me the psychological value of the story' (White, 1991: 6-7).

In the second half of her career when she began to publish her stories in the mass magazines, Wharton's editors became increasingly intolerant of narratives which rested on an active reader to find resolution, and it was not uncommon for stories to be returned and Wharton asked to rewrite them with a 'conclusive ending' (Balestra 1996: 21). As her readership widened, her story level, literal gaps progressively disappeared, which accounts for the 'detective' style stories more typical of her later work. Her work still contained gaps, in particular her ghost fiction, but these often rested on the unreliability of the narration, and the layering of irony, rather than the plot as it is presented at story level. A case in point is her 1937 story 'All Souls'', in which she offers an explanation for the mysterious disappearance of Sara Clayburn's servants, but it is given by a narrator who states that the whole affair is 'inexplicable' (*CS2* 798), his pronouncement signalling his own unreliability.

In a typically subversive move, Wharton sometimes presents the reader with a prospective gap, explicitly fills it and then forces the reader to reject this initial hypothetical closure by presenting a second, revised implicit resolution which disproves the first. 'The Confessional' (1901) contains complex plotting worthy of her Victorian predecessors, presenting her reader with explicit analepsis, which is then implicitly devalued and rejected. In this story Count Roberto, pretending to be her priest, listens to his wife's confession in

order to disprove the rumour that she is having an affair. Told from the perspective of the priest whose place has been taken, the narrative does not reveal the unnarratable, that is, what was said in the confessional, but this gap is apparently filled when the Count publicly declares his wife innocent and his honour satisfied the next day.

There have been earlier clues in the text that suggest the rumour circulated by Roberto's younger brother and his wife is unfounded. Their presence, like 'mourners who expected to inherit' (*CI* 228) at Roberto's public declaration, on the day of his departure to fight for Italy, suggests they would benefit from Countess Faustina's defamation. The priest himself is adamant that the Countess has been faithful in her husband's absences and alludes to what he knows of her character from her previous confessions when he declares her soul has 'lain before me like the bed of a clear stream' (*CI* 222). Furthermore, Wharton neatly explains the Countess's melancholy behaviour and recent reluctance to leave her rooms to make confession by the birth of a daughter a few months later.

Although the reflector, father Don Egidio (and therefore the reader), never learns what the Countess actually said in confession, he has no reason to question the count's proclamation, nor the later assumption that Count Roberto died in battle when he does not return from the war. However this line of reasoning must be rejected when the Count appears four years later in New York, living under a different name in relative poverty. The reader is prompted to surrender the initial hypothesis that the Countess Faustina was faithful, which in turn creates a further narrative gap regarding the paternity of her daughter. Implicit in her infidelity is the probability that she admitted her sin to her hidden confessor, and that the Count's public confidence in his wife was his means of protecting her from the awful consequences should her betrayal become known.

This revised filling-in of the central narrative gap mirrors the Count's actions when he first met Faustina. Whilst leaving church the young girls had to tolerate the sexual

innuendo of a pair of Austrian officers waiting at the entrance, and when Roberto saw her look of a 'wounded bird' he 'thought Italy had looked at him through those eyes' (*CI* 206) and decided to propose. His decision to give Faustina the opportunity to become an Italian Count's wife, rather than an Austrian's mistress, appears to be based on goodness and patriotism, not unlike that of a priest's, rather than a physical attraction.

Matters are complicated further by the Austrian nationality of the officer with whom Faustina is linked. Roberto realises he cannot leave for battle with his wife thought to be consorting with the enemy. He explains to Egidio what a Hell she will be condemned to if she becomes a widow without having her name cleared: 'What chance has she against that slow unsleeping hate? Their lies will fasten themselves to her and suck out her life.' (*CI* 225). His fears appear to be justified by an earlier reference to the fate of a 'poor' Italian girl who met an Austrian soldier, who is already dead when Faustina tries to send her some money via the priest (*CI* 216).

The narrative gap here acts as a form of censorship. Wharton does not explicitly state that Faustina has committed adultery. The gap not only adds uncertainty to the text, but allows Wharton to say the unsayable, or, as Prince puts it, something that is 'unnarratable or nonnarratable' because it transgresses a social law (1988: 1). As the reader jettisons the previous hypothesis of fidelity, s/he then considers whether this liaison has been engineered by Roberto's brother who introduced her to the Austrian officer, his motive being a guaranteed inheritance once Faustina is disowned by the family. Count Roberto is presented as a good man and his unwillingness to see the child implies it cannot be his. Furthermore, the Count's lack of sexual interest in the young Faustina, and his earlier remark in the narrative that he felt no need to take a wife, suggests their marriage is a sexually inactive one.

It could be argued that Wharton did not write explicitly about adultery at this point in her career as such material simply would not be published by Scribner's. 'The Confessional'

is one of the few Wharton stories that never found its way into a magazine, and only appeared in *Crucial Instances* (1901).[56] Of the seven stories in this collection, two deal with a wife's infidelity, the other being 'The Duchess at Prayer' (1900), which also references the affair via a narrative gap. However this use of an implicitly filled gap to refer to a socially unacceptable liaison is a technique Wharton uses throughout her career, even in the far more liberal environment of the twentieth century, in stories such as 'Bewitched' (1925) and 'Atrophy' (1927). Wharton was certainly capable of explicit representations of illicit sexual encounters, as evidenced by the discovery of her 'Beatrice Palmato' fragment, yet the note with which she filed it indicates she felt it was unsuitable for her readers. Her clearly written label 'unpublishable' reflects Wharton's knowledge of the reading market; the incestuous scene the fragment contained was one her public could privately imagine, but should not be expected to read. Indeed Lee muses on the damage Wharton would have done to her public persona she had been so careful to construct if she were to publish work with the sexual candour of contemporary writers such as Gide, Cocteau and Colette (2007: 584).

Both 'The Confessional' and 'Xingu' deal with prospective gaps, in which the reader is aware of the absence of some information central to the narrative, and 'the reading process becomes (at least partly) an attempt to fill it in' (Rimmon Kenan 1983: 124). Another type of gap Wharton was very fond of using, and is often viewed as a Jamesian device, is the retrospective gap (Dessner 1983: 58, Bell 1986: 88). The reader is not aware of a retrospective gap until it is filled in, and in this way does not 'ask the right question until it is answered' (Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 130). Wharton (and James) use this device to illuminate a character, which Dessner describes as a 'growth in understanding on the part of the central character and on the part of the reader' (1983: 58). In most of the stories in which Wharton uses this technique, the analepsis serves to illuminate a female character, the one exception

[56] Seventy-eight of her eighty-seven stories were published in a magazine before being issued as part of a collection.

being her early story 'A Coward' (1899), in which Mr Carstyle reveals a shameful incident in his past, overturning the narrator's original impression of the man.

Without exception, Wharton's retrospective analepses serve to subvert a previous presentation of character, thus forcing the reader to reject any previously formed hypothesis. The reader's image, rather than being a progressive growth in character, is a series of hypotheses which are progressively rejected and, Iser points out, cannot be synthesized into a sequence but must be abandoned for a new one as narrative gaps are filled in (Iser 1974: 186). This dislocating of reader image, distinct from the gradual growth associated with Jamesian revelation, was criticised by Harry Thurston Peck in his 1889 review of 'A Coward'. He writes that such a technique is not constant with the reader's presumed expectations (Tuttleton et al 1992:19), suggesting that a gradual, congruous, expected development of character, neatly completed by an assured closure was more to public taste.

Despite Peck's criticism, Wharton continued using this strategy of subversive retrospective analepsis throughout her writing career to produce some of her most crafted short stories. In these instances, it is her filled-in gaps, rather than the previously unsignalled absences, which disrupt the narrative. This technique of prompting opposing reader hypotheses reflects Wharton's skill at presenting the contradictory nature of human, particularly female, existence. In *The Writing of Fiction* (1924) she acknowledges Balzac's skill in creating this effect and praises his depiction of women who are 'as much compact of human contradictions and torn with human passions as his misers, his financiers, his priests or his doctors' (*WF* 9).

At first glance, 'Diagnosis' (1930) appears to be a story with a clever twist at the end (not unlike a tale written by O.Henry), but the retrospective analepsis contained in the narrative not only illustrates that the reflector has effectively been duped into marriage, but also opens up a spectrum of contradictions in Wharton's illumination of the female character,

Eleanor Dorrance. The reader learns that Eleanor married Dorrance knowing that he erroneously believed he only had months to live. Until Dorrance believes he is dying he had felt no desire to marry the woman who had divorced her husband for him, and Eleanor had grown old waiting for a proposal. When marriage is finally suggested, it is for selfish reasons: Dorrance 'simply could not live out these last months alone' (*HN* 238).

The story is written from Dorrance's perspective and encourages the reader to positively dislike the character. Dorrance decides not to reveal what he believes to be his doctor's death sentence when he proposes and is accepted. His private exclamation 'She thought he had asked her to marry him because the news was good!' (HN 238) indicates how little he understands his fiancée. Only after she accepts does she see the written diagnosis which was in fact for another patient and secretly checks its veracity with the doctor who wrote it. This central action is only revealed after her death, and by this time she has been married to Dorrance for two years. On her deathbed, her last words are both literally and stylistically a narrative gap. Uttering a fragmented sentence which she is too weak to finish she exclaims, 'It was worth it! I always knew-' (*HN* 248).

By this point in the narrative Wharton has set up a prospective narrative gap in the form of an enigma Dorrance believes he will never solve. The reader is equally in the dark until a chance conversation with Dorrance's doctor reveals her visit to him just hours after the proposal and the laughter the doctor and Eleanor shared over his mistake. The doctor had presumed that Eleanor had enlightened Dorrance immediately, and certainly such an action would have been in character with the portrait of the woman painted so far. Rather than Eleanor not understanding the workings of her husband's mind, illustrated by her assumption that the doctor had given him a clean bill of health just hours before he proposed, it appears she is more calculating and worldly-wise than the man she married. She does not reveal his mistake for fear of Dorrance withdrawing his marriage proposal, which certainly seems a

possibility for a man who saw her first husband as a 'convenient obstacle' and his own mother as a 'pretext' (*HN* 236) for not tying the knot.

Wharton highlights Eleanor's transgression by placing the scene in which she is laughing at her husband's mistake and promising the doctor she will rectify it at once at the end of the narrative. This is the reader's last vision of the woman. However, Wharton's use of analepsis delays the revelation of Eleanor's duplicitous nature until the author has engendered some of the reader's sympathy in this ironic tale. Furthermore she qualifies the wrongdoing by highlighting Dorrance's unpleasant nature, and not unlike 'Roman Fever' (1934), which also rests on analepsis, the perspective through which the story is told is one that is obviously distasteful to the narrator. In both cases, the second character's wrongdoing, be it illicit outdoor sex or allowing a man to erroneously believe he is dying, is narrated analeptically, enabling the unpleasantness of their 'victim' to be established beforehand. By discrediting the victim of the wrongdoing, Wharton presents complexity of both character and situation, and 'primes' the reader into some sympathy for the transgressive character. This method opens the narrative to at least two readings of the situation presented, in a manner quite distinct from the determinate closure found in the short stories of Hardy and Doyle.

In 'Diagnosis' Wharton employs retrospective analepsis to illuminate the complexities of human experience and human nature. Unlike James, whose use of a limited perspective denies access to 'the whole truth' (Bell 1986: 88), Wharton eschews the notion of a single truth for a potential plurality of meaning. Eleanor has been both misused and deceitful. Her choice to engineer a situation in which her lover finally marries her, despite knowing it is for the wrong reasons, illustrates something of the options left to a middle-aged divorcée. Indeed, age is a factor in this narrative which opens with Dorrance thinking it is time he ended his relationship with Eleanor and started looking for a younger woman who would make a suitable wife. Aware of the manipulative tactics she must employ, it appears

the decisions Eleanor has made in the past have not had happy outcomes. The reader is torn between sympathizing with her, lamenting the situation in which she has found herself, and demonizing this mildly mannered woman. The ironic stance allows the reader to do both. In many ways this story thus conforms to what Belsey defines as an 'interrogative' text which 'refuses a single point of view, however complex and comprehensive, but brings points of view into unresolved collision or contradiction' (1980:92).

Far more 'interrogative' than 'Diagnosis' are the stories in which Wharton leaves the central narrative gap open, such as 'Coming Home' (1915), where the reader is never told what the German commander did with Yvonne Malo when his battalion occupied her village. This gap in Wharton's story operates in a manner not dissimilar to that in Faulkner's 'Dry September' (1931), in that the absence of factual information points the reader towards a 'tissue of assumptions' based on prejudice (Kartiganer 1988: 14). The prejudice of the narrator, who assumes Yvonne is a fallen woman because she lived alone in Paris before staying with her fiancé's family, suggests that she had some sort of sexual liaison with the commander when he stayed in the chateau. He says of her photo 'If he had not said 'ma fiancée' I should have understood better' (*CS2* 29) and repeats the rumour as to why the orphaned Yvonne was left such a large sum by her elderly guardian. The narrator also takes care to mention that the German commander, Scharlach, was a handsome man who shared Yvonne's love of music and art, suggesting that Yvonne's reception might have been an act of wilful betrayal rather than a charming defence of the village and its inhabitants through the offering of cigars and coffee with cream. A consideration of Yvonne's 'crimes' - her beauty, her dark complexion, being an orphan, being left money, an interest in art and music, and her decision to live alone in Paris after growing up in the stifling confines of a small French village- indicate the patriarchal stance of the narrator. His condescending references to women throughout the text, from his lament that the courageous nuns he met couldn't marry

to the practice of 'sampl[ing] the usual varieties of French womankind' (*CS2* 31), are distasteful but not unusual at the time Wharton was writing.

In Faulkner's 'Dry September' the central narrative gap rests on the reliability of the story circulated by the white Minnie Cooper that she was sexually accosted by Will Mayes, a black man. Citing Jones, Kartiganer notes 'the easy and possibly erroneous assumption readers often make with regard to the character of Minnie' (1988:13), prompted by the local barber's remark that a forty year old unmarried woman is bound to have some unfulfilled sexual desires and would be prone to fantasy. In his attempt to calm the men who are intent on lynching Mayes, the white barber authoritatively states 'I know Will Mayes ....He's a good nigger' (*DS* 60), suggesting he is a 'black man wholly transparent to the perceptive white man and incapable of any action that that white man cannot safely anticipate' (Kartiganer 1988 13-15). The sexist and racist prejudices that are used to attempt to defuse the mob's anger reduce Minnie and Will to stereotypes. Kartiganer notes that although no truth is ever revealed, whilst the reader would probably resist the racism that would assume the guilt of the black man, 'they would just as automatically assume the untrustworthiness of the white woman' (1988: 14). Central to this story is the absence of any factual evidence, and the relative unimportance of this absence. Justifying their intended punishment, one of the mob explains the truth is irrelevant: 'Happen? What the hell difference does it make? Are you going to let the black sons get away with it until one really does it?' (*DS* 63) Kartiganer describes this story as 'an impassioned narrative encircling a situation ... the factual details of which ... not only never come clear but are fairly quickly relegated to the realm of the unknowable – almost dismissed' (1988: 15)

In the same way, Wharton's 1915 war story, 'Coming Home' is one of denied revelation, in which narrative judgment is based on prejudice, sometimes on evidence which is later disproved, as in the maid's retraction of her statement that there was a liaison between

Yvonne and her elderly, rich guardian. The central narrative gap of what happened between Scharlach and Yvonne is never filled and the reader only learns that, unlike the other villages he occupied, this one was left untouched. Yet a lingering doubt remains, and this story, like 'Dry September', is built upon doubt. Wharton introduces a second narrative gap into this story in the form of Scharlach's death. Seriously wounded in battle Scharlach is picked up by Yvonne's fiancé, an ambulance driver, and the narrator. Leaving the injured commander in the young man's care to search for petrol, the narrator returns to find the German dead. Knowing Scharlach 'wasn't anywhere near death' (*CS2* 57) when he left him, the narrator does not question the version of events he is told and is relieved when they finally deliver the corpse after driving in silence to the military hospital.

The narrator's decision not to investigate or even question how Scharlach dies signals his moral deficiency. Implicit in this distancing between the author and the narrator is a condemnation of the latter's values, including both a disassociation from his sexist attitudes towards independent women, and a challenging of the justice of revenge. In 'Coming Home' Wharton uses narrative gaps to accommodate a questioning of stereotyping, in a way not dissimilar to Faulkner's use of the white barber's vision of the situation in 'Dry September'. Both stories are structured in such a way that there is no overt signalling of prejudice, and at least two, equally meaningful readings of the text are presented to the reader. It is, therefore the individual reader's recognition of prejudice that ultimately decides which meaning is assigned to the narrative. As an 'interrogative' (Belsey 1980: 91) rather than didactic text, Wharton's gaps thus prompt a distinctly individualistic creation of meaning. As Iser notes, the filling in of narrative gaps presents a 'heterogeneous reaction between text and reader' (1971:2).

Wharton appears to employ the same 'scrupulous meanness' (Hunter 1999: 54) that Joyce boasted about in the composition of *Dubliners*, by presenting gaps which defy a

determinate reading of a narrative. In 'The Boarding House' (published 1914, written in 1905) Joyce writes the narrative first from the perspective of Mrs Mooney, the landlady, then from the experience of Mr Doran, the lodger, and finally from that of Polly Mooney, the landlady's daughter. The first part records Mrs Mooney's history and realization of the growing intimacy between Doran and her daughter, the second develops the romance and describes the lover's first congress through Doran's recollections. In both cases Joyce uses free indirect discourse; Mrs Mooney's scheming becomes evident, as does Doran's acknowledgement that he will be expected to marry Polly. By the time the reader reaches the final section, Doran has been called down to the front parlour to speak to his landlady and Polly is alone in her room, waiting. Yet Joyce denies the reader any access to Polly's thoughts as she sits on her bed crying, and it is only when her mother calls her downstairs that we are enigmatically told 'she remember[s] what she had been waiting for' (2000: 52).

Hunter identifies the most crucial information gaps in this story as the discussion between Mrs Mooney and her lodger and the enigmatic narration of Polly's experience (1999:55). Indeed, Joyce relates all the lovers' meetings through Doran's consciousness. Hunter recognises the way in which Joyce creates questions in the reader's mind through his use of gaps, and his refusal to provide any determinate answers. He writes:

> It is a teasingly unrevealing conclusion. Up to this point, Joyce has permitted access to his character's thoughts and motives through the use of free indirect discourse. But here, at the decisive moment, he withdraws to an observational position to describe Polly's displacement activities – a narrative gesture that itself is a displacement and deferral of the answers to the questions the story has prompted us to ask. (1999: 55)

In an arguably Joycean manner, Wharton leaves a crucial narrative gap inconclusively filled in 'The Pretext' (1908). This story rests on the assumption that an older, married woman has been used by a young man as a pretext to free himself from an unwanted

engagement. On the face of it, the information gap, that is Guy Dawnish's feelings towards Margaret Ransom, is filled in by its title, that is that she is an excuse, an escape route. However, when the narrative arrives at the crucial point in the story and Guy declares he cannot leave without telling her something 'which [he] ha[s] held out and fought against' (*CS1* 646), Margaret asks him not to say anything. She tells him to leave things as one 'might leave a picture – not quite finished, perhaps, ... but all the more exquisite' (*CS1* 646).

Written from Margaret's perspective, the story that the young man had fallen for her seems very convincing. The one point in the narrative when the reader would have direct access to Guy's sentiments is deflected by Margaret's insistence that he say nothing. The gap Wharton creates at this point effectively refuses to answer the question she has built up in her reader's mind, in what appears to be the same 'artful abstemiousness' (Hunter 1999: 55) employed by Joyce in which the author deliberately taunts his reader by refusing to give information central to the narrative. Indeed, Wharton seems to be teasing her reader much in the same way as Joyce does by creating a false sense that the truth is about to be revealed, going as far as to let Guy begin his declarations, only to defer any answer to the central narrative question. From the opening scene, in the form of Margaret's recollection of her earlier conversation with Dawnish, in which the reader is never told 'just what his last words – the very last- had been...' (*CS1* 642), the reader is taken towards some form of analepsis, and then held back. The bridging of gaps which the reader must undertake is mirrored by Margaret when she 'reads' the gaps in the letters Dawnish sends to her husband and herself. In the correspondence she finds that the 'little touch of awkwardness and constraint under its boyish spontaneity told her more than whole pages of eloquence' (*CS1* 650).

In a typically Whartonian move, what seems a straightforward story, as indicated in its title, is subverted by its telling. By denying any definite evidence of the 'unfortunate attachment' Dawnish claims he made on his trip to Wentworth, the central narrative gap in

this story is never conclusively closed. The arrival of Dawnish's aunt, who on realising Margaret's age concludes the whole thing was a useful fiction, nudges the reader towards the inherent prejudices in such an assumption. However, as Bell notes, a reader will often step outside a text and use biographical information to fill in missing information (1986: 91).The recently discovered fact that 'The Pretext' was published in the same year Wharton began her affair with the young Morton Fullerton adds further uncertainty to whether there was a mutually intense attraction between the two characters, mirroring the married Wharton's mutual attraction for her younger lover. Rather like 'Dry September', 'The Pretext' deals with prejudice concerning women and ageing, and Wharton uses the narrative gap to edge towards the taboo subject of an older woman's sexuality, which she subtly considers in other works such as 'Miss Mary Pask' (1925) 'All Souls'' (1937) and *The Mother's Recompense* (1925). By creating a text which allows two readings of Margaret's situation, one confirming and the other rejecting female stereotyping, Wharton accommodates a wide reading public by refusing to conclusively fill in the gap she consciously creates.

