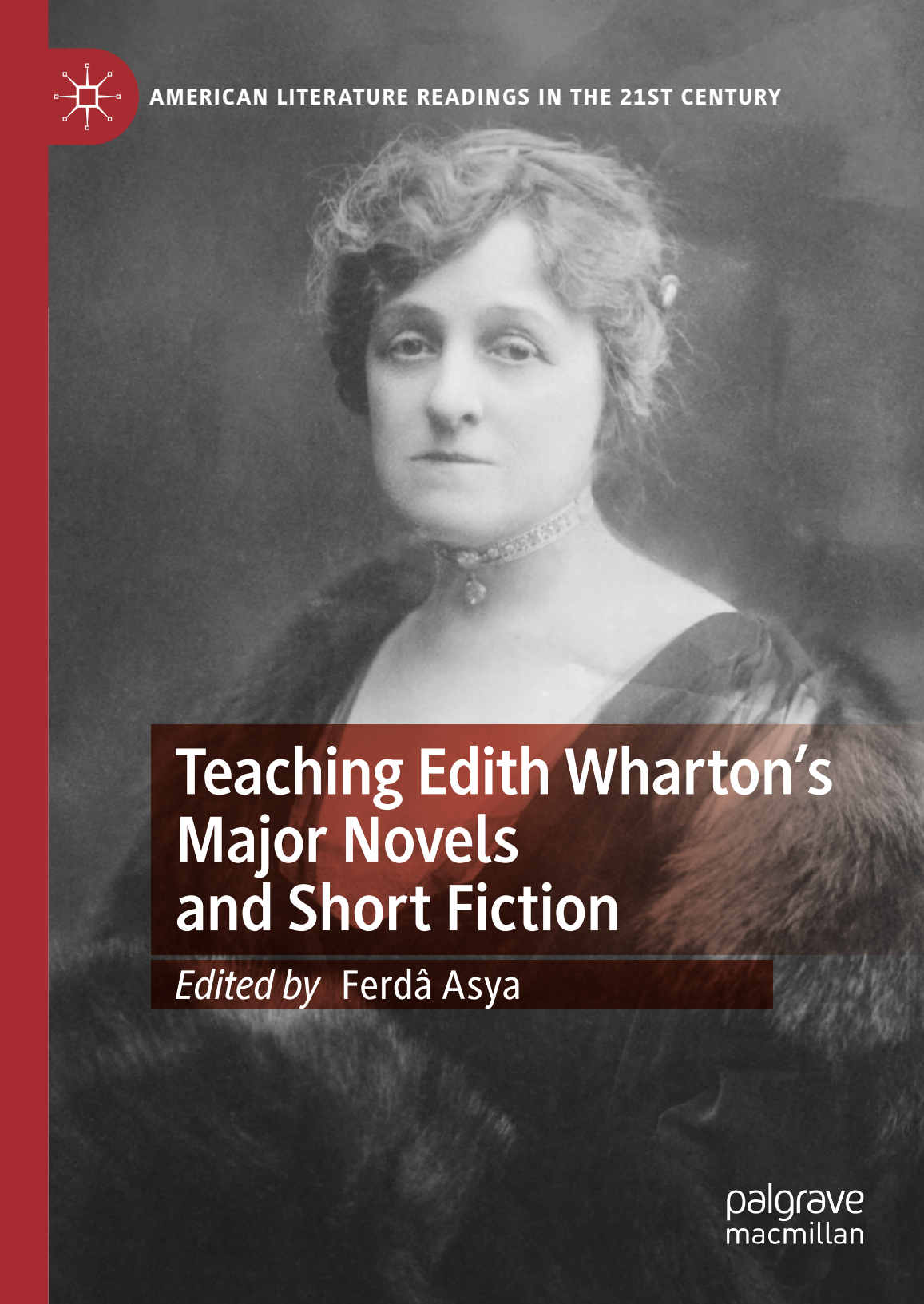
AMERICAN LITERATURE READINGS IN THE 21ST CENTURY
Teaching Edith Wharton's Major Novels and Short Fiction
Edited by Ferdâ Asya
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Teaching Edith Wharton's Major Novels and Short Fiction

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Preface

The idea of editing the volume, *Teaching Edith Wharton's Major Novels and Short Fiction*, was motivated by two incentives. The first was my conviction that the rediscovery of Edith Wharton with a revival of pedagogical perspectives on her art had been long overdue. The second was an appeal for advice on effective methods of teaching her novels from my students, who read the writer's fictions in my classes, received advanced degrees, and had students of their own to teach Wharton in the twenty-first century. I must admit that it was the latter incentive that compelled me to act, as it proved to be a telling evidence that a pedagogical volume on Wharton's works certainly would fill a void.