Wharton's use of unfilled gaps is prevalent in her ghost fiction, much of which create the indeterminacy and absence which endow the stories with their 'thermometrical quality' (*Ghosts* Wegener 1996: 273). Indeed, it is the not knowing, rather than the appearance of a spectral figure, which endows these tales which much of their ghostliness. In the few instances when a ghost *is* sighted, it is done so either erroneously, as in 'Miss Mary Pask' (1925) and 'Bewitched' (1925), or without understanding, as in 'The Triumph of the Night' (1914) and 'The Eyes' (1910), or not realized until long after the event, as in 'Afterward' (1910). The accounts themselves are fragmentary and inconclusive, even when related by eyewitnesses such as the business-like, courageous Hartley in 'The Lady's Maid's Bell' (1902), whose plain speaking report is devoid of any poetic licence, or the wealthy, independent Sara Clayburn, whose inconclusive outline of the events of one Autumn

weekend is so fragmentary that the story was not suitable for publication until Wharton had added an a final, explanatory section (Balestra 1996:21). In her preface to *Ghosts* (1937), Wharton writes that the quality of a good ghost story lies in its teller, who should take care to present a ghost in 'words shadowy or transparent enough' (Wegener 1996: 272) to demonstrate the narrator's terror. Wharton's use of inconclusive, disjointed, gap ridden narratives effectively communicates the teller's fear and begs her question whether rather than ghosts 'there are ... only tellers of ghost-stories' (Wegener 1996: 273).

Wharton's debt to le Fanu, which she herself acknowledges in her preface to *Ghosts* (1937), is evident in her supernatural fiction. Here her use of an unreliable narrator heightens the inconclusive nature of her narratives. However Dr Hesselius' account of Revd Mr Jennings' haunting by a ghostly monkey in Le Fanu's 'Green Tea' (1869) contains none of the incomprehension or marks of insecurity found in Wharton's centres of narrating consciousnesses.[57] Indeed, Orel finds the doctor's scientific tone, combined with his comparisons to similar cases lends 'greater credibility' (1986:37) to his diagnosis that the unfortunate Jennings has drunk too much green tea and suffered from a 'hereditary suicidal mania' (*In a Glass Darkly* 36). I tend to agree with Sullivan, who lists the doctor's deficiencies as proof of his unreliability, and who notes that the reader is encouraged to question Hesselius' conclusion in this 'teasing[ly] enigmatic' story (1978:17). Walton also concludes that the doctor's very 'use of empirical method' (2007:31) invites the reader to reject a materialistic explanation, stating 'The thing is not 'purely disease, a well-known physical affection' or a 'disorder of the optic nerves' or 'a symptom of nervous dyspepsia'' (2007:50). However one chooses to interpret the doctor's analysis of the case, his account is as scientific and (albeit erroneously) self-assured as those to be found in Doyle's detective

[57] 'Green Tea' was first published in Dickens' magazine *All the Year Round* (1869), and later reprinted in *In a Glass Darkly* (1872).

stories, and this certainly cannot be said of the inconclusive, often confused narration found in Wharton's ghost fiction.

A case in point is Wharton's 1902 story, 'The Lady's Maid's Bell'. Here, although the stalwart Hartley appears to be faced with the typical Victorian enigma of an unexplained ghost and strange goings on at the Brympton country house, the way in which Hartley approaches the mystery is more akin to Joyce's deferrals than Hardy's neat explanations. Many questions are left unanswered because Hartley never pursues them, thinking '[she] might learn more by holding [her] tongue and keeping [her] eyes open' (*CS1* 512). When the ghost of her predecessor appears and leads her across the snowy fields Hartley learns nothing, not even why she has been led to Mr Ranford's house. The reader is left to infer that the mistress of the house is having an affair with this gentleman, and that her husband's unexpected arrival would have uncovered her infidelity had it not been for the ghost of Emma Saxon. The night Mr Brympton returns the phantom dramatically appears, barring him from his wife's dressing room door, where Ranford is probably hiding. But this implicit reading still leaves the central narrative gap of what happened to Emma Saxon unfilled, and at the close of the story the reader is still in the dark as to how and why the first maid died, and the not knowing adds to the haunting nature of the narrative. The central question of the narrative, which has haunted Hartley since her arrival at the house is left unanswered by the text, and continues to haunt the reader long after the last paragraph is read.

Gaps often signify absence, so often a theme of modernist writing (Briggs 2006:1). Wharton uses absence to create much of the uncanny in her short fiction, such as the lack of a bottle of Perrier in the story of the same name, the missing letter in 'Mr Jones', the missing servants in 'All Souls''(1937). Such a relationship between not knowing and a material object is also a significant feature of *Dubliners* (1914); McCarthy notes Joyce's recurrent element of absence signalled by the two missing pages of correspondence in 'Counterparts', the

plumcake, nutcracker and corkscrew in 'Clay', and the second verse of Maria's song in 'Alphy' (McCarthy 1998: 3-4). Similarly, not knowing often takes on a material form in Wharton's short fiction, such as illegibly written letters, blanks on a wall where a picture used to be, a disembodied voice on the radio, a missing inscription on a tomb. Such indeterminacy is also objectified by Woolf as a smudge in her story 'The Mark on the Wall' (1917), in which she asks what this dark spot next to her desk could be. Her question is the central enigma of the story which the reader hopes to solve, but, as Hunter notes, when it is revealed to be a snail, the answer has become irrelevant. He writes:

> The point in the story lies in the *not* knowing. The narrator defers discovering the answer to the question not out of a wish to create suspense, but to sustain indefinitely the condition of uncertainty. She does not want to know what the mark on the wall is because she wishes to preserve the 'intoxicating sense of illegitimate freedom' that comes from 'crediting the mystery of life', 'the inaccuracy of thought', the 'ignorance of humanity'. 2007:66

Woolf does not reveal what the mark on the wall is because by doing so she would leave the state of not knowing and the imaginative freedom such a condition allows. By refusing the potential closure determinacy would give she defuses the central plot of the narrative, which is no longer definitively to find out what the mark is. Hunter writes that Woolf's narrator is disappointed to be told that the mark on the wall is a snail (2007:67), and whereas I agree that the tone of the narrative changes completely when this discovery is made, I would suggest Woolf injects a certain flippancy or bathos, rather than disappointment, into the text with such an inconsequential, abrupt ending, thus nudging the reader into revising the overall tone and perhaps motive of the piece.

The sense of not knowing that Woolf celebrates and actively attempts to prolong in this story probably owes much to the significant influence Chekhov had upon her work.

Hunter writes that she was particularly drawn to his ''note of interrogation', that is, his willingness to leave matters puzzlingly unresolved at the end of his stories' (2007: 65). Mansfield also admired Chekhov's interrogative style and wrote to Woolf in 1919 'What the writer does is not so much solve the question but to put the question' (Hunter 2007:72). Mansfield in particular is associated with what is regarded as a modernist shift to open or irresolute endings, her stories ending in enigmatic gaps which Chatterjee identifies as a distinct challenge to the traditional resolution ending which Aristotle calls 'a completed action' (1991: 327). Chatterjee notes that Mansfield's final sentences, such as 'And then after six years she saw him again' in 'A Dill Pickle' (1917), or 'The week after was one of the busiest of their lives' in 'The Daughters of the Late Colonel' (1921) force the reader to 'fill in the gaps intentionally left by the author' (1991: 326).

Whilst her narratives often present the reader with some form of (frequently ironic) resolution, Wharton often inserts a final, subversive sentence which would challenge the apparent closure of the narrative. Perhaps the most incongruous is Mrs Amyot's final cry that she had sent her daughter-in-law a sealskin coat for Christmas, when it is revealed that there is no financial necessity for her to lecture; nor is there popular demand (*CS1* 94). The reader must make the link between this purchase and the injustice of her son's rage on his discovery of her deceit. The final remark shifts the focus of the narrative from Mrs Amyot's need for her independence to its relationship to consumerism, the nature of which is left for the reader to decide. This seemingly incongruous outburst forces a revisionary reading of the text which accommodates Mrs Amyot's final words.

However, sometimes it is not the link, but the referent itself which is unclear at the end of the story. In 'After Holbein' (1928) Anson Waverly's end is unclear. The story finishes with the following sentence: 'Then he took a step forward, to where a moment before the pavement had been- and where now there was nothing.' (*CS2* 496). The reader is unsure

whether Wharton is referring to death or to an accident of some sort. The final sentence is preceded by a detailed, realist descriptive passage which further highlights the figurative potentiality of the last words. By contrast, the last sentence of 'Souls Belated' (1899) has a clear, literal meaning, but it is the purpose of Gannett's perusal of train times to Paris which is unclear and the reader does not know if he will be travelling alone or with his lover. In her study of the ghost stories, McDowell's comments on the ambiguity of Wharton's endings in particular, an observation that could be extended to much of her short fiction in general, as could the effect of these unfilled final gaps on the reader who 'ponders the tale long after it has been told' (McDowell 1992: 299).

A further narrative gap that Wharton frequently employs and rarely closes is the one she often leaves between the title and the story itself, which Blackall notes is 'frequently oblique and point[s] towards a veiled meaning or an implied comment' (1987:157), as in 'The Lamp of Psyche' (1985) and 'The Pelican' (1898) which I discussed in Chapter Two. It is in her early stories in particular, that Wharton thus gives titles whose only link to the ensuing text rests on the reader's intertextual knowledge. Her references are not only to classical tales; the works of Nietzsche are alluded to in the titles 'The Twilight of the God' (1899), and 'The Blond Beast' (1910), Darwin in 'The Descent of Man' (1904) and Omar Khayyám in 'The Moving Finger' (1901).[58] All these stories were significantly published by Scribner's, who targetted their publications at a relatively wealthy, well-educated section of the American reading public. When she used the same technique in her 1931 story

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[58] Wharton aptly uses the title of Friedrich Nietzsche's *Twilight of the Idols (*1889) in her short story 'The Twilight of the God' ten years later, as both narratives present a distinctly critical vision of cultural hegemonies. In Wharton's story Lucius Oberville and his wife scheme to achieve his own professional advancemant, and in Nietzsche's study he points to the hollow foundation of many prominent European cultural figures. Nietzsche was to call the aristocratic predators who write society's laws 'the splendid blond beast' precisely because they so often behave as though they are beyond the reach of elementary morality (Simpson 1993). The title aptly suits Wharton's story about the questionable morality of a wealthy philanthropist. (Lawson 1977: 289, MacNaughton 1999). Wharton ironically plays with the title of Darwin's *The Descent of Man* (1889), suggesting the decline of society, rather than the origin of mankind. She also references Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat* in the title of 'The Moving Finger', a story in which a man attempts to defy the death of his wife. Verse 51 of Edward Fitzgerald's 1859 translation reads 'The moving finger writes; and having writ, moves on'.

'Pomegranate Seed', published in the popular mass magazine *Saturday Evening Post*, Wharton was showered by a deluge of letters asking her to explain the title's relevance, demonstrating that the myth was not as well-known by her new, wider reading public as she had presumed (*Ghosts* 2).[59]

Given the period in which she wrote, it is unsurprising, perhaps, that the types of narrative gap that Wharton uses in her short stories incorporate both a nineteenth-century tradition of resolute plotting and an indeterminacy associated with modernist writing. From the outset Wharton broke with the convention of an omniscient narrator in favour of a reflecting consciousness and the incomplete vision of a situation this entailed. Much of her 'refusal to share information' (Dessner 1983: 60) beyond her reflector's powers, which Dessner regards as 'undue privateness, even selfishness in [her] narrative procedure' (57), results from her use of irony, that is, the gap between what is said and what, perhaps, is meant. The indeterminacy that underlines her stories (especially, but not only, in her ghost fiction), suggests that she expects her reader not to construct of a complete picture of the situation, but to intuit that there is perhaps no *single* truth in her narratives. Whereas in James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) the reader is resigned to never knowing what really happened, in 'The Pretext' Wharton persuades the reader that knowing is no longer central to the plot, rather like the increasing irrelevance of the source of Woolf's mark on the wall.

Wharton 'renovated' (Beer and Horner 2007: 177) literary heritage to depict the uncertainty, contradictions and puzzles of human existence. Whilst she admired Chekhov she also praised the craftsmanship of Le Fanu and closed many of her gaps at story level in a manner typical of Victorian enigma fiction. Neither was she adverse to giving her readers

[59] Wharton writes in her preface to *Ghosts* that when 'Pomegranate Seed' first appeared in a magazine ' I was bombarded by a host of enquirers anxious, in the first place, to know the meaning of the story's title' (Wegener 1999: 271). I am surprised she did not receive a similar reaction to her 1928 story 'After Holbein', also published in *Saturday Evening Post*, in which the title, and the title alone, refers to a series of woodcuts depicting both the inevitability and universality of death. (No reference is made to the woodcuts in the magazine publication of the story.)

clues with which to fill in the gaps she created, such as her playful, cryptic use of names, often overlooked by critics. Wharton was innovative, but she liked order, often dividing her stories into sections, which in turn created their own narrative gaps.

Practical imperatives influenced the manner in which Wharton incorporated narrative gaps into her short fiction. As her readership widened Wharton increasingly fused closure at story level with ambiguity and indeterminacy at discourse level. Narrative gaps enabled her to write for readers for whom she had little sympathy, incorporating prejudiced narration visible only to the enlightened reader, whilst giving the 'mechanical' reader (*VR* 100) the sought-after resolution, sometimes with the implicit flattery that s/he had got there alone. Rather than becoming 'lax' and 'less and less of a craftsman, more and more of a facile entertainer' (Bell 1965: 303) as she left the quality magazine frame for that of the more profitable mass market, Wharton's poetics became increasingly subtle, creating texts that simultaneously told different stories on different levels for different readers. Much of this 'plasticity', to use Wharton's phrase (Wegener 1996: 99), is indebted to her artful use of the narrative gap.

Chapter 5.1: The Short Stories and Magazine Publication

In this chapter I aim to reposition Wharton's short story oeuvre in relation to both the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era of American magazine publication, demonstrating that she did not fit easily into either milieu. I argue that throughout her career Wharton's ironic, often anti-establishment narratives subtly subverted the magazine context in which they were published, frequently targeting the same commodity culture the publications sought to promote. I also consider the 'forever interconnected' (Scholes 2008:2) link between modernist experimental writing and the popular fiction typical of the mass magazines in which Wharton published the majority of her short stories.[60] Whilst modernist writers usually were sympathetic to the frame in which they published, be it that of a little magazine, or even mainstream publications, as demonstrated by Joyce's and Eliot's 'highly conventional' (Boscali and Duffy 1996: 133) self presentations on the front page of *Time* magazine, Wharton's stories, by contrast were often at odds with their magazine context, creating a disharmony in which her literary craftsmanship flourished. Her decision to actively court a mass readership and to directly enter into a dialogue with modern culture was fuelled not only by a businesslike attitude to writing, but also by the belief that art had a social role and 'could not stand outside the society that spawned it' (Peel 2005: 99).

The often subversive nature of Wharton's stories, her expectation of an active reader and use of an ambiguous, gap-filled narrative style not only challenged magazine conventions but also indicated certain affinities between her work and the new experimental writing of the early twentieth century. Both the subject matter and use of satire in Wharton's short fiction demonstrate that she shared many modernist concerns about society. Her despair at her readers' insensibility 'to allusiveness and irony' in her essay 'Permanent Values in Fiction' (1996: 179), is not dissimilar to T.S. Eliot's comment that the effect of daily newspapers on

[60] See bibliography for details of Wharton's short story publications.

their readers was to 'affirm them as a complacent, prejudiced and unthinking mass' (Carey 1992:7). Although she actively sought a mass readership, throughout her career Wharton was never above satirizing the very people who paid to read her stories.

Despite her complaints about the people who bought her magazine stories, it is perhaps her seemingly intimate relationship with her intended reader which most distinguishes her prose from that of modernist writers of the time. She creates a familiar tone within her texts which suggests concordance rather than dissatisfaction, in a technique which I label a 'pseudo intimacy' in my earlier chapter. By writing for an increasingly wide readership Wharton composed stories with a belying depth of complexity and irony, but she did not write the difficult, inaccessible texts associated with modernist writing. Wharton's prose style was unproblematic in comparison to Stein's opaque, abstract composition, the latter being dubbed by reviewers as 'Steinese' for its foreignness (Tischler 2003: 16). She avoided explicit depictions of sex and sexuality employed by new writers such as Joyce, choosing allusion, and even black comedy to deal with such taboo subjects as homosexual desire and incest.

Generally she judged her public well; they bought her stories and they were involved enough in her narratives that they regularly sent her letters, indeed at one point her earnings from her writing exceeded those of any other living American writer (Singley 1995: ix).[61] However she was sometimes caught out by her assumptions about magazine buyers, erroneously presuming they would be aware that a pomegranate seed signified a reference to Persephone, or that they would relish, or at least, manage without, explicitly plotted closure. 'Elitist and fastidious' (Lee 2007: 172), Wharton was not snobbish about making money, and was never touched by Hemingway or Fitzgerald's fear that getting a good price for a story

[61] Lewis notes that a woman once sent Wharton a two cent stamp and begged her to allow *The House of Mirth*'s Lily Bart to live happily ever after with Lawrence Selden (1975: 152).

was prostituting one's art (Peel 2005: 225). So successful was she at selling her fiction that the American magazine market, combined with the single volume market, was to provide the bulk of her very substantial income until the end of her career, by which time film adaptation rights began to reap greater profits (Towheed 2007: 11).

This chapter is divided into two sections which outline the two very different eras and modes of magazine publishing in which Wharton wrote. I begin with the Gilded Age of American publishing, epitomized by the quality monthlies in which Wharton first published her short stories. I contest the notion that it was in this environment in which Wharton was 'more at home … than anywhere else' (Bell 1957:311), noting that the majority of her stories were in fact published in the popular magazines of the early twentieth century. I discuss how her depiction of women, writers, and vision of the commodity culture in which she wrote clashed with the editorial ethos of the magazine, as did her desire to make money from her writing. I outline some of the strategies Wharton employed to avoid censorship and bypass suggestions for rewrites in this genteel age. I conclude this section by considering the way in which the illustrations which began to be published with her stories oversimplified and often sentimentalized the complex meaning in her narratives.

The second section of this chapter charts her publication history in the Progressive Era of the mass magazines. I discuss Wharton's very different relationship with both the new type of editor she encountered and the increasingly restrictive, inflexible magazine frame in which her stories were published. Here I consider how she successfully incorporated subtle layers of meaning in stories suitable for an increasingly wide readership. Noting that some of the most experimental, inherently subversive stories were written in the later half of her career, I challenge the assumption that she 'lower[ed] her literary standards to meet popular taste ' (Balestra 1996: 22). I do, however, acknowledge that much of her irony is discreetly

signalled and runs the risk of being overlooked, by the likes of readers such as Blake Nevius who concludes the 'conservatism [of the women's magazines] must have agreed with her' (1953: 243). Finally, I consider the way in which Wharton's stories of this era interact with the myriad of other texts published on the same pages as her narratives, the illustrations and advertisements in particular, and highlight the conflict Wharton appears to actively court with her material frame of publication.

5.2: The Gilded Age

Wharton's first short story, 'Mrs Manstey's View' (1891), appeared within the pages of *Scribner's Magazine*, a monthly which epitomised the Gilded Age of publication in its devotion to Victorian culture (Turner 2003: 42) and its 'aristocratic tenor' (Wilson 1985: 41). By 1904, Wharton had published stories in all three leading quality magazines of the time, *Scribner's, Harper's,* and *Atlantic Monthly*, monthlies that had a relatively high price and were targeted at a select audience of mostly Northeastern, 'sympathetic' subscribers (Wilson 1985: 43).Wharton is thought to have been comfortable in this, her initial publishing milieu, in which editors 'took on a responsibility of cultural custodianship' (Mott 1957: 2), and their relationship with contributors and audiences was one of 'mutual cultivation and cooperation' (Wilson 1993: 45). Indeed, Burlingame, Scribner's founding editor, was to become a lifelong friend, and Wharton was to dedicate *The Descent of Man* (1904) to him, describing the man as 'my first and kindest critic'. Brownell, head of Scribner's book-publishing department, was also to become a valued companion and Wharton was to write to him years later in 1913 'I live really with and on very few people, and you are one of my unfailing references' (Bell 1957 297).

Scribner's Magazine operated through a distinctly paternalistic editorial policy, where the few women writers who appeared in its pages were valued for their sentimental fiction and for upholding the view that 'women's most hallowed roles were those of wife and mother' (Singley 2000: 229). Rather than following suit within this tradition, Wharton actively distanced herself from other women writers of the time, renouncing the writing of New England local colourists such as Sarah Orne Jewett and Mary Wilkins Freeman and the 'laxities of the great Louisa [Alcott]' (Singley 2000: 229); indeed Levy notes that she avoided meeting English novelist May Sinclair on two separate occasions (1993: 60). Instead,

Wharton espoused what Wilson terms a more realist, "more masculine" narrative technique, which he associates with post Darwinian writing (Wilson 1985: 1). Her writing often 'demonstrate[es] the power of biology and environment in shaping characters and events' (Singley 2000: 226) and consequently contemporary critics found Wharton's early stories ' a trifle cold – devoid of [the] hearty joys and sorrows' (Plante 1963: 363) so associated with traditional women's writing. Wharton's distancing from 'feminine' writing ran the risk that she would belong to neither the world of the professional male author nor the circle of Hawthorne's 'scribbling women' (Mott 1957: 122). Kaplan writes:

> If professionalism could distinguish the serious writer from her trivialized competitors, it could also be deployed by the custodians of that profession, the critics, to exclude her. (1986: 441)

Ammons notes that even in her first published story, 'Mrs Manstey's View' (1891) Wharton was already 'working towards an individual vision, unsentimental and unpleasant' (1980: 6). Indeed, in this story of the lonely, widowed Mrs Manstey living out her last days in relative poverty in a rented room, Wharton not only questions the worth of the sacrifices a woman makes in bringing up a family, such as the dream of living in the country, but also challenges the notion of a mother's innate emotional bond with her offspring. On the one hand Mrs Manstey lives alone because her adult daughter married and went away, on the other she indicates that she has little desire to spend her old age with this younger woman with whom she has had so little in common, declaring 'she never cared for the same things' (*CS1* 7). The connection between the two now consists of 'the exchange of a few perfunctory letters, written with indifference by the daughter, and with difficulty by Mrs Manstey, whose right hand was growing stiff with gout' (*CS1* 1). Written with a sympathy towards the older woman, Wharton makes it very clear Mrs Manstey does *not* want to live with her daughter.

Greatly influenced by the Darwinian revolution, as evidenced in the titles of her narratives such as 'The Descent of Man' (1904), and *The Greater Inclination* (1899), Wharton's detached, knowledgeable style was closely tied to her interest in scientific writing. Her rejection of the sentimental tradition in which women were expected to write often resulted in complaints about her 'cleverness' by critics (Plante 1963: 364), but her stories were so popular that in 1894 Burlingame suggested publishing a bound collection (Lewis 1975: 70). Many of Wharton's early stories depict the dilemma in which the intelligent woman found herself in the patriarchal environment of the turn of the century, the woman often paying a high price for her own clarity of vision and rationality. In 'The Quicksand' (1902), for instance, a young woman refuses to marry the man she loves when he will not give up his muckraking newspaper which thrives on the destruction of people's reputations. (Wharton also targets the increasingly popular muckraking magazines of the times in her 1894 story 'That Good May Come'.) Singley notes the irony in 'The Quicksand' is that had the woman less critical intelligence, she would have married and lived happily ever after (2000: 237). Indeed, the clear, rational vision of the female characters in her early stories is often the source of their unhappiness, as in Delia Corbett's re-envisioning of her husband in 'The Lamp of Psyche' (1895) and Lydia Tillotson's understanding of the effect of marriage on a relationship in 'Souls Belated' (1899).

Whilst the Gilded Age magazines defended an upper class cultural heritage, it is noticeable that Wharton's early female characters did *not* come from the wealthy, privileged, well travelled circles the magazine represented. The women of 'Mrs Manstey's View' (1891), 'That Good May Come' (1894) and 'Bunner Sisters' written in 1892, do not belong to the higher echelons of society and are more concerned with surviving on a meagre income or paltry savings than acquiring an 'education without indigestion' (Burlingame 1946: ix) by reading literature, criticism and travel writing about places they never have the remotest

chance of visiting. Although duped by the position they have been placed in by society, Wharton's early women often show a certain amount of integrity and self sufficiency. The female protagonists of 'A Journey' (1899), and 'Friends' (1900) are, or once were, teachers and women earn money from their writing in 'Friends' (1900) and 'Copy' (1900). In these stories of essentially working women, Wharton shows a distinct sympathy and sensibility in her portraits of these characters, and when 'Bunner Sisters' was finally published in *Scribner's Magazine* in 1916, it was praised for not having the 'odor of condescension' about it (Wright 1998: 35) that one would have expected from a 'literary aristocrat'(Parrington 1962).

As I mentioned earlier, Wharton openly targets the muckraking magazines in her early stories such as 'That Good May Come' (1894) and 'The Quicksand' (1902), but this was not the only facet of the publishing industry that met with her scorn. In a double blow to both the church and the publishing trade, 'Expiation', initially published in *Hearst's International Cosmopolitan* in 1903 and then by Scribner's in *The Descent of Man and Other Stories* (1904), points to the vacuous nature of the reading public and the way they are manipulated for financial gain. The notion that writing's cultural worth may be measured by its popularity is dismissed in this story where the publishing strategy of denouncing Paula Feverall's book from the pulpit increases its sales. The denouncer in question is Paula's uncle, who, in return for his services receives the funds to install a new chancery window, which he unveils with great ceremony at the end of the story. Whilst highlighting the double dealings of the publishing trade, in which even a man of the cloth would participate, Wharton not only questions the integrity of the publishing business, but also that of the reading public. Furthermore it is significant that while Paula Feveral gains from the manoeuvre, the bishop publicly announces that it is the enormous popularity of *his* latest book which he claims provided the funds for the window dedicated to his grandfather. As Wright notes 'the credit

of Mrs Feveral's success thus goes, ironically, to a man' (1998: 77), to memorialize another man.

Probably Wharton's most famous satire of the literary fashion and the middle and upper class 'cultivated' readers (Wilson 1985: 43) Burlingame catered for can be found in her 1911 story 'Xingu'. This story centres on a ladies' reading group and their attitudes to what and how one should read. These women, with the exception of Mrs Roby, who will be asked to leave by the end of the story, are essentially the 'mechanical' readers Wharton earlier bemoaned in her article 'The Vice of Reading' (1903). The ladies 'pursue Culture in bands, as though it were dangerous to meet alone' (*CS2* 1) and are ridiculed from the opening paragraph, for their elitist, vacuous, arrogant attitude to literature .Wharton satirizes the ladies in various ways – from her use of capitalization to distance herself from the views held by the group, ('Culture', 'Providence' and 'Lunch Club' all have capital letters in the ladies' thoughts), to the plot itself which ends with their humiliation. Unlike many of her other stories, 'Xingu' has a structure which permits only one reading of the author's intention to deride these ladies who read: there are no competing layers of meaning in their portrayal. In the technique favoured by O. Henry, the sting of the tale is in the ending, which, unlike 'Roman Fever'(1934), permits no sympathy for the situation the women find themselves in, suggesting that the fault is all their own.

For these ladies, reading is a social obligation, involving little personal choice and active involvement in the texts. Mrs Ballinger declares, 'there are so many books one *has* to read' (*CS2* 4) and her companion Mrs Leveret is unable to distinguish between 'instruct' and 'elevate' (*CS2* 4), having always believed these two purposes of literature were synonymous. The women perceive the texts they read as didactic, and assume they require no input from the readers themselves, apart from the effort of reading them : 'Books were written to be read; if one read them what more could be expected?' (*CS2* 5). And reading *is* an effort; when

Mrs Roby declares she has started reading Trollope simply because he amuses her, the ladies are scandalized. These ladies read to elevate themselves socially, as suggested by their names: Mrs Plinth and Mrs Leveret. They want their knowledge, like their clothing and their homes to be fashionable, indicating 'that in the capitalist marketplace of America literary culture has become one more accessory' (Pennell 2000:4).

The Lunch Club receives a visit from the writer, Osric Dane.[62] A celebrity author, Dane haughtily arrives looking 'as though she were about to be photographed for a new edition of her books' and her ego is fanned by the admiring ladies who are ready to 'propitiate divinity' (*CS2* 8). Most of the human failings depicted in this story are stereotypically female, such as the ladies' belief that Mrs Roby was recommended to the group by a respected professor friend for 'the way she does her hair' (*CS2* 2), rather than as a result of any intellectual attraction. Mrs Roby's masculine interests, such as travelling through South America, rather than reading about it, separates her from the other women in the narrative. At this time, whilst men occupied the publishers' and critics' chairs, the magazines commanded a substantial female readership, which is directly satirized here. The narrative itself has a distinctly male point of view, which unlike her later stories, betrays little sympathy for the women who are mocked by the narrative.

Unsurprisingly it is Mrs Roby who brings the house down, encouraging the ladies to pretend they are familiar with 'Xingu' in order to increase Osric Dane's discomfiture when they quiz the writer on the subject. Osric Dane has clearly never heard of 'Xingu' before, but, in the same way that the other ladies would never admit to this, makes ambiguous remarks in an attempt to hide her ignorance. Until the meaning of the word is revealed the reader is in the same position as the ladies in the story, not simply in terms of their knowledge but also by virtue of their choice to read, and probably subscribe to a 'quality' magazine which

[62] Osric is a minor character in Hamlet. He is a foolish courtier, who is described by Hamlet as typical of the flock of frothy, superficial people fashionable in these frivolous times (Act 5 Scene 4, lines 165- 170).

epitomizes the aristocratic circles the story satirizes. The readers are laughing at themselves and the magazine they have paid good money to peruse. It is ironic that one of the greatest fans of this story was Theodore Roosevelt, claiming it to be his family's favourite, given that he regularly contributed to *Scribner's*, which catered for aspirational readers (Ohmann 1981: 98) such as those ridiculed by this story.

'Xingu' not only targets lady readers who 'pursue Culture in bands' (*CS1*: 1), but also the rising celebrity of authorship that was taking place at the turn of the century. Wilson notes that at this time 'financial rewards could now place writers ... well beyond Howell's small-city doctor' (1985: 60-61) and by the turn of the century well publicized names started to replace blank spaces or the traditional initials following an article (Wilson 1985: 52). Osric Dane personifies this new celebrity writer, and White suggests that she is a mixture of Henry James and Wharton herself, noting the similarity between Osric's latest literary offering *The Wings of Death* and James's *The Wings of the Dove*, (1902) and that Wharton was known for her 'superior air' and 'pessimism' (White,1991: 87). Wharton's reworking of James's title certainly has a sting to it, given that she claimed she could not read any of his works of the decade 1894-1904, the period in which *Wings of the Dove* was written (Bell 1965: 221). The notion that James may be inside Dane is an interesting one considering James's difficult relationship with his readers and publicity as a whole. Hochman notes the growing tendency at that time to 'package the author along with the book', and suggests that in James's case, his 'reader/writer relationship [is] informed by a need for distance, a longing for contact' (1996: 193). Funston (1984) also identifies a connection between James and Dane, not only in terms of their literary products, but also with reference to the criticism both Wharton and James received. She cites a newspaper review of *The Descent of Man* in which the reviewer called Wharton 'a masculine Henry James's and suggests that here Wharton is creating her own 'feminine Henry James's (1984:228). Given that James lost touch with his audience, the

portrait of the celebrity is tinged with a certain irony and suggestion that the writer's superiority will be James's and Dane's undoing.

Scribner's Magazine published work by well-known writers such as Stevenson, Barrie, Howells, and Kipling (Lee 2007:169), and Wharton's stories often competed with the work of celebrities for readers' attention. The placement of her stories in the magazine implied an order of merit that depended very much on the status of the other writers published in the same edition. Wharton may have been flattered by the many times she was second only to Theodore Roosevelt or George Meredith in order of placement in *Scribner's Magazine*, but she was also 'outranked' by Mary E. Wilkins in *Harpers* (March 1901, June 1902), whom she was later to renounce as a 'rose and lavender' local colourist (*BG*: 293). It is notable that the only time a Wharton story 'topped the bill' of a *Scribner's Magazine* was in the December 1903 edition which led with one of her weakest tales 'A Venetian Night's Entertainment', which reveals more about the relative status of the other contributors than the intrinsic quality of her writing.

Not only did Wharton 'compete' with celebrity writers via her order of placement in the quality magazines, her work was also published alongside, and effectively competed with the artwork of famous illustrators. Although more commonly associated with the magazines of the Progressive Era, such as *Pictorial Review*, and *Ladies' Home Journal*, illustrations were starting to be published in the Gilded Age magazines before the turn of the century. 'The Duchess at Prayer', published in *Scribner's Magazine* in 1900, is the first time one of Wharton's stories was illustrated for the reading public. It was accompanied by three sumptuous, architectural pictures by one of the most famous illustrators of the time, Maxfield Parrish.

The relationship between Parrish and Wharton was not always a smooth one. Although they worked together on other projects, including a series of illustrated articles

about Italian villas which was later compiled in book form as *Italian Villas and their Gardens* (1904), their partnership soured and ended in 1916 when he refused to design the cover for *The Book of the Homeless*. Parrish was a name that would sell a magazine: the year that 'The Duchess at Prayer' (1900) was published in Scribner's was the same year in which he received an honorable mention in the Paris Exposition. (He was to become a member of the National Academy five years later (Wright 1998: 196)). The inharmonious combination of Wharton's narrative and Parrish's illustrations for 'The Duchess at Prayer' represents a struggle between two artists, each with their own independent, individual creative vision. Whereas Wharton refuses to make explicit the central event of the story, Parrish chooses his own vision of this moment for the subject of one of his three illustrations, thus filling in the gap Wharton had purposely left for the reader's imagination to bridge.

Wharton's relationship with the Gilded Age magazine editors was not without conflict either. Requests for rewrites were often simply ignored, as in the case of Burlingame's request that she should revise the overly 'soulful' (Lewis 1975: 65) allegory 'The Fullness of Life' which she sent him in 1891. When he received no reply he offered to make the changes himself and was again met with silence on the subject. Finally, in 1893, he begged 'his mutely mulish young author to return the story as it was' (Lewis 1975: 65) and it was published in *Scribner's Magazine* that December. Burlingame rejected her thirty-thousand word story 'Bunner Sisters' in 1892, declaring it was too long to print in a single issue, but Wharton wrote to him a year later suggesting it be included in a forthcoming collection of her short stories (Lewis 1975: 70-1). It was finally published in 1916, in *Scribner's Magazine*.

Other clues to disagreements with editors and Wharton's inflexibility can be found in the circumtextual frame of the stories themselves; evidence of her refusal to use American, rather than British, writing conventions is in the statement accompanying her story 'The Long Run' (1912), published in *Atlantic Monthly*, which reads 'In this story certain divergences in

spelling and punctuation from the established practice of the *Atlantic* are made at the request of the author – The Editors'. Stories Scribner's did not accept were sent to other magazines; the rejected 'Valley of Childish Things' (1896) was published in *Century* (Lee 2007: 160), and 'April Showers', returned by Burlingame in 1893 (Lewis 1977: 71), was published in *Youth's Companion* seven years later. Of her approach to the business of writing, Lee concludes:

> [The editors'] paternalistic assumptions about her as a 'lady' writer, expected to 'defer to their expertise' and to reach only a small elite audience, were energetically challenged by Wharton from the start ... She would leave them, outlive them, and eclipse them (2007: 164).

It was not only her manner of interaction with her editors that set Wharton apart from the Gilded Age of magazine publication, but also the very stories themselves. Despite the illustrations which 'softened and prettified' her often satirical, biting social commentaries, 'the toughness of her [early] stories was at odds with the context she published in' (Lee 2007:170). Her stories challenged many of the cultural values, which the quality magazines, in their role as barometers of good taste, were striving to uphold. She challenged in particular traditional notions concerning women's role in society, presenting motherhood as a 'selective passion' (Hoeller 2000: 142), and writing a significant number of stories with sympathetic portraits of bad mothers in the first few years of her story writing career. Indeed the examples of 'bad mother' stories Tintner cites, all come from Wharton's early short fiction: 'Friends' (1900), 'April Showers' (1900), 'The Line of Least Resistance' (1900) and 'The Mission of Jane' (1904).

In such a staid environment, where 'purism [was] undoubtedly more rigid [in America] than in England' (Brake 1994: 113), Wharton's seemingly invariable sympathy for unhappy, unfaithful wives, as in 'Souls Belated' (1899), 'The Duchess at Payer' (1900) and

'The Long Run' (1912) sat uncomfortably within the frame of the quality magazines of the Gilded Age. In 'The Dilettante' (1903) her inherent criticism of the young man who captures the heart of the older Mrs Vervain, but does *not* take her as a lover, becomes all the more subversive when his fiancée refuses to marry him for such a misdeed. Her tales often allude to taboos such as the incest present in 'The House of the Dead Hand' (1904), which is wrapped in subtle metaphor and absence; such a strategy appears to have evaded the 'pruning- hook editing' exercised by *Harper's, Century, Scribner's* and *Atlantic Monthly* (Brake 1994: 114). The Gilded Age editors strove to protect the family audience of the magazine, who might 'unexpectedly stumble on unwelcome material', which led Harper's to publish a bowdlerized version of Hardy's *Tess*, less reader sensibilities be offended (Brake 1994: 113). Mott notes not only the prudery of many magazine editors, but also illustrates how censorship could promote sales, noting how Walker, the editor of *Cosmopolitan*, is said to have increased demand for Richard Le Gallienne's version of the *Rubaiyat* (1897) in book form by 'bowdlerizing it (with asterisks) when he printed it in the magazine' (Mott 1957: 37).

Such censorship by editors is one of the targets of Wharton's 1899 story, 'The Muse's Tragedy', which deals with the publicly constructed relationship between a poet and his muse, and editorial control. After the poet's death, his credited muse, Mrs Anerton, edits his work with asterisks suggesting something has been censored, when in fact, rather than taking anything away from the text, she has managed to add absence. On one level Wharton illustrates the power of the editor, who in this case is the muse, and on the other she illustrates how editing a text changes it. Here the public construct something out of nothing, which in this case is a signalled absence, to rewrite the text itself. So, rather than the collection of letters becoming a best seller in its own right, it is what is *not* in the text which sells it. In this story the muse challenges the text she has been consigned to and refuses to remain in the margin of someone else's construct, in the same way that Wharton refuses to be bound by the

'vast fatras of American magazinery' (Bell, 1957: 309) despite being published within its borders.

Wharton's vision of writing as work rather than a leisurely activity set her apart from genteel circle of aristocratic writers with whom she first published and was the underlying cause of her break from Scribner's and entry into the mass market magazines. Wharton was meticulously recording her sales figures in her diary (Lewis 1975:151) at a time when anyone openly involved in making money 'was spoken of in a whisper' (Kaplan 1986: 68). Her letters to Brownell at Scribner's were often complaints about lack of advertising and general promotion of her work. In 1899, when her first collection of short stories came out she wrote of not being fairly treated 'as regards the advertising of The Greater Inclination' and ended with the following warning: 'Certainly in these days of energetic and emphatic advertising, Mr Scribner's methods do not tempt one to offer him one's wares a second time' (Bell 1957: 298). Indeed many of her letters remind Brownell of the other publishers interested in her work in an attempt to negotiate prices. In May 1918 she wrote:

> I can sell short stories for $1,000 dollars apiece to any number of magazines, and articles for $500 or $600 apiece and though my old affection for Scribner makes me always wish to see my name on your list .... I feel I must profit by such offers as those I have mentioned. (Bell 1957: 310)

Wharton's short story output was prolific, 'she was writing at a rate no single magazine could keep up with' (Bell, 1957: 308), so much so that Burlingame warned her not to become a 'magazine bore' (*BG*: 146). *Scribner's* struggled to meet the prices offered by rival publishers for her short stories (Bell 1957:305), when in fact the firm was more interested in the far more profitable book market, particularly after the spectacular success of *The House of Mirth* (1905). But Wharton's fame as a novelist made her a well known name who could command higher prices for her stories than *Scribner's* had been paying her, and the attraction of the

mass circulation magazine story rates was greater than her sentimental ties with the firm who published her earliest work. Wharton was a businesswoman at heart and her break from Scribner's was inevitable.

By the end of 1918 Wharton had published a total of fifty-four stories in ten different magazines. Thirty-one of these stories had appeared within the pages of *Scribner's Magazine* (and then as part of various collections also published by Scribner's).[63] From 1919 onwards none of Wharton's short fiction, bar her novella 'Her Son' (1932), would feature in this magazine again; the thirty remaining magazine stories that were published after this date appeared in the popular monthlies such as *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Pictorial Review*. In terms of magazine publication almost half of her pre-1919 magazine stories were not published in *Scribner's*: twenty-five stories appeared in other magazines, compared to the thirty that had appeared in *Scribner's* by this date. By Wharton's death in 1937, of the seventy-seven short stories published in magazines, less than half were sold to Scribner's: forty-six featured in other magazines, and only thirty-one in *Scribner's*. These figures challenge the not uncommon belief that Wharton was particularly loyal to Scribner's and that 'almost all of Edith Wharton's oeuvre was handled by just two publishers in the U.S' (Towheed 2007:15).

Wharton's business prowess and very practical attitude towards the profession of authorship did not diminish the intrinsic respect she held for her Gilded Age editors (Wright 1998: 224-5). Certainly not sentimental about the intellectual guardianship under which she began her career, Wharton's dedications to Burlingame, Brownell and Scribner have a ring of sincerity about them, as she acknowledges all she had learnt from her early colleagues (Wegener 1996 205-210). Wharton's increasing modernity, both in terms of her texts and her attitude to the publication of her stories made her residence in the milieu of the Gilded Age

[63] See bibliography for details.

magazines untenable. Wharton did not want to write for a select readership; she wanted to be widely read and command high prices for her writing. The lure of the mass magazines was irresistible.

5. 2. The Mass Magazines of the Progressive Era

As the total US population jumped from 63 million in 1890 to 105.7 million in 1920, and disposable personal income went from 26.4 billion per annum during the period 1907-11 to 61 billion in the period 1917-21 (Reed 1997: 119), many periodicals began to cater for a new, wider readership, and the middlebrow mass magazine of the twentieth century was born. Quite a few of these 'modern' magazines had begun in the Gilded Age, such as *Ladies Home Journal*, founded by Cyrus Curtis in 1883. The *Ladies Home Journal* presented its readers with 'entertainment and amusement' (Zuckerman 1998: 4) as well as 'practical instruction' (Reed 1997: 61), and via an editorial policy which included highly illustrated pages and incentives such as free gifts to new subscribers (Reed 1997:62), it achieved a circulation figure of 1,260,000 by 1910. By contrast, *Scribner's Magazine*, which started in 1870, continued to cater for a cultivated elite, and reached an all time highest circulation of 215,000 in 1910 when it carried Theodore Roosevelt's 'African Game Trials' (Wagenknecht 1982: 213).[64]

The middlebrow magazines flourished in the first decades of the twentieth century; by 1920 *Woman's Home Companion* was selling 1,215,069 copies a month, and *Saturday Evening Post* over two million a week (Reed 1997: 119,121). And whilst readers' disposable income rose, magazine prices fell; many magazines being priced between ten and five cents (Zuckerman 1998: 26), an exception being *Scribner's Monthly*, which cost twenty-five cents (Reed 1997:66). The Postal Act of 1879 meant magazines could now be sent cheaply to subscribers, the technological advancements in printing, engraving and papermaking, lowered production costs, and the growth of national advertising even made it possible for a magazine to be sold below the price of production, as in the case of *Munsey's Magazine*, which I

[64] *Scribner's Magazine* began as *Scribner's Monthly* in 1870, becoming *Century Illustrated Magazine* in 1881, and then *Scribner's Magazine* in 1887 (Reed 1997: 52-57).

discuss later. With the increased commerciality and breathtaking profits to be made from the mass magazines came a new breed of editor, who would reject the Gilded Age office system 'encouraging literary repose and moderate action' (Wilson 1985: 44), and take on a proactive hunt for names that would sell their magazine. Wilson writes:

> As *The Independent* observed 'The modern editor does not sit in his easy chair writing essays and sorting over the manuscripts that are sent in by contributors. He goes hunting for things'. Abandoning the genteel 'we' McClure [editor of *Century* magazine] intoned: 'I never got ideas sitting still' (1993: 46).

The editors and publishers of the mass magazine wielded more power than those of the late nineteenth century as publishing 'grew from a gentlemanly pursuit into a capital-intensive industry' (Reed 1997:120). Whereas the Gilded Age monthlies 'usually led a solitary existence in the American market', those of the Progressive Era were forming into family groups: the Curtis Company published the two most successful magazines in the world, the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Ladies' Home Journal,* and by 1920, the Crowell Publishing Company owned both the *Woman's Home Companion* and *Collier's Weekly* (Reed 1997: 120).

Gone were the days when Wharton could ignore editorial calls for rewrites, as she did with Scribner's and insist on her own choice of spelling and punctuation, as she did in *Atlantic Monthly.* The popular magazines underwent scrupulous editing, and there were frequent calls for rewrites to make pieces suitable for their readers. Indeed, McClure coined the term 'magazining' to describe 'the treatment of a topic to make it just right for our use' (Wilson 1985: 51). Writers such as Faulkner and Hemingway, who submitted pieces for *Saturday Evening Post,* were often asked to adapt their work to suit the magazine's readership; in his study of the short story Stevick cites a particular example of Faulkner 'modifying the baroque intricacies of his prose and muting his idiosyncratic voice' with the

purpose of 'crafting deliberately direct and nonproblematic stories for the mass market' (1984: 8-9).

Wharton's relationship with this new type of businesslike editor was predictably far from smooth, and paradoxically, although she was now a celebrity writer herself, she had to respond to her editor's demands and comply with calls for rewrites in order to sell her stories. Balestra refers to two instances, that of the revision of 'Pomegranate Seed' (1931) and 'All Souls'' (1937) in which Wharton redrafted her tales according to her editors' suggestions. In both cases she did so with complaint, sending the revised version of 'All Souls'' to her literary editor Eric S. Pinker, with the label 'for the use of the magazine morons' (Balestra 1996: 21).

The original version of 'All Souls', which was previously entitled 'Week-End', consisted of two sections, the first being an introduction, the second the account Sara Clayburn gave the narrator of what happened over the course of the thirty-six hours following All Souls' night. The story is one of absence, signalled by the disappearance of her servants, when Sara awakes from her sick bed in her empty, cold house. As she drags herself with great difficulty downstairs, silence follows her 'as though she were its prisoner and [it] might throw itself upon her if she attempted to escape' (*CS2* 810). Wharton links this silence with death itself, describing it as a 'pall' (*CS2* 812) and a 'sepulchre' (*CS2* 814) and her house's name, 'Whitegates' has an obvious connection with its pearly counterpart. Returning to her bedroom, taking care to lock her door, Sara falls into an agitated sleep and wakes to find the servants back in the house, denying they have ever been away. Although she cannot believe the weekend was some form of hallucination as a result of her fever, she puts the whole matter out of her mind, until exactly one year later. On the next All Souls' night she recognises the same strange woman she had seen outside her house just before she had the fall that had confined her to bed. Terrified, Sara flees, vowing never to return.

'Week-End' was rejected by Pinker for its lack of explanation as to what had happened that first weekend, and she was asked in a letter from her editor on 11th March 1937 to 'satisfy the average magazine reader's desire for something at least approaching a conclusive ending' (Balestra,1996: 21). Her revised story, with what Balestra describes as a 'spurious ending' and the suggestion that it be given the revised title 'All Souls'' was sent to Pinker with her 'magazine morons' comment (1996: 21). Wharton's additional, third, section to the story, consists of the narrator's explanation of events. Sara's cousin, the narrator, introduces the theme of witchcraft, suggesting directly there must be some 'natural explanation' (*CS2* 820), and stipulating that the strange woman was a 'fetch', who had come to take the servants to a coven – hence their absence the following day.

The narrator's words, in both the first and final sections of the story are in distinct contrast to the subtle, image-laden narration of Sara's account in the second, central section. He contradicts himself, suggesting the business is 'queer and inexplicable' (*CS2* 798), yet attempts to give an explanation, in what 'isn't exactly a ghost-story' (*CS2* 799). Whereas Sara's account contains the implicit fear of approaching death, her cousin, by contrast, dwells on explicit references to the sexually fuelled practices of the coven in a blatant, clumsy framing narrative. His convoluted ninety-six word opening sentence, riddled with embedded clauses, self interruptions and afterthoughts, 'ceaselessly tentative, punctuated by dashes, parentheses and ellipses' (Stengel 1989: 87), encourages the reader from the outset to question his reliability. Even his naming of her is not consistent; he first refers to her as 'Sally', and then onwards as 'Sara', suggesting the closeness between the two is of his own invention.

Critical reaction to 'All Souls'' includes Ammons' suggestion that the reference to witches in the final section corresponds with Wharton's use of this figure in Ethan Frome to personify 'maternal rejection' and 'female betrayal' (1980: 75). (Sara Clayburn is childless.)

Lewis concludes that the two perspectives of the events of the weekend highlight Sara's 'loss of grip on reality [and] hysteria... [which] are her intuitive moral and psychological reaction to the coven' (1968: 45). Neither consider that of the two conflicting accounts of what happened that weekend, Sara's has more narrative credibility by virtue of the very way it is recounted, and that it serves to highlight the inadequacies of the frame given by her inept cousin.

I contest Balestra's suggestion that Wharton's revisions constitute a lowering of her literary standards (1996: 22), and argue that the narrative frame created by the first and last section of the story operates to give the text further depth. Furthermore, the changes that Wharton was obliged to make are subverted by this buffoon-like narration, beneath which is the submerged voice of Sara Clayburn, who makes no connection with and displays no credence of witchcraft. It is true that the original story has lost its 'almost Beckett like vacancy' (Zilversmit 1987: 303) by not ending with Sara's flight from the house, but much of the absence is still there and had the gaps been less clumsily filled by the narrator, *then* they would have been lost. Wharton's obligation to produce the type of nonproblematic story Faulkner was told to produce by his magazine editors, led her to create polyphonic texts in which the reader actively constructs meaning.

Compared to earlier stories, such as 'Xingu' (1911), printed in the magazines of the Gilded Age, 'All Souls'' is imbued with layers of meaning that support varied readings of the story. The influence of Wharton's need to accommodate a far wider audience at this stage of her career cannot be dismissed, and I argue that it certainly plays a role in the subtly contradictory narrative structure of this story. 'All Souls'' is both a warning about witchcraft and is dismissive of the practice. It is about the fear of death (Wharton was now in her seventies), and a foolish woman who thinks she can remain invincible in her old age. It is a tale that is simultaneously explicit and subtle, that has (superficial) closure yet is riddled with

absences and hinges on unsaid understandings between author and reader. Despite the considerable editorial pressure under which Wharton had to write in this era of the mass magazine, she skilfully retains her authorial integrity, giving her editor what is required whilst also subtly challenging it.

Arguably the most influential force in the dramatic rise of the mass magazines was advertising. Turner writes of Munsey's magazine 'revolution' of 1893:

> [Munsey and McClure] hit upon an elegantly simple formula: identify a large audience that is not affluent or particularly classy, but that is getting on well enough, and that has cultural aspirations; give it what it wants to read; build a huge circulation; sell a lot of advertising space at rates based on that circulation (Munsey's rate was one dollar per page per thousand of circulation); sell the magazine at a price below the cost of production, and make your profit on ads (2003: 89).

Magazines relied heavily on advertising revenue. *Youth's Companion*, in which Wharton was published, is described by Turner as a 'mail order catalog[] dressed up as magazines to meet postal regulations, ... often sent free to 'subscribers' with little or no actual effort to gather in renewals' (1991: 90). Whereas the editors of 'quality' magazines such as *Scribner's Magazine* believed 'any displays other than book notices lowered the dignity of a literary monthly' (Reed 1997: 57), the mass magazines took a very different approach and proceeded to make vast profits promoting products from cruises to shampoo. By 1910 the *Ladies' Home Journal* was making two and a half million dollars in gross advertising revenue per annum, an amount eclipsed by the *Saturday Evening Post* which Reed calculates made five and a half million dollars gross purely on advertising the same year (1997:105). He notes that the *Post*'s 1576 pages plus 26 front covers for the period January to June 1910 featured a total of 788.69 pages of paid insertions (1997:105), which suggests virtually half the magazine itself was advertising.

It was not only advertisements that directed the reader's attention to specific products; consumption was also encouraged visually via the illustrations accompanying the stories in a magazine. Thornton notes how the serialization of *The Mother's Recompense* in *Pictorial Review* was published with a series of illustrations which 'not only point to the text for meaning, ...but also to the products that they are meant to sell' (2001:31). She notes the illustrator's choice to depict Kate and Anne in the October 1924 edition in strikingly similar hats, shoes and postures to those of the two figures in the full page Modart Corset ad in the same magazine. Also noted is the decision to include a distinctive couch in the two illustrations for the serial in the December 1924 edition which complement the many home furnishing advertisements to be found in the same pages (2001: 39-52). She observes Earl Christie's portrait of Lilla in the October 1924 edition, is that of a young, blonde, artificial looking flapper in contrast to Wharton's portrait of a much heavier, more robust girl. She writes 'Even Lilla's 'contempuous stare' is softened into a demure come-hither expression achieved through emphasizing large brown eyes that appear wet or misty' (2001: 36) (Fig 13).

The same 'American Beauty school flapper' model appears in one of the most eye-catching Wharton story illustrations, in *Red Book Magazine*'s 1935 edition of 'Poor Old Vincent'. Here Nalda Craige's 'chestnut ripples' (April 1935: 16), are transformed into the bleached blonde bob in an image that dominates two double page spreads (Figs 14 and 15). In a pattern that Thornton so convincingly observes in Wharton's serialized novel, the image appears to be a reinforcement of an advertisement placed in the accompanying pages, in this case for Blondex Shampoo, whose powers are demonstrated by a bobbed blonde (April 1935 : 118) (Fig 16).

Unsurprisingly the layers of meaning Wharton was so careful to construct in her later stories are often overwhelmed by the illustrations that accompany her tales. Particularly

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Fig 13: Earl Christie's portrait of Lilla in *Pictorial Review* October 1924 taken from Thornton (2001: 36)

36 *Edie Thornton*

Figure 2. Earl Christie's "flapper." Cover. *Pictorial Review*, October, 1924. All *Pictorial Review* reproductions courtesy of the Chicago Public Library.

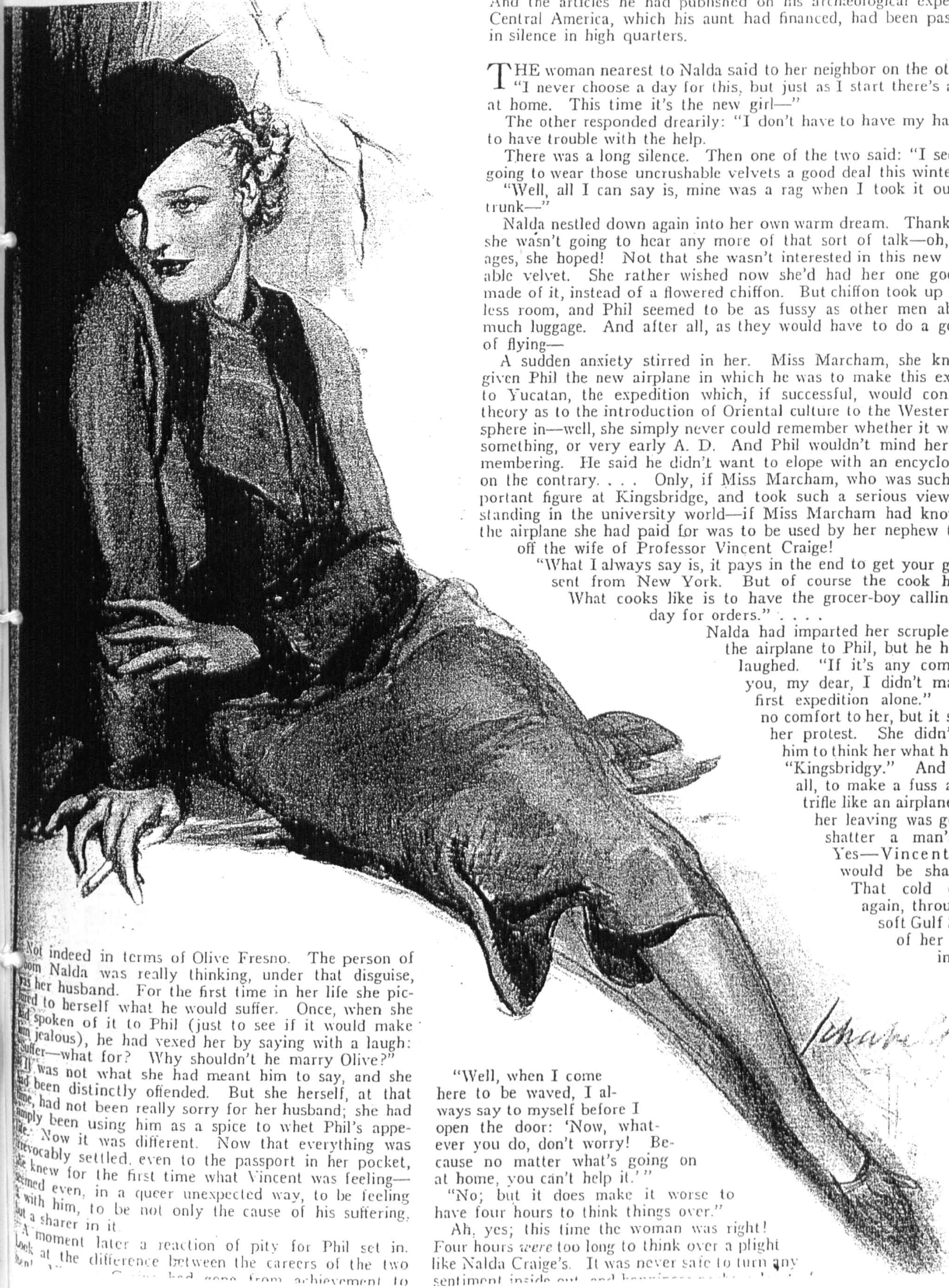
Fig 14: Illustration of Nalda Craige in *Red Book Magazine* April 1935, page 21.

, she had on the broadtail when she first met Phil
n. It was at the skating-party on the river that
essly Normans had got up; and could she help it
was prettier than the other women, and if her fur
as out and away the smartest there, and if her
d been "permed" the day before, and looked as
s as a chestnut just out of the bur? It was
perhaps, to date such an overwhelming event as
t encounter with Phil Ingerson by the fact of her
been waved the previous day; but then being
gave one, as nothing else did,—no, not even a new
hat sense of security and easy power which a wom-
r needed more than at her first meeting with the
o was to re-make her life. . . .
y—she remembered now how bored and restless
d to get during that interminable waving séance.
ours of immobility; "in the stocks," as Winna
. ca" it. When you had run through Gaston's
of p ure-papers, and exchanged platitudes with
r victims, if they happened to be acquaintances,
as simply nothing to do but to yawn and fidget,
k of all the worries and bothers which could be
abeyance at other times by bridge and golf and
and rushing about, always a little late, to one's
ents. Yes; she had chafed at the imprisonment
lled it "serving a life-sentence;" but since she
wn Phil Ingerson (six months it must be, for
her fourth wave since their first meeting) she
e to look forward to that four hours' immobil-
time for brooding over their friendship, taking
herself and of him.

sure would have seemed too long for that, she
ght. She looked at the driven faces of the other
desperately enduring the four hours' imprison-
h their own thoughts; then she sank back into
t bath of beatitude. There was so much to oc-
thoughts; every word of Phil's, every glance,
, his laugh, his comments on her dress and
s (*he* never failed to notice when she had
ly waved!), and his odd paradoxical judg-
life and men, which were never exactly
expected, and therefore so endlessly ex-
he. with poor Vincent you could tell
e opened his mouth what he was going
d say it for him more quickly than he
it out.
at (she interrupted herself parenthet-
e did not appreciate Vincent. Of
e did. She had always appreciated
e knew how high he stood in his
, how much the University es-
im as a lecturer and as an au-
n his particular subject. And
economics had become such
ant branch of learning that
raige's name was known far
he University, and he
e writing learned ar-
historical reviews
ophical quarterlies;
ad even, at a New
tion, heard some
om she had been
t, rejoin eager-
? The wife of
t Craige? Is *he* here, by any lucky chance?"
should dare to say that she had not appre-
cent—she wasn't as stupid as all that! Only,
an's life is wrapped up in economics, so little
r for his wife. And had Vincent ever appre-

He'd sit with his nose in a book all evening, and if she should appear with her head shaved instead of waved, he would never notice.

Fig15: Illustration of Nalda Craige in *Red Book Magazine* April 1935 page 23.



And the articles he had published on his archæological expedition in Central America, which his aunt had financed, had been passed over in silence in high quarters.

THE woman nearest to Nalda said to her neighbor on the other side: "I never choose a day for this, but just as I start there's a rumpus at home. This time it's the new girl—"

The other responded drearily: "I don't have to have my hair waved to have trouble with the help.

There was a long silence. Then one of the two said: "I see they're going to wear those uncrushable velvets a good deal this winter."

"Well, all I can say is, mine was a rag when I took it out of the trunk—"

Nalda nestled down again into her own warm dream. Thank heaven, she wasn't going to hear any more of that sort of talk—oh, not for ages, she hoped! Not that she wasn't interested in this new uncrushable velvet. She rather wished now she'd had her one good dress made of it, instead of a flowered chiffon. But chiffon took up so much less room, and Phil seemed to be as fussy as other men about too much luggage. And after all, as they would have to do a good deal of flying—

A sudden anxiety stirred in her. Miss Marcham, she knew, had given Phil the new airplane in which he was to make this expedition to Yucatan, the expedition which, if successful, would confirm his theory as to the introduction of Oriental culture to the Western Hemisphere in—well, she simply never could remember whether it was B. C. something, or very early A. D. And Phil wouldn't mind her not remembering. He said he didn't want to elope with an encyclopædia—on the contrary. . . . Only, if Miss Marcham, who was such an important figure at Kingsbridge, and took such a serious view of her standing in the university world—if Miss Marcham had known that the airplane she had paid for was to be used by her nephew to carry off the wife of Professor Vincent Craige!

"What I always say is, it pays in the end to get your groceries sent from New York. But of course the cook hates it. What cooks like is to have the grocer-boy calling every day for orders." . . . .

Nalda had imparted her scruples about the airplane to Phil, but he had only laughed. "If it's any comfort to you, my dear, I didn't make my first expedition alone." It was no comfort to her, but it silenced her protest. She didn't want him to think her what he called "Kingsbridgy." And after all, to make a fuss about a trifle like an airplane, when her leaving was going to shatter a man's life! Yes—Vincent's life would be shattered! That cold current again, through the soft Gulf Stream of her broodings. . . .

Not indeed in terms of Olive Fresno. The person of whom Nalda was really thinking, under that disguise, was her husband. For the first time in her life she pictured to herself what he would suffer. Once, when she had spoken of it to Phil (just to see if it would make him jealous), he had vexed her by saying with a laugh: "Suffer—what for? Why shouldn't he marry Olive?" It was not what she had meant him to say, and she had been distinctly offended. But she herself, at that time, had not been really sorry for her husband; she had simply been using him as a spice to whet Phil's appetite. Now it was different. Now that everything was irrevocably settled, even to the passport in her pocket, she knew for the first time what Vincent was feeling—seemed even, in a queer unexpected way, to be feeling with him, to be not only the cause of his suffering, but a sharer in it.

A moment later a reaction of pity for Phil set in. Look at the difference between the careers of the two men! . . . Craige had gone from achievement to

"Well, when I come here to be waved, I always say to myself before I open the door: 'Now, whatever you do, don't worry! Because no matter what's going on at home, you can't help it.'"

"No; but it does make it worse to have four hours to think things over."

Ah, yes; this time the woman was right! Four hours *were* too long to think over a plight like Nalda Craige's. It was never safe to turn any sentiment inside out, and happiness . . .

Fig 16: Advert for Blondex Shampoo in *Red Book Magazine* April 1935, page 118.

Because both have "signs" to show THEY'RE FRESH!

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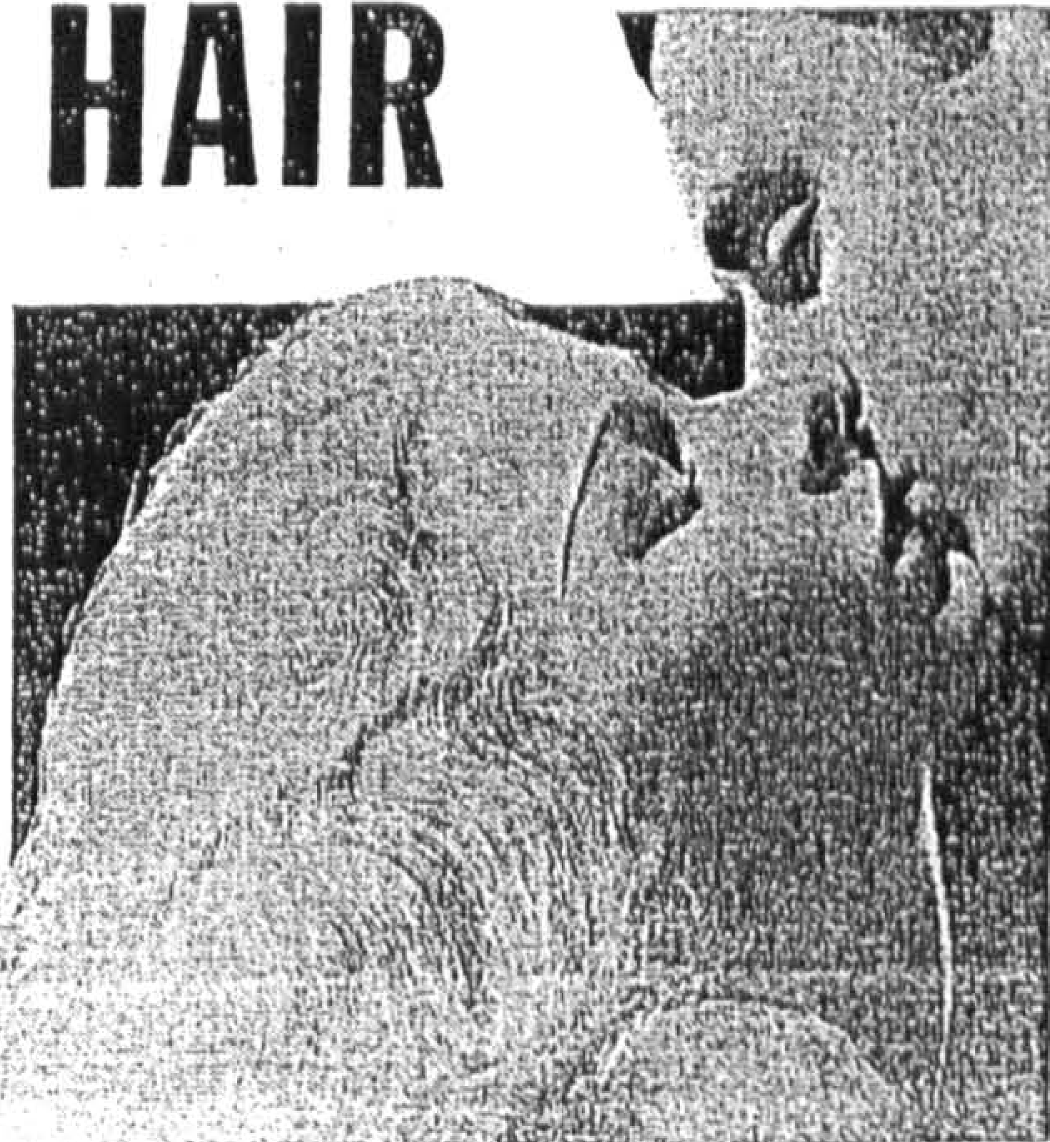

it again last night." She had always said yes, and then forgotten; and it was because she had that kind of mind, with great holes in it through which things were always slipping, that, instead of going up those stairs for the last time tonight, she would probably continue to go up them every day for the rest of her life. It was queer, how things hung together. . . .

As she mounted the stairs, her mind was rushing through every possibility of retrieving the incredible blunder of the date. But already she had the feeling that these dizzy feats of readjustment were being performed in the void, by some one who was not really herself. No; her real self was here, on this shabby familiar stair-carpet, going up to the room which had been the setting of her monotonous married years. It was curious; she had no faith any longer in the reality of that other future toward which, a few hours ago, every drop of blood in her had been straining. Should she rush out again, and at least send off a wire to the steamer? No; that was not possible, either. The steamer sailed at seven; and her bedroom clock (which always kept good time because Vincent saw to the clocks) told her that it was already past the hour.

But would she have telegraphed, even if there had been time? What could she have said? "Made a mistake in the day." That was too humiliating. . . . Better let him think that her courage *had* failed her, or that a sense of duty— But no; not that either. They had made too many jokes about that cowards' pretext, the sense of duty. . . .

She tossed off her hat and sat down wearily. Her mind, sick of revolving in its endless maze, became suddenly cold and quiescent. This was the way things had been meant to happen, she supposed.

Well, she thought, at any rate she would be alone this one evening. Thursday—the first Thursday of the month—was the night of her husband's club dinner, the dinner which was the cause of so many pleasantries, and so much secret anxiety, among certain ladies of the faculty, because of the late hour at which their husbands returned from it, but which had never troubled Nalda, since at eleven she could always count on hearing Vincent's key in the lock.

Poor old Vincent! She wondered what he would have said and done, if, returning home, he had found her gone?

THERE was a knock on the door, and she started up. A telegram after all?

"Yes?" she said.

"Dinner's ready, ma'am. The Professor sent me up to say—"

"Dinner?" She repeated the word slowly, trying to fit it into her mind. "I don't want any dinner. Mr. Craige's going out, isn't he?"

"Why, no; he hasn't mentioned it."

She stared at the woman, bewildered. It was extraordinary, incredible! Her hus-

overlooked in the pictures painted by illustrators who were 'huge celebrities in their own right [and] wielded the style power of today's media star' (Thornton 2001: 31) was the comic irony that Wharton wrote into some of her darkest stories. In many ways, the comedy in 'The Mission of Jane' (1902) adds to the cruelty of the final wedding banquet scene in which Jane, now a 'captive' of the wedding ring, clings to her mother, crying that she cannot leave her, at which point her new husband 'snatches [her] from her mother's bosom' (*CS2* 432). The violent loss of childhood, and enforced womanhood suggested by Wharton's textual imagery is not present in the illustration of this moment in *Harper's Magazine* December 1902 (Fig 17). Here there is very little bodily contact between mother and daughter, the latter veering genteelly towards the former's shoulder, suggesting a fond farewell rather than the awful realisation that she must leave forever. The comic narrative distance is lost in the artist's sentimental brushstrokes. Nor is there any hint of comedy in the two other illustrations (Figs 18 and 19), depicting pivotal moments in the story of the mother whose mind was destined to travel 'through an eternity of girlishness' (*CS2* 414) and whose 'opinions were heirlooms' (*CS2* 415). The woman is depicted in a theatrically romantic way - the very same feminine sentimentality which is the target of the story's satire.

The *Pictorial Review* sold itself on the quality of its illustrations, producing a different cover each month that could be framed as a picture (Zuckerman 1998: 17). When the magazine ran Wharton's 'Miss Mary Pask' (1925), with accompanying chiaroscuro illustrations, the picture of the eponymous character lacks the awful comedy of the moment, and resembles a painting of Scrooge by Goya rather than the white figure who 'twitters' with her 'clumsy capering coquetry' (*CS2* 315) (Fig 20). Whilst this is a dark story about female ageing and loneliness, it is a deeply ironic one, in which the narrator believes he has met Miss Mary Pask's ghost, rather than the living woman. Wharton creates comedy in the narrator's erroneous understanding of what happened the night he visits the old lady's house in a remote

Fig 17 ‘I can’t leave you’ she wailed. Illustration by E.M. Ashe in *Harper’s* December 1902, page 73.

"I CAN'T LEAVE YOU," SHE WAILED

Fig 18: 'You've been doing something you're thoroughly ashamed of!' Illustration by E.M. Ashe in *Harper's* December 1902, page 62.

"YOU'VE BEEN DOING SOMETHING YOU'RE THOROUGHLY ASHAMED OF!"

Fig 19: 'Over this anonymous particle of life Mrs. Lethbury leaned'. Illustration in *Harper's*

December 1902, page 67.

OVER THIS ANONYMOUS PARTICLE OF LIFE MRS. LETHBURY LEANED

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Fig 20: 'I suppose Grace asked you to come? It's an event – quite an event! I've had so few visitors since my death, you see.' Illustration by Harold Brett in *Pictorial Review* April 1925

Miss Mary Pask

Illustrations by Harold Brett

By Edith Wharton

part of Brittany; she employs the standard clichés of the ghost tale, including that of a stormy night and a dense sea fog that terrifies the carriage driver, who refuses to take the narrator any further. Miss Mary Pask is dressed in the standard 'baggy white garments' (*CS2* 315) and holds the requisite candle when she opens her door. These overworked motifs are unconsciously developed by the narrator himself, who notes that her steps on the wooden stairs were soundless and adds "Well – they would be, naturally!" (*CS2* 315). When he describes the room, with its bedraggled cushions, odds and ends of copper pots, he labels it "a real Mary Pask interior!" (*CS2* 316).

Whilst Wharton elicits sympathy for the forgotten woman, she also urges her reader to laugh at the young, male narrator, who is partly responsible for the situation he finds himself in. Beer and Horner note how Mary Pask enjoys the visitor's mistake 'play[ing] at being a vampire' and 'camp[ing] it up ... as a member of the living dead' for her guest's benefit (2003: 273). In this story the comic irony of the tale is overlooked by the illustrator, which, as Singley points out, is the risk Wharton frequently takes when she injects a dark humour into her narratives which 'relies as much on the interpreter as the creator of the text' (2000: 240).

Whilst modern and a product of the Progressive Era, the mass magazines were very much bent on providing purchasers with what they wanted to read, texts which contained sentiments they found congenial, or, as Reed puts it 'emotional balm in [a] rapidly changing world' (1997: 109). Magazines such as the *Saturday Evening Post* were intensely conservative (Reed 1997: 108), and *Harper*'s had a tone which 'resemble[d] the grip of a comfortable armchair' (Reed 1997: 58). The values of the middle-class, mainly female readership of the *Pictorial Review* sat uncomfortably with Wharton's often sympathetic rendering of female adultery, and it is therefore hardly surprising that Harold Anderson's illustration for 'Bewitched', paints the young woman a married farmer regularly meets as a ghostly apparition rather than a real live mistress, in an illustration for a story which allows

both readings of events.

In his illustration published in the March 1925 edition of the *Pictorial Review*, Anderson depicts Saul Rutledge standing next to a decidedly spectral Ora Brand, through whose transparent body a tree trunk can be seen (Fig 21). The image confirms Saul's story that he has been haunted by the ghost of his former sweetheart, whereas Wharton's text suggests that he has been meeting the girl's sister, Venny, on a regular basis. This is supported by Venny's death shortly after the ghostly figure is shot at by Venny's father, Sylvester Brand, who had been called in to investigate. Submerged beneath the gloss of the neat conclusion presented by Anderson's illustration, 'Bewitched' is a narrative with undertones of domestic violence and incest (White 1991: 99 and Fedorko 1995: 112). White notes the similarity between the Brand family and the Palmato family in Wharton's incestuous fragment, 'Beatrice Palmato': in both stories the mother dies and the two daughters are left in the care of an abusive father. In the case of 'Bewitched', one daughter, Ora wastes away and the other, Venny is shot by her father. Mrs Rutledge, it seems, is the only character who stands up to this 'animal' (*CS2* 354) 'bullying' (*CS2* 351) man, but, as White notes, the revenge destroys the victim (1991:104). None of these dark undertones are present in Anderson's illustration, which seems more suited to a Christmas card design than a depiction of the story of two girls who 'had their sexuality feared, and their lives controlled and ultimately ended by patriarchal power' (Fedorko 1995: 112)

Unsurprisingly, Wharton's texts do not sit passively within their magazine context. 'Writing a War Story' (1919) is very much Wharton's response to the restrictive frame of the magazine, satirizing the use of images to sell a narrative and the effect of the encouraged commodification of women in a time when some of the most successful magazines were those directly marketed to women. Published in *Woman's Home Companion*, the story not

Fig 21: 'Bewitched' Illustration by Harold Anderson in *Pictorial Review* March 1925 p14

only highlights the absurdities of 'sugar-coating' fuelled by editorial prudishness, but satirizes the feminine qualities promoted by magazines such as the one in which this story is published. Ivy Spang, whose name alone suggests something of the vacuous nature of her character, is asked to write 'a tragedy with a happy ending' (*CS2* 248) for the monthly publication *The Man at Arms*, yet despite what she believes to be her considerable talent, cannot find her 'Inspiration' (Wharton's capitalization). Having to resort to asking her old governess for help, Ivy would have abandoned the project if it had not been for her particularly flattering photo which is to be published alongside her story.

When *The Man at Arms* is distributed to the patients at the hospital where she works pouring out tea to the injured, Ivy is flattered by the soldiers' interest in her work. This is until she realises that this interest is in the photo, which she is asked to sign, rather than the story, which all admit to not having read. The only reaction she receives to the story itself is that of the famous writer Harold Harbard (a play on bard perhaps), who manages to contain his fits of laughter when he makes the connection between the photograph and the woman standing in front of him. Harbard, with his 'brown, ugly, tumultuous-locked head' (*CS2* 258) proceeds to follow the pattern of his sex by asking her to sign the photograph. He is confused by her reaction:

> You were angry just now, because I didn't admire your story; and now you're angrier still because I do admire your photograph. Do you wonder that we novelists find such an inexhaustible field in Woman? (*CS2* 260)

Whilst, as Lee writes, this story suggests that women cannot write about the war (2007: 490), the 'we' of Harbard's remark signalling the exclusively male realm of novel writing, Wharton also demonstrates how Ivy is seduced by manufactured beauty, in this case that of her photograph, and voices her dislike of the eminent writer in terms of his ugliness. The woman is devalued by the importance she gives to appearances, a notion which

challenges the ethos of the magazine in which the story is published, and subverts the very values by which it is sold. (The next month's cover was to have the title 'Fall and Winter Fashions'.) To add further irony, 'Writing a War Story' was published alongside a full page promotion of Ellen Glasgow's forthcoming serialized novel, which, of course, included a large, flattering photograph of the author (Fig 22).

Unlike Ivy, Wharton rarely wrote stories with happy endings, and the few she did are probably her weakest, such as 'Venetian Night's Entertainment' (1930) and 'Bread Upon Waters' (1934). Although she responded to beauty, particularly the fine arts and architecture, she preferred being associated with male rather than female writers, rejecting the sentimentality associated with her sex, which was to earn her the reputation of being 'cool' (Tuttleton et al 1992: 504) and seemingly heartless in the treatment of her characters. Rejecting happy endings for rawer, bleaker narratives, Wharton's writing was often associated with James, but a more masculine version (Waid and Colquitt 2005: 541). The 'we' in Harbard's outburst probably includes Wharton.

Yet this story, as is the case of the majority of her later, mass magazine fiction, is open to different readings. Whilst Ivy's behaviour and attitude to writing is depicted in a decidedly comic, derogatory manner, the narrative also provides clues to why she is like this: Ivy has been duped by her own commodification. When her poetry receives a glowing review from a critic whom she charmed one night at a dinner party she is led to believe her writing is of some worth (*CS2* 247). In the same way, when her photo is so fetching, 'really too charming to be wasted' (*CS2* 253), she is encouraged to believe she can write a similarly beautiful story. She cannot see things as they really are, because she has acquired a woman's vision which does not go beyond appearances. This is in direct contrast to the clear-sighted, rational women of Wharton's early stories, such as Delia Corbett in 'The Lamp of Psyche' (1895), and Lydia Tillotson in 'Souls Belated' (1899) who see through the 'fiction' of their

Fig 22: Page 1 *Woman's Home Companion* September 1919.

The Woman's Home Companion is published monthly. The price is 20c a copy; $2.00 a year. Foreign postage, $1 extra; Canadian postage, 25c extra. Entered at Post-Office at Springfield, Ohio, as second-class matter under the Act of March 3, 1879. Copyright, 1919, The Crowell Publishing Company, United States and Great Britain.

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THE WOMAN MAKES THE HOME

PHOTOGRAPH BY CAMPBELL STUDIO

Ellen Glasgow's Great Novel

"The Builders"

A FINE and moving love story, set in the modern South, is "The Builders," Ellen Glasgow's new novel which will begin in the October COMPANION. This is the first time that Miss Glasgow has consented to magazine presentation of any of her books, so COMPANION readers may congratulate themselves on a unique honor, as well as on the certain pleasure of reading a work that is sure to be considered one of the most distinguished novels of the year.

BASIL KING

Author of "The City of Comrades," "The Inner Shrine," "The High Heart," etc.

A BIG novel, "The Thread of Flame," by Basil King, will follow "The Builders,"—the story of a man who, while acting as stretcher bearer at the front, has lost all knowledge of his identity, and for three years has lived a life entirely different from all he had known before. This man's wife, another man, younger and a victim of the war in a different way, and a clever and amusing girl, who frankly declares her intention to marry for fame and money, are the principal characters in the book, which is of absorbingly vital interest.

ELEANOR H. PORTER

Author of "Pollyanna," "Oh, Money, Money," "The Road to Understanding," etc.

ANOTHER character as engaging as "Pollyanna" and "Miss Billy" is "Mary Marie," the heroine of Mrs. Porter's latest novel, which will be one of the COMPANION'S special fiction features for spring. "Mary Marie" is a quaint and vivid personality, the daughter of a serious-minded college professor and his light-hearted, rather frivolous wife, who, through utter incompatibility, are divorced when Mary Marie's story begins. It is told in autobiographic form by Mary Marie herself, with all the pathos and humor imaginable.

own lives. Wharton's later depictions of relatively mindless young women indicate her despair at the new consumerist culture of femininity, and within these portraits lies a direct challenge to both the mass magazines and the middlebrow female readers for whom she wrote.

Whilst magazines such as *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Woman's Home Companion* were promoting the smooth running of a happy household, Wharton was writing stories about a husband giving his wife 'six month's leave' with a lover and a woman letting a man erroneously believe he has a few months to live so that he finally marries her. As Wharton's readership became an increasingly female one, her female characters were presented progressively harshly: either as mindless decorative, creatures such as Ivy Spang in 'Writing a War Story' (1919) or Nalda Craig in 'Poor Old Vincent' (1935) or as calculating women who use men, such as Alice Waythorn in 'The Other Two' (1904) who swiftly moves through three husbands as she makes her way up the social ladder. The odd spark of muted admiration or narrative pleasure can be found in her presentation of her older women, such as Miss Mary Pask (1925), Mrs Ashby senior in 'Pomegranate Seed' (1931) and Grace Ansley in 'Roman Fever' (1934), but her later stories contain a distinct absence of the developed charting of the thinking female character she incorporated into some of her earlier short fiction, such as 'The Muse's Tragedy' (1899) and 'The Quicksand' (1902). In terms of promoting the perfect household and happy family venerated by the women's magazines, Wharton was decidedly unhelpful: only a handful of her female characters possessed children, and not one of stories was an unambiguous celebration of maternal or marital felicity.

The new style 'face-to-face' sales marketplace of the popular magazines encouraged a narrowing of the gap between editor and reader (Wilson 1985: 50); letters from the public were both sought and published, *Ladies Home Journal* receiving almost a quarter million in the first six months of 1913 (Zuckerman 1998: 35). This new appreciation of readers was not

embraced by Wharton, who, apart from satirizing them in her stories, derided them in both her letters and in her published critical writing. Yet, as I outlined in my earlier chapters on Wharton's use of ellipsis and gaps, Wharton's stories have a distinct orality of tone and share much in common with conversation in their use of silence, ambiguity and the illusion of a shared understanding with the reader. Whereas her non-fiction displays a distinct irritation with her readers, her stories suggest a certain concordance, even if it is to seduce her reader into his or her own self denigration.

In his study of the origin of mass culture, Ohmann cites the need for more research into exactly who were the readers of the America popular magazines of the early twentieth century (1981:91). Although considered a large percent of the population, Ohmann notes this 'mass' audience did not include the twenty percent of the population who were immigrants, nor the twelve percent who were black, nor the poorest Anglo-Saxon farmers and workers. He concludes that 'mass' readership of the popular magazines in the first half of the twentieth century was approximately half of the white 'native' American population, which was about one third of the U.S. population in total (Ohmann 1981: 92). Ohmann's approximations indicate that the magazines had a generally middle class, aspirational readership. (These 'cheap' monthlies were still beyond the financial reach of working class individuals, whose only access to the periodicals was through 'passed along' copies (Zuckerman1998:26)). The magazine readers of Wharton's later stories did not have the education or wealth that their Gilded Age predecessors possessed, but were eager to acquire cultural and practical knowledge as part of their own self advancement.

This new reader is reflected in the development of Wharton's narrative style and suggests she was not as insensitive to her public as she would make us believe. In her later stories Wharton drops many of the direct references that rest on a shared classical knowledge, electing, instead, to make more subtle, submerged allusions, such as a surname 'Gorse'

indicating a character's Persephone-like role in 'Pomegranate Seed'(1931), which, if not acknowledged by the reader is not a barrier to an understanding of the plot. Whereas in her 1904 'The House of the Dead Hand', set in Siena, she incorporates various classical figures and references the works of Dante, Goethe, Virgil, Sodoma and Shakespeare, in her 1934 'Roman Fever' her only classical allusions are the city's famous buildings. It was, however, the elliptical structure of her stories which created much of the conflict with her editors. She received complaints about the unclear ending of 'Mr Jones' (1928), and was asked to rewrite 'Pomegranate Seed' (1931) giving 'explanation of the situation' (Balestra 1996: 15). Her gap filled, reader-led narratives did not suit the conclusively plotted, explicitly narrated stories desired by middlebrow editors and readers, and suggests that in terms of structure, her writing was perhaps too modern for its mainstream magazine frame.

As telephones, airplanes, x-rays and central heating found its way into Wharton's later fiction, many of the taboos of the Gilded Age began to disappear. Most striking is her rendering of infidelity, and by 1933 she was able to publish a short story in *Woman's Home Companion* that began in decidedly outspoken terms. She writes:

> His wife had said: 'If you don't give her up I'll throw myself from the roof.' He had not given her up, and his wife had thrown herself from the roof (*CS2* 587).

(Ironically Wharton was asked to change the name of the story from 'The Day of the Funeral' to 'In a Day' as the original title was a little too morbid for the magazine's sensitive readers (Wright 1998: 58).) In this new, modern environment Wharton continued to write subversively in terms of the taboos she challenged; in her later stories (and novels) she chose to consider the older woman's sexuality, and continued to dip her toe into the alluringly dark waters of incestuous desire, most notably in her 'Beatrice Palmato' fragment, which she elected not to destroy. One wonders if her forty years as witness to the development of publishing led her to believe that this piece of work would someday be publishable (as it

was). If this is the case, it is evidence of Wharton's understanding of the industry and awareness of which boundaries could be challenged and which she should not attempt to pass in her lifetime. It also shows that whenever Wharton wrote, it was for the restrictive frame of a published context.

Wharton wrote to sell, and in the case of her short stories, it was to an increasingly wide readership, but she did not compromise her art to do so. Her frequently ironic stories contain layers of meaning and are often polyphonic in nature. She is thus able to create an 'awful comedy' of female ageing in 'Miss Mary Pask' (1925) and a 'delightful' condemnation of female commodification in 'Poor Old Vincent' (1935), both complex creations being beyond an illustrator's reach. Such layering gives readers an apparent explanation for the situations she creates, whilst also often providing the depth of a counter narrative for those who choose to acknowledge it. In order to please a wide readership Wharton wrote stories which satisfied a range of readers' desires, from entertainment to social criticism, from the upholding of tradition to a condemnation of its outmoded values, all within the same text. And Wharton created meaning not only from within the narratives themselves, but also through their interaction with the material frame of the magazine in which they were published. The irony of 'Writing a War Story' is doubled by its placement nearby Ellen Glasgow's photograph, just as the inanity of the importance Nalda Craige gives her hair is further ridiculed by the beauty advertisements alongside the story.

Wharton artfully used a restrictive environment to her advantage. She challenged her Gilded Age editors within her texts by producing distinctly unsentimental portraits of women and marriage, and outside them by demanding they match the sums she had been offered by other magazines for her stories. Whilst completing many of the rewrites demanded by the editors of the mass magazines, she subverted their often puritanical publishing policy by wrapping tales of adultery in a ghost story, and female desire in comedy, producing narratives

which not only ridiculed the advertising that financed the magazines, but also the very readers who bought them. Whilst these new magazines presented a greater challenge to authorial autonomy, not simply in calls for changes to texts, but also in the way stories were dissected and sections placed in different parts of the magazine in order to lead the reader to the advertising[65], Wharton developed her reader-led narratives to create a subtle, often comic irony which provided much more than the simple entertainment her editors sought.

Wharton's subversive narratives, which defied the very frame in which she published, share much in common with modernist distaste for establishmentarianism and consumerism. However, Wharton did not separate herself from mass culture; rather she subtly challenged many of its values from within the institution of the popular magazine, whilst paradoxically making a fortune from the venture. Nor did she ever write without having her (mass) reader in her mind – from writing her own reviews of 'Fast and Loose' when she was fifteen (Wolff 1977:45), to meticulously recording her sales figures in her diary as an adult (Lewis 1975:151). Wharton's ability to 'connect' to a wide readership, imbuing a single story with a myriad of narratives reflects not only her recognition of literature as a marketplace commodity, but also the importance she gives to the reader in the assignment of meaning. Safely publishing in their little magazines, many 'radical' modernist writers refused to enter into the public marketplace, and those who did, such as Hemingway, T.S. Eliot and Joyce appeared to embrace it, unlike Wharton who challenged it to the very end of her forty-six year writing career. The magazine frame in which the majority of Wharton's short stories had their debut provided not simply financial gain, but also a disharmonious context in which her literary craft flourished.

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[65] The reader picking up the April 1925 edition of *The Pictorial Review* would find 'Miss Mary Pask' dissected into four sections appearing on pages 8, 9, 75 and 76.

Chapter 6: Wharton and the Twentieth Century: Short Stories, Modernism and Magazine Readers.

In this concluding chapter I discuss the importance of the often overlooked original magazine context of Wharton's short stories. I demonstrate the influence of this magazine frame on both Wharton's poetics, that is, the manner in which she constructed her short stories, and on the critical reception of the stories, in terms of how their initial material context has coloured the way in which they have been read. Informed by recent studies of the role of the publishing marketplace in fin de siècle and modernist writing (Strychacz 1993, Brake 1994, Rainey 1999, Morrison 2000, 2006, Chan 2007, Scholes 2008), I consider the extent to which the stories' original magazine frame suited, if not shaped, many of the modernist features of her work. Following the lead set by scholars such as Balestra (1996) and Thornton (2001; 2005), I use the magazine frames of Wharton's short stories to demonstrate her often challenging engagement with twentieth century culture. Indeed, it is only from within their initial magazine context that her short stories fully reveal their subversive character, demonstrating Wharton's subtly ironic, crafted challenge to the nineteenth century mainstream tradition in which she is so often positioned.

Although typically considered 'a minor genre' (Shaw 1983:61), and one '[best suited for] apprenticeship' (Howells 1887, quoted in Levy 1993: 66), Wharton made a lifelong commitment to the short story, and wrote to Robert Grant as early as 1907 of the 'sense of authority' (Lewis: 1988: 124) with which she felt she commanded the form. She skilfully combined popular success with literary craftsmanship, and whilst actively encouraging bidding wars between publishers for her short fiction, she was pronounced a 'master of the short story' in 1936 by Percy Hutchinson in the *New York Times Book Review* (Tuttleton et al 1992: 534). However, despite her critical and commercial achievement in this genre, and her

clear predilection for the short story, Wharton's posthumous positioning in the literary canon is largely based on her novels, and more often than not, fictions such as *The House of Mirth* and *The Age of Innocence* have associated her 'with the ideal of a past stable social order, a caretaker or preserver of tradition' (Sterling 2005: 1), although the growing critical attention given to her later novels (Haytock 2008, Griffith 2006, Beer and Horner 2007, and forthcoming) is reinforcing current revisions of this image of the writer.

Wharton's lack of recognition as a short story writer, a form in which she is regarded as being at her 'most modern' (Ware 2004: 17), if not 'ultra-modern' (Tuttleton et al 1992: 159), has contributed to her past associations with a nineteenth-century tradition. Indeed, only three book length studies of her work in this genre have been published to date: White's *Edith Wharton: A Study of the Short Fiction* (1991), Fracasso's *Edith Wharton's Prisoners of Consciousness* (1994) and Sterling's *Irony in the Short Stories of Edith Wharton* (2005). The critical tendency to focus on the novels, combined with Wharton's own infamous vehemently antimodernist criticism (Wegener 1999A: 32-33), has done little to highlight the innovative, often modernist nature of her short fiction. Yet her short stories, both as narratives and marketable commodities, demonstrate Wharton's active engagement with twentieth-century culture and their recognition as such would do much to prompt a reconsideration of her relationship with a her nineteenth-century tradition, a century in which she was published for only nine years. Although she wrote and was published for thirty-seven years in the twentieth century, Wharton is still frequently regarded as a Victorian writer (Beer 2006), and is overlooked in studies such as Shuman's *Great American Writers of the Twentieth-Century* (2002). If her work *is* to be assigned to a particular historical era, the dates between which she published, and the critical revising of contemporary writers with whom she is frequently compared, such as James and Conrad (Willison 2007:viv), logically position her in a modernist one. However, despite recent focus on Wharton's spirited dialogue with the

twentieth century (Ammons 1980, Bauer 1994, Peel 2005) and her 'engagement with modernism' (Haytock 2008:15) she is, as Haytock ruefully observes (13), notably absent from tomes such as Bonnie Kime Scott's *The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology* (1990), and Lisa Rado's *Modernism, Gender, and Culture: A Cultural Studies Approach* (1997). A greater recognition of Wharton's 'experimental' (Ware 2004:17), 'subversive' (Whitehead 2008: 54) short stories, and their often paradoxical relationship with popular culture, would begin to redress this current critical imbalance, and speed along Wharton's long overdue repositioning alongside other modern writers of the twentieth century, whilst also acknowledging her woefully overlooked contribution to the short story canon.

In his discussion as to why her short stories have suffered such critical neglect, Totten observes that their place of publication 'reflected unfavourably on Wharton' (2008: 7), and it is certain that their appearance in the form of magazine fiction has much to do with their marginalization. Indeed, as Pattee noted in 1923, the very fact that a 'historicist interpretation of the genre [i]s possible' via the link between its growth and that of the magazine publishing industry, is much of the source of its critical dismissal (1923: 443). Wharton's short stories were closely intertwined with the magazine industry; the majority were published initially (and in some cases only) on the pages of a magazine, as was 'nearly every short story published a century ago' (Chan 2007: xix). Indeed, a study of Wharton's forty-six year story writing career based solely on the bound collections published in her lifetime would overlook thirteen of some of her most revealing tales, such as 'The Fullness of Life' (1891), 'The House of the Dead Hand' (1904) and her satire of the magazine short story itself, 'Writing a War story' (1919). The short story's 'fugitive existence in ephemeral publications' (Shaw 1983:8) is aptly illustrated by the fact that almost two in every ten Wharton stories were solely published as magazine features, and it was not until 1968 that a complete collection was finally compiled by R.W.B. Lewis. It should also be noted that Lewis' collection is no

longer in publication and consequently, at the time of writing, there is no complete anthology of Wharton's short stories on sale in the U.K. or the U.S..

Whilst the short story presented Wharton with a substantial income, and a means of becoming a well-known name, which would in turn enhance book sales, it also associated her shorter work with journalistic, increasingly popular fiction, via a medium that unashamedly flaunted the link between literature and commerce. From its beginnings the mass magazine story was often regarded as 'filler material' (Orel 1986: 2) and as the genre became increasingly sought after by readers and profitable for writers, its status correspondingly plunged. Colum wrote in the *Dial* in 1917:

> At present America is in the grip of the short story – so thoroughly in its grip, indeed that, in addition to all the important writers, nearly all the literate population who are not writing movie scenarios are writing or about to write short stories. (345-6)

Wharton's short stories first received the appellation 'magazine fiction' in 1910, in a review of *Tales of Men and Ghosts* in the *Nation* (Tuttleton et al 1992: 496). Twenty-six years later, similarly unforgiven for their place of publication, the stories collected in *The World Over* received the same criticism. An anonymous reviewer laments:

> Why Mrs Wharton should ever have allowed these slick little bits to be exhumed from the files of the ladies' magazines is difficult to determine. Probably they read very nicely between the advertisements, but here they seem a very ordinary vintage. *Nation* 27 June 1936 852 (Tuttleton et al 1992: 537)

The World Over contained two of Wharton's subsequently most anthologized stories 'Roman Fever' and 'Pomegranate Seed', yet the initial magazine context of these narratives led them to be overlooked by contemporary critics. Indeed it was widely believed at this time that the magazine industry exercised a corrupting effect on the literature that it carried, as outlined in Q.D. Leavis' 1932 study *Fiction and the Reading Public*. Here Leavis sums up her concern

by stating that the magazine's 'desire to conciliate and flatter 'the man on the street'' (1978: 27) had ultimately led to 'close the market to genius; talent, and distinction, and to force instead a kind of anaemic ability to satisfy the reading habit' (1978: 31).

Rather than 'the *man* on the street', magazines, and above all magazine readers, were decidedly feminine, and the short story's association with this mode of publication further distanced it from the phallocentric (Totten 2008:6) domain of the literary canon. Levy notes that in 1887 Howells pompously wrote in his 'Editor's Study' column in *Harper's* that the short story was 'best suited for 'women who as a rule' lived 'restricted lives' that produced a 'necessarily narrower outlook on the world' (Levy 1993: 66), further associating the form with a negative femininity. In one of the first stories Wharton wrote about the writing of popular fiction, she aligns the genre with women and appears to reinforce the assumption of its consequent insipid sentimentality, whilst also questioning the integrity of the magazine industry through her comic satire. Although published in 1900, 'April Showers' was written in 1894 (Lewis 1975:71), the same year that Wharton published 'That Good May Come' which also deals with the uneasy relation between commerce and art, but not in such a humorous manner.

'April Showers' concerns the attempts of Theodora Dace to write a best-selling novel. Inspired by writers such as Kathleen Kyd, who happens to live near Theodora's uncle, she takes on the pen name Gladys Glyn and writes a sentimental opus ending in the words 'But Guy's heart slept under the violets on Muriel's grave' (*FS* 129).[66] This was also the final line of Wharton's adolescent novella 'Fast and Loose' (Lewis 1975:30) and 'April Showers' not only sends up the business of popular sentimental fiction, but also is self mocking in its targeting of her own juvenile illusions about the writing industry.

[66] See Appendix 3 for a copy of 'April Showers' which appeared in 'April Showers' in Miles, Alfred (1905) (ed) *Fifty-Two Stories of Head, Heart, and Hand for Girls*. London: Hutchinson and Co. pp. 129-139

Theodora Dace is the eldest of four siblings, and as a seventeen year old girl who has presumably finished her formal education, she is expected to assist in the running of the household. But rather than prepare her invalid mother's breakfast or sew on her brother's buttons, she is constantly waylaid by what she believes to be her literary genius, and completing the manuscript takes precedence over her domestic chores. When the novel is finished, her only concern is that its 'emotional intensity' (*FS* 131) might be beyond the average reader, but then again, she did not care to 'amuse' her readers, 'she left that to more frivolous talents' (*FS* 131).

Theodora decides to send her manuscript to the home of popular fiction, the magazine *Home Circle*, in which Gladys Glyn was first published. (Ironically, twenty-five years later Wharton herself was to publish in women's magazines including *Woman's Home Companion* and *Ladies' Home Journal*. It appears this irony was not lost on the author, as demonstrated in her satirical piece for the *Journal*, 'Writing a War Story' (1919), in which she ridicules the treatment of aspiring women writers.) Considering the (undoubtedly female) readership of *Home Circle*, Kate wonders if perhaps an inferior work would have a better chance of publication, but no, she would not make any changes. Wharton writes:

> The thought was sacrilege! Never would she lay hands on the sacred structure she had reared; never would she resort to the inartistic expedient of modifying her work to suit the popular taste. Better obscure failure than vulgar triumph. The great authors never stooped to such concessions, and Theodora felt herself included in their ranks by the firmness with which she rejected all thought of conciliating an unappreciative public (*FS* 131-2).

Theodora's thoughts not only serve to demonstrate her immature lack of self knowledge (if she is not chasing popular success, why does she send the manuscript to a magazine?), but also the common perception of the time that to be 'great' one could not be

'popular'. This belief appears to be a precursor to the modernist ideology that was to fuel the new magazines, such as the *Little Review,* with its motto 'Making No Compromise With The Public Taste' (Churchill 2006: 9), a sentiment which Wharton here associates with a childish immaturity and misguided belief in the brilliance of one's own talent. Indeed, years later, when she wrote about Joyce's *Ulysses*, a ground-breaking novel in its challenge to the popular literary tradition of the time, she was to describe it as fiction 'of the schoolboy type' (Lewis 1988: 461). Her target was not so much the pornographic element of his novel (her fragment 'Beatrice Palmato' demonstrates her belief that such material may be presented in a crafted albeit graphic manner), but its unrefined, unworked, adolescent nature.

'April Showers' strips the glamour from popular fiction and the magazine industry. Theodora's uncle reveals that Kathleen Kyd, the author of 'Fashion and Passion', 'An American Duchess' and 'Rhona's Revolt' is in fact called Frances G. Wollop and is married to a dentist. Whilst praising the woman's ability to make ten thousand a year on her writing, he sternly criticizes her fiction and hopes that his niece never reads her work. He declares 'I don't believe in feeding youngsters on sentimental trash; it's like sewer gas – doesn't smell bad, and infects the system without your knowing it' (*FS* 131).

But Theodora *is* an avid reader of Kathleen Kyd's work, and has been infected. When she receives a letter that her work will be published in *Home Circle,* she falls into a ridiculous clichéd reverie that demonstrates what Wharton saw as the absurd, distorted, vacuous nature of much popular sentimental writing. Theodora stumbles into the wood next to the schoolhouse and 'look[s] up through interlacing boughs at a tender, opaque blue sky full of the coming of a milky moon... enveloped in an atmosphere of loving comprehension' (*FS* 135). However, this story is not simply a composite of the 'forced narrative tone' and a caricature of 'aromatic pain' that led Burlingame to refuse to publish it in *Scribner's* (Lewis 1975:71). Whilst Theodora has been influenced by the sentimental fiction promoted by the

popular magazines and restricted to an existence as a domestic helpmeet, she has an active, creative mind and looks beyond the confining nature of her own life. By sending the manuscript she is attempting to secure a both a profession and independence, and it is significant that when she daydreams about what she will do with her earnings, she plans to buy her mother and sisters freedom via a wheelchair and bicycles, the latter a well recognised symbol of the New Woman.

Theodora's acceptance letter is proved to be an administrative error made by the *Home Circle* staff. The blame lies partly on their own disorganisation, highlighting the very mundane processes by which literature is chosen for public consumption, and partly because the title of her work is the same as that of piece recently sent in by Kathleen Kyd herself, which they *do* intend to publish. The clichéd title suggests that Kyd is following a standardised narrative formula, which contains little originality, so much so that perhaps even a seventeen year old could write it. Indeed, the turn of the century marked a tremendous growth in handbooks for writers who wished to sell their work to the popular magazines (Leavis 1978: 27-28). Copious guidelines were available for anyone hoping to become a successful author, from instructions such as 'write for children to read', to even 'write so a blind man can read it' (Leavis 1978: 30). Particularly popular were the handbooks for short story writers, who were advised to create 'stories with a strong feminine appeal and a happy ending', 'avoid anything sordid or depressing' and take note that 'the gruesome, ghostly or brutal [were] not required' (Leavis 1978: 27-8).

Even at this early stage in her career (Wharton had written four short stories by 1894), Wharton's short fiction broke with the conventions of magazine writing. The 'gruesome, ghostly and brutal' were already beginning to make their appearance in her stories, 'The Fullness of Life' (1893) beginning with a haunting description of the protagonist's own death. From the beginning of her short story career 'happy endings' were few and far

between and her very first, 'Mrs Manstey's View' deals with the subject of the premature death of a lonely widow. As for writing material suitable for children, her 1893 treatise on marriage, 'The Fullness of Life', which implies women often make the unfortunate choice of a boring life with an irritating husband, certainly was not a tale for the nursery. Wharton's first stories were published almost exclusively in *Scribner's Magazine*, which disassociated itself from the 'magazine fiction' ridiculed in 'April Showers', but even when she was writing for the women's monthlies in the second half of her career, her double-edged satire of popular fiction was still very much a part of her narratives. Both 'Writing a War Story' (1919), and 'April Showers' (1900) concern rather silly women writers, unable to recognise their own lack of talent, yet both stories suggest it is as much the woman's environment, as the woman herself ,which is responsible for her shortcomings.

Often dismissed as juvenile fiction as a result of its juvenile reflector, 'April Showers' is currently unavailable as part of a collection and can only be read in its original place of publication, the January 18th 1900 edition of *Youth's Companion* or in the 1905 collection *Fifty-Two Stories of Head, Heart and Hand for Girls*. The story is significant in its uncharacteristically sympathetic portrait of Theodora's father, compared to the other father figures to be found in Wharton's short fiction, such as in 'The House of the Dead Hand' (1904) and 'Mr Jones' (1928). His ironic, gently humorous vision of his daughter's domestic deficiencies reflects Wharton's own sympathetically ironic perspective as a writer of short fictions, a narrative point of view that was to become characteristic of her short story poetics. Theodora's father's request that she remove the 'East, West, home's best' (sampler, perhaps) from his office when he comes back to find a fireless grate and a smoky lamp, has an authenticity which suggests this is one of the few instances in Wharton's stories in which the character's voice and the narrator's are one. His empathetic response when Theodora discovers the awful mistake reveals the deep affection beneath his often sardonic mien, a

narrative stance found in much of Wharton's darkly comic, seemingly detached short fiction. Doctor Dace reveals he, too, had a manuscript returned and his own failure as a writer, yet his integrity as a father suggests literary fame is not a reliable measure of a person. Furthermore, his choice to become a doctor appears to reinforce the social value given to altruism, following the sentimental tradition of much women's writing. Yet, paradoxically, Wharton's woman writer, Theodora, is unwilling, and perhaps essentially unsuited to the caring role this tradition has assigned her.

Wharton wrote to be read, preferably widely read, and her magazine career is a testament to this. When Burlingame refused her story, she found another magazine that would publish it. In fact, in 1900 *Youth's Companion* carried two stories rejected by Scribner's Magazine, 'April Showers' and 'Friends'. That is not to say Scribner's rejected all her stories, indeed by 1900 they had published thirteen, including eight within her first collection *The Greater Inclination* (1899), which had been well received by critics and readers alike.[67] (Although Wharton complained of the lack of advertising the volume was given (Lee 2007: 162-3), 3,000 copies were sold in the first year of publication.) By the end of 1900 she had published fourteen magazine stories, in *Scribner's, Century, Lippincott's, Hearst's International* and *Youth's Companion,* and as I outlined in Chapter Five, by the end of her career her magazine publishing frame was to widen to a total of nineteen different periodicals.

Although she shunned publicity such as Stein's promotional tours (Turner 2003: 3) and Joyce's pages of photos for *Time* magazine (Boscali and Duffy 1996), she never sought the narrow readership of the expensive limited edition favoured by Lawrence (Willison 2007: xiv), nor that of a Jamesian opus that 'earned critical acclaim [but no] financial security'

[67] The eight stories published in The Greater inclination were 'The Pelican', 'The Muse's Tragedy', 'A Coward', 'The Portrait', 'A Journey', 'Souls Belated', 'The Twilight of the God', and 'A Cup of Cold Water'. 'The Pelican' and 'The Muse's Tragedy' had previously been published in *Scribner's Magazine* in November 1898 and January 1899 respectively.

(Towheed 2007:10). Wharton did not write for Walter Berry's 'Happy Few' (Lee 2007:173), and much of the attraction of the magazine publication was the access it gave to an increasingly larger circle of readers. The popularity of Wharton's magazine stories, their mass appeal and wide, heterogeneous distribution has much to do with their critical neglect, a neglect which stems from a contemporary distrust of the close link between the magazine and commerce. Lee notes that as early as 1899, on the success of *The Greater Inclination*, Wharton was already facing the perennial question 'Could you be very good and very popular?' (2007:173). To many critics, her decision to abandon the select readership of *Scribner's Magazine* for that of the mass periodicals confirmed that Wharton had made her choice and had decided to be popular. In 1953 Blake Nevius wrote:

> [It is] particularly unfortunate that she chose the forum of the women's magazines. Their conservatism must have agreed with her, but the formula to which they reduced human life and human behaviour encouraged certain weaknesses in her writing that she had once managed to control (Dean 2002: 243-44)

The fallacy of this historical critical tendency to define Wharton's fictions by their place of publication is demonstrated by their subsequent acclaim. 'A Bottle of Perrier' (1926) and 'Pomegranate Seed' (1931), two of her most frequently anthologised stories, first met their public on the pages of the *Saturday Evening Post*, the very same women's magazine Nevius condemns in his study of her fiction. It was not uncommon for such prejudice to be shared by writers themselves, and James famously described 'The Turn of the Screw' as 'the most abject, down-on-all fours pot-boiler that a proud man brought low ever perpetuated' when it was first published in 1898 in *Collier's Weekly* (Chan 2007: 119).

Wharton's own attitude to her popularity and critical reaction to her association with a mass readership is a complex one, illustrated by the contradictory layers of meaning in her 1904 story 'The Pot-boiler'. Here Wharton presents three well-named artists, one talented

(the reflector), called Stanwell, the second, a mediocre painter called Mungold, and the third, Arran, a sculptor who is absolutely devoid (or 'b[arren]') of talent, but tolerated by his friends because of his very charming sister. The most financially successful, as his name indicates, is the mediocre artist, who churns out fashionable portraits and uses the proceeds to woo Arran's sister with food hampers for her ailing brother.

After much deliberation Stanwell agrees to paint a portrait of a society hostess, who epitomises public taste by wanting 'something different from [what] all [her] friends have got, but [ju]st like it all [th]e same' (*CS1* 666). The picture is a success, and exhibited in a gallery it becomes 'a centre of comment and discussion' (*CS1* 680). Emboldened by his prosperity Stanwell proposes to Arran's sister, only to be told she has agreed to marry Mungold. She declares she has decided to make this 'sacrifice' because if she does so her brother will not have to 'prostitute his art' (*CS1* 688) by bowing to popular taste in order to support the two of them.

The real sting in the tale is the criticism the woman pours upon Stanwell, who has by now fallen in love with her. She communicates her profound disappointment that he has lowered himself to produce such mainstream, popular art, choosing to compromise his talent for financial gain, yet she justifies the average calibre and blatant commerciality of Mungold's work by citing his lack of ability, pointing out he is making the very best of his decidedly minor talent. The similarity between her criticism of Stanwell's choice to produce art for popular consumption rather than for an elite few, and that of with Nevius' 1953 condemnation of Wharton's 'magazine' fiction is striking. Both rest on the presumption that genius should be a private, nonnumerative affair and they clearly answer Lee's question; no, one *cannot* be good and popular. However this point of view is implicitly discredited by the person who proclaims it; Arran's sister, whilst decrying talented artists who work for financial gain, marries a man towards whom she feels little real fondness, for his money. The

sincerity of Stanwell's affection towards this woman appears to be as damning as his talent, as, after digesting her words, he rejects any further portrait commissions and returns to his lonely existence in a draughty studio.

Implicit in this story is the notion that the intelligent artist can both satisfy public taste and his own personal standards. Visited by an agent, he is told that he is 'smart enough' (*CS1* 666) to give his potential customers what they want, and in an argument with Arran over popularity Stanwell declares an artist can do two types of work 'one to please himself and the other to boil the pot', concluding 'a man can 'adapt his art' if he's clever enough to see the other side' (*CS1* 671). Yet, it appears Stanwell is not clever enough to see through Arran's sister, and continues to believe in the essential divide between popularity and artistic integrity, even to his own personal detriment, whilst those around him demonstrate the fallacy of such a creed.

Although two years after 'The Pot-boiler' was published Wharton blithely proclaimed 'all masterpieces of fiction have been potboilers, I think the name a very honorable one' (Lewis 1988: 103), as she became increasingly successful, winning the Pulitzer prize in 1921 (which she subsequently ridicules in *The Gods Arrive* (1932)) and being nominated for the Nobel in 1927, her lack of critical prestige, despite her enormous sales, both embittered and depressed her (Lewis 1975: 492). Her later short fiction is populated with unappreciated woman writers, as noted by various critics (Fedorko (1995) Donovan (1989) Wilson –Jordan (2007)), including a woman whose writing is not read (as in 'The Letters' (1910), 'Writing a War Story' (1919) 'Mr Jones' (1928) and 'Confession' (1936)), or is returned (as in 'The day of the Funeral' (1933)), or is unreadable (as in 'Pomegranate Seed' (1931)). Such fiction appears to echo her despair of not really being read as she thought she deserved, and consequently not being understood. Yet as she became increasingly bitter towards her readers, she continually sought an ever widening readership, forever wary of a loss of

popularity and income, and the subsequent 'darkness of indifference' (*CS1* 685) as she describes it in 'The Pot-boiler'.

Wharton's first decisive step in realizing her goal of a wide readership and becoming one of the most popular names in fiction was the publication of 'Mrs Manstey's View' in 1891 in *Scribner's Magazine*. Although she had published poetry in magazines as early as 1879, her choice of the short story form was a fundamental element of her mass appeal. In his introduction to *The Country of the Blind and other Stories*, H.G. Wells describes the 1890s as the 'heyday' of the form, writing 'The short stories of the nineties were written [for attention]. People talked about them tremendously, compared them, and ranked them. That was the thing that mattered' (1913: vi). Wharton's lifelong espousal of what was becoming the most popular genre of her age, and her decision to move from the selective milieu of Scribner's to the mass magazines meant that her contemporary readership was not wide, but vast. By the end of her career her stories were being read by millions.[68]

Such a mass readership, nurtured to a great extent by Wharton's association with mainstream magazines, was rejected by or simply not available to many modernist writers. Much of modernism's driving force was its anti-commercial stance, and although its relationship with commodity culture has proved to be an increasingly complex one (Wicke (1988), Rainey (1998), Turner (2003), Chan (2007), Scholes (2008)), its hostility to the established literary market is widely regarded to have fuelled the creation of 'a fully alternative market of ... little magazines [and] book publishing' (Willison 2007: xiv). Modernist writers often saw themselves as writing for a small, select readership, rather than what Lawrence described as the 'parcel of fools' that constituted the 'tuppenny public' (Worthen 2007: 112). The little magazine epitomized their highbrow vision and active courtship of an elitist, minority readership, as did the lucrative business of limited editions.

[68] Reed writes that as early as 1920 *Woman's Home Companion*, one of the magazines in which Wharton's stories were published, was selling over 1, 215,000 copies a month (1997: 119)

Magazines such as the *Little Review* had two to three thousand subscribers, and the *Egoist* only ninety at the end of the First World War (Morrison 2001: 136), a stark contrast to the 64,000,000 mainstream magazines in circulation in America by 1905, which meant 'three monthlies to every four people' (Turner 2003: 90). In terms of place of publication, it appears Wharton could be no further apart from modernism than in her desire to be widely read and accordingly well paid for her writing.

Yet despite, or perhaps, as recent scholars have argued, because of, its indisputable link to the dramatic growth of the mass magazine industry (Levy 1993: 7, Shaw 1983:7), the short story is regarded as a 'quintessentially modernist' form (Head 1992: ix) (Curnutt 1997: 141). In terms of its material history, the short story's associations with modernism demonstrates the 'integrative' nature of the era's 'fascination with and opposition to mass culture' (Turner 2003: 6-7), via its affiliation to a form so closely associated with commodity culture and 'the man on the street' (Leavis 1978:27). In her study of British periodicals and the short story, Chan concludes that the form is 'emblematic of early modernism ... in its oscillation between mass culture and high art' (2007: xi). Indeed, as Shaw notes, Chekhov and Hemingway (whose work is strongly affiliated with modernism) 'began their careers as newspapermen' (1983: 7), which suggests that their experience of writing within a limited, commercially bound frame honed their skills in this genre and played a part in the emergence of a new style of writing that was later to be labelled modernist. And while their relation with the marketplace may have prompted Faulkner to describe the writing of short stories as 'going whoring' (Myszor 2001:39), it was undoubtedly the chosen form of many modernist writers. Wharton's positive disposition towards the short story was shared by iconic writers such as Joyce, Woolf, Wells, Lawrence and Hemingway and, it goes without saying, Mansfield, who wrote solely in the genre.

In his study of early modernism, Russell concludes that what made the short story and modernism 'synonymous' (1998:7) was the fact that both were marginalised by the dominant literary culture of the time. To this I would add that whilst modernism has since attracted considerable scholarship, the modernist short story continues its shadowy existence on the periphery of literary criticism, as demonstrated by the fact there is only one book length study of this modernist form, written seventeen years ago by Dominic Head (1992). The only other extended work on the modernist short story is Hunter's 1999 excellent PhD thesis *'Complete with Missing Parts': Modernist short fiction as interrogative text*, currently only available on microfilm at the British Library.

Even within the recent wave of critical interest in Wharton's relationship with modernism (Wegener 1999, Thompson 2002, Peel 2005, Haytock 2008), surprisingly little attention has been given to her short stories. Particularly disappointing is Peel's *Apart from Modernism*, in which he considers Wharton's pre 1914 writing. Whilst he acknowledges modernist features in *Ethan Frome* and 'The Eyes' (1910), (2005: 125, 107), little is made of the fifty-eight other stories Wharton had written by this date, even though a year before his study was published, they were cited by Ware as Wharton being at her 'most experimental' (2004:17).

Equally disappointing is the lack of extended comment on the modernist affiliation with the genre in studies of the short story. There are, fortunately, some notable exceptions; in her study *Short Stories and Short Fictions 1880-1980*, Hanson dedicates a sizeable chapter to the modernist short story. She considers in detail the modernist poetics of a short time frame, unreliable narration, fragmentary representation of experience and a rejection of the 'trite and outworn forms of the exotic or romantic' (1985: 63). Hanson concludes that in the modernist period 'the short story came to have, for the first time in its history, a status almost equivalent to that of the novel', noting that many writers of this era not only began their

careers in this form, but 'continued to find [it] congenial' (1985:56). Another notable exception to the lack of prominence given to the modernist short story can be found in Hunter's *The Cambridge Introduction to the Short Story in English* (2007). Here he assigns five chapters to the genre, beginning with a chapter-long discussion of the form and then dedicating one in turn to Woolf, Mansfield, Beckett and Joyce. Although an essentially formalist study, Hunter does recognise the role the magazines played in the development of the modernist short story, and his study is an outstandingly detailed and extended analysis in a very barren territory of scholarship.

It is outside literary studies, in material and social history that some of the most illuminating work on the modernist short story can be found. Particularly invaluable to scholarship and groundbreaking in the attention given to relation between a story's material form and its poetics is Chan's *The Economy of the Short Story in British Periodicals of the 1890s*. She makes a well supported argument that formalist studies of the genre, such as Head's *The Modernist Short Story* (1992), 'overlook the form's cultural history, which reveals precociously modernist tendencies that owed nothing to modernism's iconoclasts' (2007: xvii). With a strong focus on James's fiction, she concludes that the short story is both the product of mass culture and the backlash against it, directing recent considerations of modernism and commodity culture into the arena of the short story and the periodical. In the same vein, eschewing traditional literary analysis for a political study of the genre, Russell's PhD thesis, 'Early Modernism and the English Short Story' (1998), discusses the influence of the politics of early modernism on the short story form, referencing periodicals of the time, such as *Punch*. Such an approach illustrates the immediacy of the form and highlights its ability to act as a social barometer of the time. Russell's sentiment is echoed by Scholes who remarks that the magazines in which modernist fiction was first published present scholars

with an insight 'into the world that inspired and informed the work of writers [of the era]' (2009: 5) not to be found in a bound volume.

In his introductory chapter on the modernist short story, Hunter notes that the rapid and ephemeral nature of the genre made the form particularly attractive to writers of the era (2007: 46). As Poe observed in his 1886 treatise on the form, the short story's ephemeral qualities operate on two levels: firstly the narrative itself is read in one, brief, sitting, and secondly, by virtue of typically being published in a magazine, the material text is rarely kept for posterity, as the way bound volumes would be stored on a library shelf. Although Poe argued for the superiority of the short story over the novel for its unity of both effect as a narrative and a reading experience, he acknowledged that the price of its immediacy was its disposability. In his discussion of the advantages of the short story's easier, faster, cheaper distribution via a magazine, Levy also notes its inevitable expendability and observes that Poe claimed that a story 'was to be read once and only once' (Levy 1993: 22) and then presumably thrown away. Short story magazines were certainly discarded after reading, as portrayed in Wharton's 'Writing a War Story' (1919), in which a budding writer picks up an old copy from under the bench on which she is sitting in her search for inspiration (*CS2* 249) and magazines were often read and passed on to another reader (Zuckerman 1998; 26). The magazines were a cheap vehicle through which readers exchanged stories, and the narratives themselves became objects of social interaction. As Wells writes in 1913, stories had a social function: 'People talked about them tremendously, compared them, and ranked them.' (1913: vi). By virtue of their magazine publication, short stories became a currency of conversation and an everyday commodity shared between friends.

As I outlined in my chapter on Wharton's use of ellipsis, Wharton imbued her short stories with an immediacy, an orality of tone that is not found in her novels. In *The Writing of Fiction* (1925), she cites the short story's connection to the ballad, a form which originally

existed only as a spoken text, modified by various non verbal features such as pace and tone of voice. In his study of Faulkner's modernism, Kartiganer suggests that such orality is created by Faulkner's use of gaps, claiming that stories such as 'Dry September' (1931) mimic conversation in their use of ''gesture' and storytelling, whether over the phone, the fence, or on the porch of a local general store' (1988:15). The short story in its magazine context presented a narrative and material form that was more immediate, more intimate than the novel. Stories that relied on an active reader to fill in gaps, recognise nuances, even down to the level of a writer's use of punctuation, appeared more like a conversation than the literary text associated with the bound volume. In this way the poetics of the magazine modernist short story mimicked its material function via its affiliation to spoken rather written text, and to a social rather than solitary mode of communication.

The ephemeral nature of the magazine short story suited the twentieth century shift from a linear plot to the depiction of the fleeting moment associated with modernist writing. In her study of short fiction Hanson cites this era as the moment when 'the unit of fiction moved from the year to the day' (1985: 55); many of Wharton's narratives concern a short time span, often focusing on a moment of revelation, rather than a drawn out series of events. ' A Glimpse' (1932) centres on a momentary vision of a couple arguing on a boat in Venice, and not unlike Woolf's 'An Unwritten Novel' (1920), the narrator builds a story around these strangers, only to find the truth of the situation is quite different to the narrator's previous fanciful fiction. Various Wharton stories are illuminating, or as Kim (2006) argues, epiphaniaic, such as 'The Lamp of Psyche' (1895), 'The Pretext' (1906), 'The Letters' (1910). Each deals with the tenuous nature of the illusory world in which the protagonist exists, and the very impermanence of the form in which it is narrated makes it particularly appropriate to its subject matter. Indeed, Chesterton saw the short story as the most suitable form for expressing 'a real sense of fleetingness and fragility', aptly depicting the

contemporary disillusionment of the era. His conclusion, 'We have no instinct of anything ultimate and enduring' (Keating 1981: 42), is epitomized by the material form of the magazine story, of which he wrote two hundred.

The defining feature of the short story is its brevity, and whilst this condition often was beyond James, there is much to suggest that Wharton thrived within such rigid confines.[69] Indeed, Wells implies that such a restraint encouraged experimentation and a certain paradoxical authorial freedom. He states that if the 'only' criteria the writer should meet is that it 'should take fifteen minutes to read out loud' (1913: viii), the 'irregular forms' this single rule would permit were to be relished, concluding 'this world is not for the weary and in the long-run it is the new and variant that matter' (1913: vii). Wilson also acknowledges that the very brevity of the story could widen a writer's possibilities. He writes:

> The length of the short story, rather than narrowing down possibilities, provided the modernist writer with a fitting form to represent the fragmentation, fleetingness and unsatisfied yearning which they saw as a characteristic of modernity (1993: 87).

Woolf also saw the short story as a 'place[] of freedom where she could experiment with narrative technique' (Simpson 2003: viii), and found it compared very favourably to the 'frightfully clumsy and overpowering' (quoted in Simpson 2003: viii) novel, yet her short stories were often a means of 'limbering up for her novels' (2003: viii), and it is here that Mrs Dalloway, for instance, makes her first appearance. Rather than 'art for art's sake', some of Woolf's stories can be read as practice for the novel's sake, which certainly cannot be said of

[69] Shaw (1983) writes of the difficulty James had keeping within a specified word limit when supplying tales for magazines and of his belief that such enforced brevity restricted the artistic integrity of the writer. She writes: 'Money, he confessed to himself, was the sole incentive for co-operating with a journal which always demanded the smaller, the safer , the "inferior thing"' (1983: 18).

Wharton, whose vision of the genre was more akin to that of Mansfield's, recognising the short story as a complete, worthy narrative form in itself.[70]

For the short story writers who did not set up their own printing house, and were restricted by specified word counts by magazine editors, much of the 'experimental' features of the modern short story were a means of meeting requirements whilst retaining some authorial integrity. Chan notes that the devices writers began using to keep within a certain word count meant that 'even in the 'family magazines' the short story at the fin de siècle was already taking on characteristics often identified with modernist practices' (Chan 2007: xv). However, as Chan acknowledges, editorial confines were not the only influence in the emergence of the modernist short story; much of its structure and form reflected the anxieties and concerns of the era. In his 1917 condemnation of the standardized, unoriginal forms advocated by the short story handbooks of the time, Corey argued that traditional narratives simply could not reflect the age. He poignantly writes:

> The international agony, the national bewilderments, the fearful social injustices, the heart-beat of our epical life – these can neither be described not interpreted by the trivial and the hasty. The [traditional] short story is but a more delicate manifestation of that universal fever that has bankrupted mankind (1917: 381)

The fragmentation that was necessary to insert a 'complete' narrative into a limited space was not only a practical technique used by modern writers, it also echoed the fragmentary, splintered vision prevalent at the beginning of the twentieth century, particularly after the First World War. In this way this feature of modernist writing reflected both a material context and contemporary sensibility. The gaps or uncertainties which create the 'interrogative' (Belsey 1980: 85, Hunter 1999: 36) texts associated with modernism, whilst also found in novel form such as Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*

[70] The same may be said of some of Joyce's short fiction; *Ulysses* began as a short story for his *Dubliners* collection (Hanson 1985:56-7)

as a Young Man, are particularly suited to the short story genre. Indeed, in her consideration of the effect of the enforced brevity of the short story, Chan states that apart from having to compress situation and character, the writer must 'resort[] to suggestion rather than statement, and limit[] point of view, often to an unreliably subjective first person' (2007: xv), two features often regarded as characteristically modernist.

The social injustice that Corey laments should be a concern of the short story writer was a notably constant theme of Wharton's writing, in as much as throughout her forty-six year career she continually addressed the restrictive nature of women's lives. Levy notes the suitability of this subject in the confined form of the short story, limited not only in its required brevity but also in its positioning within the bounds of magazine censorship. He notes that Wharton's critical writing about the short story contains 'much to suggest enclosure was superior to open freedom because it was a more realistic statement of cultural realities' (1993:76). Somer's recent study of Wharton as a 'spatial activist' (2005) demonstrates the importance of enclosed spaces in her work, in terms of the physical surroundings of both her characters and readers, beginning with her first published book *The Decoration of Houses* in 1897. Tellingly, Somers also observes the figurative boundaries in Wharton's frequent representations of an individual's relationship with an often restrictive social environment. Wharton's subject matter and predilection for an architectural structuring (Ware 2004:17) of her narratives, makes the short story, with its fixed material and stylistic boundaries, a particularly appropriate genre for the writer. As I argued in my earlier chapter, it appears she relished the opportunities such a rigid form presented, particularly as a means of challenging and subverting both the literary establishment and the magazine marketplace.

Read within their magazine contexts, Wharton's short stories illuminate many of the issues and concerns about women's lives in the twentieth century. Her antagonistic attitude towards consumer culture (despite her well documented fondness for new technologies such

as fast cars (Bentley 2003: 147)), becomes all the more apparent when her stories are read in the mass magazines, 'the very crucible of consumer culture' (Wilson 1992: 42). Here, as I outlined in my previous chapter, her later stories about topics such as a mindless young woman perming her hair in 'Poor Old Vincent' (1935), or an aging beauty paying to be told she has not lost her charms in 'The Looking Glass' (1933), are surrounded by advertisements for shampoos, powder, corsets and other beauty products. Her concerns about the increasing commodification of women and society's denial of any role other than a domestic one, often directly challenged the values perpetuated by the mass magazines in which her stories were published.

Wharton's 1902 story 'The Mission of Jane', published in *Harpers Monthly*, poignantly delineates the dilemma in which the educated young woman found herself at the beginning of the century. The 'extraordinarily intelligent' (*CS1* 423) Jane, who dazzled her teachers by her ability to store information, is mocked by the reflector when she tries to use any of this knowledge for some practical purpose. The only avenue open to her is a domestic one, and her attempts to run the household scientifically are ridiculed by the narrator, as she is described as a harbinger of the unhygienic dangers of carpets, curtains and picture frames. Indeed, the only effect of her attempting to regulate the amount of nutrients in the daily menu is the departure of the cook and her father's new habit of dining at his club (*CS1* 424-5). When the father fears that he will face an eternity of 'the blighting edification of Jane's discourse' (*CS1* 425), a suitor finally appears, and with a collective sigh she is ushered out of the house into the arms of a waiting bridegroom. The depiction of marriage itself, in which Jane is described as a 'captive' (431) also denies her any voice or independent thought.

As an educated woman Jane does not fit into an environment where she is positively discouraged from independent thought or action. Her learning has only led to disharmony and an upsetting of the traditional balance of male and female roles. Her father's belief that

her knowledge estranges her from her mother (*CS1* 424), and that the 'axioms on her lips' and 'encyclopaedia in her eye' (*CS1* 425) discourage possible suitors, demonstrates the barriers women encountered if they attempted to perform anything other than a traditionally feminine role. Singley notes the irony of the tale, observing the ambiguous nature of the title (2000: 230). On the one hand, Jane's mission has been successful in that she has united her adopted parents in their desire to get rid of her, on the other, Jane's own mission – her *own* desires for her future have been thwarted by marriage and social expectation. It is notable that in the same year that 'The Mission of Jane' (1902) was published, Wharton wrote a defence of George Eliot's studying of the sciences. Her essay was in direct defiance of Brownwell's 1902 assertion that Eliot's study had weakened her narrative style, but not, as Wharton ironically notes, presumably that of Goethe or Milton (Wegener1996: 72).

Wharton's poignant vision of the position in which an educated woman found herself at the beginning of the twentieth century was in direct contrast to the way in which she was usually portrayed by the mainstream magazines, and this may well have influenced her decision to use the medium of humour and irony in her short fiction, rather than the blatant defiance of her critical essays. In her study of the depiction of the New Woman in American cartoons in *Life* magazine, Köhler notes the strong impulse to confine women to 'their fathers' and husbands' homes' and the clear message that 'there is no place outside the home for a woman to be happy' (2004:169). She notes that female graduates were often portrayed with books, sometimes a globe, but always with cupid (Figs 23 and 24). A particularly pertinent cartoon published in 1912, at the height of female suffrage, is that of a young mother looking into the smiling face of her baby, and behind her a professional woman in a business suit exclaiming 'I feel two natures struggling within me' (Fig 25). Of this cartoon Köhler writes:

Fig 23: 'A Lesson in Ancient History' *Life* 11 February 1915: 285

Figure 9.6 'A Lesson in Ancient History', *Life*, 11 February 1915: 285.

Fig 24: 'The Search for the Great Cause' *Life* 6 July 1905: 15

Figure 9.4 'The Search For the Great Cause', *Life*, 6 July 1905: 15.

Fig 25: 'I Feel Two Natures Struggling Within Me'. Life 7 November 1912 : 1685.

Figure 9.7 'I Feel Two Natures Struggling Within Me', *Life*, 7 November 1912: 1658.

> A woman needs to make up her mind; once she has decided on career and fame, she will never be given a chance to return from her barren, cold world of disappointment, anxiety and loneliness into the flowering and happy world of love, marriage and home (2004: 171-2).

It appears that ten years earlier, in another mainstream magazine, Wharton's Jane was on the verge on making a choice between these two futures. Her education had given her high hopes of independent thinking, yet society, and above all, her parents, the very people who oversaw her learning, deny her such a choice and do their utmost to successfully imprison her in the domestic sphere after giving her a taste of what might lie outside.

Other twentieth-century concerns about women's lives that Wharton considered included the way in which divorce affected the working of society. In 'Autres Temps' (1911), Wharton notes that divorce had become so common-place in modern society that it was now positively fashionable. Using a poignant humour she contrasts the experience of young Leila Lidcote and her mother. The two women divorce, and whereas the former's popularity and prospects grow as a result, the latter is still socially shunned as she had dared to separate from her husband at a time when such an action carried a heavy stigma. The superficial nature of social acceptance is highlighted by the fact that the woman who follows the crowd is welcomed by it, and the one who goes against convention will never be forgiven, even if that particular convention is later recognised as old-fashioned and restrictive. In 'The Other Two' (1904), Wharton poses comic, yet blindingly pragmatic questions as to how the relation to an ex-spouse should be maintained, suggesting that a woman's ability to suit her new husband made her rather like an old shoe 'that too many feet had worn' (*CS1* 44). She considered the effect of remarriage on both women and men's lives in both her short and long fiction, and notably considers the offspring's experience in such a situation, tentatively in

'The Other Two' (1904), and in more detail in *The Mother's Recompense* (1925), *Twilight Sleep* (1927) and *The Children* (1930).

Wharton's short stories demonstrate an active engagement with twentieth-century issues, rather than a glorification of an elegant past era. Studied within their original magazine contexts, the relation between the narratives and their place of publication provides further insight into the layers of meaning within her texts. Her questions about women's lives take on a different gloss depending on whether they are published within the patriarchal confines of *Scribner's Magazine*, or the glorified commodification of women promoted by the mass magazines. In the first context Wharton directly challenges her editors via the medium of women's learning and reading, and in the second she brings in the beauty industry to consider how it has further infantalised women's lives. In the same way, her earlier depictions of the working/middle class lives of teachers, shop keepers and writers found in the Gilded Age magazines ebbs away into an almost invariable portrayal of upper class life in the mass magazines, who sold her stories to their aspirational public on their aristocratic content.

Rather than a general reading public, magazines were aimed at specific 'reading communities' (Chan 2007: xix), and these targeted readers influenced the type of story that was chosen by editors for publication, which in turn played a fundamental role in the development of the short story genre itself. Various scholars have commented on the 'masculine' poetics of Wharton's early stories, including Lawson who notes a distinct 'sense that her audience is male' from clues such as the narrator's remark in 'The Lamp of Psyche' that the heroine was one the reader 'would not like his wife to meet' (1974: 34) and Lewis who comments on her 'masculine wit' and 'masculine vein of satiric humour' (1991: xxi). However, the extent to which Wharton's seemingly masculine poetics is a direct influence of her intended reading public is not as clear cut as it first appears. She certainly appears to have

begun her short story career writing for a mainly male readership, but her use of satire is still very much in evidence when she wrote for the women's magazines. Indeed, this 'masculinity' which Lewis and Lawson note seems to be a precursor of the new literary style of the Progressive era, is identified by Wilson as a direct break from the 'once-dominant ethos of 'feminized' Victorianism' (1985:1). Wilson concludes:

> Ultimately, all of these cultural trends seemed to converge upon a new style of American popular writing. The trademark literary approach of the Progressive era was more scientific, more vigorously realistic, more political, more 'masculine'. (1985:1)

Rather than a nod to a genteel past, Wharton's poetics, from the very outset of her writing career were forward-looking, anticipating the 'fundamental reorientation [in] the way American looked at itself' (Wilson 1985: 1).

Wharton's move to the mass magazine corresponds with her increased production of spine-chilling horror and ghost stories, a genre, which Ferguson, in her study of the short story deems as 'less highbrow genres than the realistic story' (1989: 182). Examples include 'A Bottle of Perrier' (*Saturday Evening Post* 1926) and 'Mr Jones' (*Ladies' Home Journal* 1928), which are far more visceral than her earlier supernatural fiction such as 'The House of the Dead Hand' (1904) and 'The Eyes' (1910), published in the middlebrow *Atlantic Monthly*. When Wharton wrote for the women's magazines in the second half of her career, the way in which she presented the female characters in her stories began to subtly change. One can certainly find the usual sprinkling of unpleasant characters such as Mrs Clemm in 'Mr Jones' (1928) and Alida Slade in 'Roman Fever' (1934) but, as I argued in Chapter Two, Wharton's rendering of female experience, and above all, that of the older woman, becomes increasingly sympathetic in the last decade in which she wrote.

Wharton's ability to write for such a wide audience is often overlooked. As I demonstrated in Chapter Five, she was never completely affiliated to one magazine, and

consequently one reading community. The fact that she was published in nineteen different magazines over the course of her lifetime demonstrates the enormous flexibility of her reader-led narratives, which whilst appealing to Leavis' 'man on the street' (1978: 27), also incorporated a depth of intertextuality and allusion that rivalled any of her modernist contemporaries. Whereas writers such as Woolf and Joyce only published within a magazine frame sympathetic to the writer's own ideologies, Wharton was able to sell her work to the very institutions her narratives ridiculed by means of her literary craftsmanship. Those modernists who *did* publish in mainstream magazines invariably doctored their prose to suit its material frame. Stevick notes Faulkner having to rewrite parts of his fiction for mass market magazine publication (1984: 8-9) and Watts charts the way in which Conrad adapted his prose to suit a more female readership (2007: 86). Although Wharton reluctantly made certain requested changes to her short stories towards the end of her career, as I outlined in Chapter Five these revisions did not compromise her art, but rather prompted the incorporation of further layers of subversive subtlety into her narratives. I am inclined to agree with Levy that the very confines of magazine publication brought out the best in Wharton's short story writing.

For these reasons, any study of Wharton's short stories must be made with a consideration of their original magazine context. As this thesis demonstrates even seemingly formalist analyses of the poetics of Wharton's short stories inevitably lead to the context in which they were originally published. My early chapters on her form of narration, use of gaps and ellipsis outline the influence of material constraints such as that of editorial censorship, catering for target reading communities brought up on a diet of 'cinema obviousness' (Wegener 1996: 179), or simply fitting a narrative into the confines of a set number of columns in a magazine. Even Wharton's use of myth continued a tradition and marketing strategy already set in place by magazines, which mined the currently fashionable public

interest in classical literature and art. Such a reconsideration of the publishing frame of a writer's work has been one of the driving forces behind recent revisions of modernism, with scholars (including Rainey 1999, Morrison 2000, Tischler 2003, Turner 2003, Chan 2007, Scholes 2007, Churchill and McKible 2007, Willison et al 2007) turning towards the marketplace in their studies of writing of this era. Such critical revision of modernism's relationship to magazines, the 'small [ones], large ones and those in-between' (Scholes 2007), logically calls for a reconsideration of Wharton's place in the modernist canon as her business acumen and interaction with the mass marketplace no longer constitute reasons for exclusion.

Wharton's attitude towards the short story, her acknowledgment of its distinctly commercial nature albeit founded in a well-established literary tradition, was a certainly a paradoxical one, as was the creative freedom she found in its very restrictive nature. As I have outlined in this chapter, much of the negative critical response she received to her short stories was a direct result of the taint of their place of publication, and yet she continued to write for the magazines until the last year of her life. Indeed Wharton's short story career was eleven years longer than that as a writer of novels, yet she is primarily remembered for her longer fiction. Wharton's enduring regard for the short story and career-long dedication to the form suggests that, having dispelled many of the erroneous nineteenth-century associations of her work, and recognising the often subversive nature of her short narratives, it is here that we see Wharton at her most crafted, her most innovative and most modernist.

Short Story Magazine Publication

	Title	Magazine Publication	First Collected	Edition referenced in thesis
1	Mrs Manstey's View	*Scribner's Magazine 10* July 1891		*CS1* 1-11
2	The Fullness of Life	*Scribner's Magazine 14* December 1893		*CS1* 12-22
3	That Good May Come	*Scribner's Magazine15* May 1894		*Scribner's Magazine 15* May 629-642
4	The Lamp of Psyche	*Scribner's Magazine 18* October 1895		*CS1* 23-41
5	The Valley of Childish Things	*Century Magazine 52* July 1896		*CS1* 42-49
6	The Pelican	*Scribner's Magazine 24* November 1898	*GI* 1899	*CS1* 76-94
7	The Muse's Tragedy	*Scribner's Magazine 25* January 1899	*GI* 1899	*CS1* 50-64
8	A Coward		*GI* 1899	*GI* 131-155
9	The Portrait		*GI* 1899	*GI* 229-254
10	A Journey		*GI* 1899	*CS1* 65-75
11	Souls Belated		*GI* 1899	*CS1* 95-122
12	The Twilight of the God		*GI* 1899	*CS1* 123-135
13	A Cup of Cold Water		*GI*1899	*CS1* 136-161
14	The Touchstone*	*Scribner's Magazine 27* March, April 1900		*CS1* 162-233
15	April Showers	*Youth's Companion 74* 18 January 1900		*FS* 129-139
16	Friends	*Youth's Companion* 23, 30 August 1900		*FS* 193-216
17	The Line of Least Resistance	*Lippincott's 66* October 1900		*Lippincott's 66* 559-570
18	'Copy': A Dialogue	*Scribner's Magazine 27* June 1900	*CI 1901*	*Scribner's Magazine 27* June 1900 657-663
19	The Rembrandt	*Hearst's International-Cosmopolitan Magazine 29* August 1900	*CI 1901*	*CS1* 290-306
20	The Duchess at Prayer	*Scribner's Magazine 28* August 1900	*CI 1901*	*CS1* 234-253
21	The		*CI 1901*	*CI* 181-242

	Confessional			
22	The Angel at the Grave	*Scribner's Magazine 29* February 1901	*CI 1901*	*CS1* 245-270
23	The Recovery	*Harper's Magazine 102* February 1901	*CI 1901*	*CS1* 271-289
24	The Moving Finger	*Harper's Magazine 102* March 1901	*CI 1901*	*CS1* 290-306
25	The Reckoning	*Harper's Magazine 102* August 1902	*DM 1904*	*CS1* 454-475
26	The Lady's Maid's Bell	*Scribner's Magazine* November 1902	*DM 1904*	*CS1* 499-519
27	The Quicksand	*Harper's Magazine 105* June 1902	*DM 1904*	*DM* 283-312
28	The Mission of Jane	*Harper's Magazine 106* December 1902	*DM 1904*	*CS1* 414-432
29	Sanctuary*	*Scribner's Magazine 34* Aug, Sept, Oct, Nov 1903		*CS1* 323-393
30	A Venetian Night's Entertainment	*Scribner's Magazine 34* December 1903	*DM 1904*	*DM* 315-345
31	Expiation	*Hearst's International-Cosmopolitan Magazine 36* December 1903	*DM 1904*	*CS1* 476-498
32	The Other Two	*Collier's 32* February 1904	*DM 1904*	*CS1* 433-453
33	The Descent of Man	*Scribner's Magazine 35* March 1904	*DM 1904*	*CS1* 394-413
34	The Dilettante	*Harper's Magazine 108* December 1903	*DM 1904*	*Harper's* 139-43 *DM* 263-280
35	The Letter	*Harper's Magazine 108* April 1904	*DM 1904*(In Macmillan – English – edition, but not American edition)	*DM* 233-261
36	The House of the Dead Hand	*Atlantic Monthly 94* August 1904		*CS1* 520-547
37	The Last Asset	*Scribner's Magazine 36* August 1904	*TMG1910*	*CS1* 601-632
38	The Potboiler	*Scribner's Magazine 36* December 1904	*HWW1908*	*HWW* 212-259
39	The Best Man	*Collier's 35* 2 September 1905	*HWW1908*	*CS1*689-713
40	The Introducers	*Ainslee's 16* December 1905		*CS1* 548-577
41	The Hermit and the Wild	*Scribner's Magazine 39* February 1906	*HWW1908*	*CS1* 578-600

	Woman			
42	In Trust	*Appleton's Booklover's Magazine 7* April 1906	*HWW1908*	*HWW* 106-139
43	The Verdict	*Scribner's Magazine 43* June 1908	*HWW1908*	*HWW* 194-210
44	The Pretext	*Scribner's Magazine 44* August 1908	*HWW1908*	*CS1* 633-662
45	Les Metteurs en Scene	*Revue des Deux Mondes 67* October 1908		
46	The Bolted Door	*Scribner's Magazine 45* March 1909	*TMG1910*	*TMG* 3-70
47	The Choice	Century Magazine 77 November 1908	*X 1916*	*X* 282-305
48	His Father's Son	*Scribner's Magazine 45* June 1909	*TMG1910*	*CS1* 714-730
49	The Daunt Diana	*Scribner's Magazine 46* July 1909	*TMG1910*	*CS1* 731-743
50	The Debt	*Scribner's Magazine 46* August 1909	*TMG1910*	*CS1* 744-757
51	Full Circle	*Scribner's Magazine 46* October 1909	*TMG1910*	*CS1* 758-781
52	The Legend	*Scribner's Monthly 47* March 1910	*TMG1910*	*CS1* 782-809
53	Afterward	Century Magazine 79 January 1910	*TMG1910*	*CS1* 830-860
54	The Eyes	*Scribner's Monthly 47* June 1910	*TMG1910*	*CS1* 810-829
55	The Letters	*Century Magazine 80* August, September, October 1910	*TMG1910*	*CS1* 861-897
56	The Blond Beast	*Scribner's Magazine 48* September 1910	*TMG1910*	*TMG* 275-319
57	Autres Temps	Century Magazine 82 as 'Other Times, Other Manners' July, August 1911	*X1916*	*CS2* 59-88
58	Xingu	*Scribner's Magazine 50* December 1911	*X1916*	*CS2* 1-25
59	The Long Run	*Atlantic Monthly 109* February 1912	*X1916*	*CS2* 112-140
60	The Triumph of the Night	*Scribner's Magazine 56* August 1914	*X1916*	*CS2* 141-165
61	Coming Home	*Scribner's Magazine 58* December 1915	*X1916*	*CS2* 26-58
62	Kerfol	*Scribner's Magazine 59* March 1916	*X1916*	*CS2* 89-111
63	Bunner Sisters*	*Scribner's Magazine 60* October, November 1916	*X1916*	*CS2* 166-246

64	The Marne*	*Saturday Evening Post 191* 26 October 1918		*CS2* 261-308
65	The Seed of Faith	*Scribner's Magazine 65* January 1919	*HB1926*	*CS2* 369-401
66	The Refugees	*Saturday Evening Post 191* 18 January 1919	*CP1930*	*SEP* 3-5,53,57,61
67	Writing a War Story	*Woman's Home Companion 45* September 1919		*CS2* 247-260
68	The Temperate Zone	*Pictorial Review 25* February 1924	*HB1926*	*HB* 255-325
69	Bewitched	*Pictorial Review 26* March 1925	*HB1926*	*CS2* 347-368
70	Miss Mary Pask	*Pictorial Review 26* April 1925	*HB1926*	*CS2* 309-323
71	Velvet Ear Pads	*Redbook Magazine 45* as 'Velvet Ear-muffs' August 1925	*HB1926*	*CS2* 402-435
72	The Young Gentlemen	*Pictorial Review 27* February 1926	*HB1926*	*CS2* 324-346
73	A Bottle of Perrier	*Saturday Evening Post 198* March 1926	*CP1930*	*CS2* 448-473
74	Atrophy	*Ladies' Home Journal 44* November 1927	*CP1930*	*CS2* 436-447
75	Mr Jones	*Ladies' Home Journal 45* April 1928	*CP1930*	*CS2* 497-523
76	After Holbein	*Saturday Evening Post 200* 5 May 1928	*CP1930*	*CS2* 474-496
77	Dieu D'Amour	*Ladies' Home Journal* October 1928	*CP1930*	*CP* 102-140
78	Diagnosis	*Ladies' Home Journal 47* November 1930	*HN1933*	*HN* 231-251
79	Pomegranate Seed	*Saturday Evening Post 203* 25 April 1931		*CS2* 678-709
80	Her Son*	*Scribner's Magazine 91* February 1932	*HN1933*	*CS2* 524-586
81	A Glimpse	*Saturday Evening Post 205* 12 November 1932	*HN1933*	*CS2* 609-631
82	Joy in the House	*Nash's Pall Mall Magazine 90* December 1932	*HN1933*	*CS2* 632-652
83	The Day of the Funeral	*Woman's Home Companion 60* as 'In a Day' January, February 1933	*HN1933*	*CS2* 587-608
84	The Looking Glass	*Hearst's International-Cosmopolitan Magazine 95* December 1933	*TWO1936*	*CS2* 763-781
85	Charm	*Hearst's International-*	*TWO1936*	*TWO* 3-49

	Incorporated	*Cosmopolitan Magazine 96* as 'Bread Upon Waters' February 1934		
86	Roman Fever	*Liberty 11* 10 November 1934	*TWO1936*	*CS2* 749-762
87	Confession	*The Story-teller 58* as ' Unconfessed Crime' March 1936	*TWO1936*	*TWO* 141-212
88	Duration		*TWO1936*	*CS2* 782-797
89	Permanent Wave	*Red Book Magazine 64* as 'Poor Old Vincent' April 1935	*TWO1936*	*RBM* 20-23, 116-119
90	All Souls'		*Ghosts 1937*	*CS2* 798-822

* indicates a novella

86 short stories, 4 novellas

'Bunner Sisters' (1916), although longer than some of the four novellas is classed as a short story by scholars including Barbara White (1991) and the Edith Wharton Society; in this breakdown of Wharton's shorter fiction I am following in this tradition.

<u>Other Primary Texts</u>

(Excluding individual short stories)

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Appendix 1: **Haunted Houses**

All houses wherein men have lived and died
Are haunted houses.Through the open doors
The harmless phantoms on their errands glide,
With feet that make no sound upon the floors.

We meet them at the door-way, on the stair,
Along the passages they come and go,
Impalpable impressions on the air,
A sense of something moving to and fro.

There are more guests at table than the hosts
Invited; the illuminated hall
Is thronged with quiet, inoffensive ghosts,
As silent as the pictures on the wall.

The stranger at my fireside cannot see
The forms I see, nor hear the sounds I hear;
He but perceives what is; while unto me
All that has been is visible and clear.

We have no title-deeds to house or lands;
Owners and occupants of earlier dates
From graves forgotten stretch their dusty hands,
And hold in mortmain still their old estates.

The spirit-world around this world of sense
Floats like an atmosphere, and everywhere
Wafts through these earthly mists and vapours dense
A vital breath of more ethereal air.

Our little lives are kept in equipoise
By opposite attractions and desires;
The struggle of the instinct that enjoys,
And the more noble instinct that aspires.

These perturbations, this perpetual jar
Of earthly wants and aspirations high,
Come from the influence of an unseen star
An undiscovered planet in our sky.

And as the moon from some dark gate of cloud
Throws o'er the sea a floating bridge of light,
Across whose trembling planks our fancies crowd
Into the realm of mystery and night,--

So from the world of spirits there descends
A bridge of light, connecting it with this,
O'er whose unsteady floor, that sways and bends,
Wander our thoughts above the dark abyss.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow 1858