As the chapters came together, the most significant raison d'être of the book emerged to be the dedication of teachers to passing their knowledge, skill, and practice of teaching the oeuvre of this highly accomplished American writer of the twentieth century on to the next generation as much as the attention to the author's work of students who continuously inspired this dedication.

Editing this volume afforded me many a moment to reminisce the tireless travails of educationists that went into molding me into a teacher. I wish to memorialize Don L. Cook (1928–2016) of Indiana University, Bloomington, professor, editor, and friend, who taught me to use

intellect and intuition not only to come to know the mind and heart of Edith Wharton, but also to come to grips with the craft of phrase turning.

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Ferdâ Asya is professor of English at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania. She received her PhD in American Literature from Indiana University, Bloomington. Her teaching and research focus on the nineteenth-century and twentieth-century American literature with emphasis on fiction and American expatriate literature in Paris. Her essays on Wharton's work appear in such publications as *Edith Wharton Review, Studies in Short Fiction,* and *Edith Wharton and Cosmopolitanism* (University Press of Florida, 2016). She also published articles and book chapters on the works of American and international writers. She is the editor of *American Writers in Europe: 1850 to the Present* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

Nina Bannett is professor of English at New York City College of Technology, City University of New York, where she teaches courses on women writers, poetry, and first-year writing. She received her PhD from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Her chapter in this volume is an expansion of a paper presented at the 2016 Wharton in Washington Conference. Her essay, "Reclaiming Sentimentalism in Edith Wharton's *Summer*," appears in *The Edith Wharton Review* (2015). In addition to her work on Wharton, she published critical essays on Louisa May Alcott, Elizabeth Stoddard, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Anzia Yezierska in journals including *New England Quarterly* and *Teaching American Literature*. She also published two books of poetry and she was featured in a wide array of literary journals.

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Tricia M. Farwell is associate professor in the School of Journalism and Strategic Media at Middle Tennessee State University. She holds a PhD and an MA in English and a Master of Mass Communication from Arizona State University. Her primary teaching areas are advertising and public relations. She is the author of *Love and Death in the Fiction of Edith Wharton* (2006). Her research appears in a variety of academic journals including *Teaching Journalism and Mass Communication* and *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*. She also contributed chapters to books including *Social Media in Higher Education: Teaching in Web 2.0*, *Using Social Media in the Classroom,* and *Teaching Arts and Science Using the New Social Media*.

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Lina Geriguis teaches at Cabrillo College, CA. She received her PhD in English from Claremont Graduate University, CA. Her teaching expertise includes multicultural literatures of the U.S., American gothic, realism, naturalism, literary theory and criticism, composition, and ESL courses. The pedagogical methods described in her chapter refer to the teaching experiences she acquired as a lecturer at Chapman University. Published in the *Edith Wharton Review* in 2017, her essay, "'Rich in Pathological Instances': Disability in the Early Reception Theory of Edith Wharton's *Ethan Frome*," received the Edith Wharton Society Award for a Beginning Scholar in 2016. She is the author of an article on *The Age of Innocence*, an encyclopedic chapter on Emily Dickinson and social class, and several journal articles on questions of disability, ecocriticism, and ethnicity in various works by U.S. and British writers. She serves as a book review editor for *Pacific Coast Philology* and *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*.

Melinda Knight is professor of English and the founding director of the Center for Writing Excellence at Montclair State University, NJ. She earned a PhD in American Civilization at New York University. She teaches graduate and undergraduate courses on nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American literature with a focus on realism and naturalism, African American women writers, the Lost Generation, and the Harlem Renaissance. Her research interests include the intersections of class, gender, identity, and race in American literature, manifestations of aestheticism and decadence, impact of urbanization on cultural products, representations of the American West, and writing in the disciplines

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Ferdâ Asya

Edith Wharton (1862–1937), who received the Pulitzer Prize in 1921 for her outstanding presentation of American life and manners in her novel *The Age of Innocence* (1920) and whose oeuvre comprises volumes of novels, novellas, story collections, travel writings, articles, reviews, autobiographies, poems, a study of fiction, a book of interior design, and an edited volume of literature and art, stands out not only as one of the most accomplished but also the most prolific writers of America. In her lifetime, the author knew many notable public figures, politicians, intellectuals, and authors, witnessed a devastating world war, lived through significant social incidents and cultural changes, saw important technological innovations, and made some sixty trips across the Atlantic.

Edith Newbold Jones was born in 1862, at a critical moment of the American Civil War. Belonging to a prominent New York family, reading in her father's library, learning foreign languages from governesses, and often sojourning in European cities with her family, she lived a privileged childhood. Around the turn of the twentieth century, the author of the best-selling novel *The House of Mirth* (1905), together with her

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husband Edward Wharton, to whom she was married from 1885 to 1913, continued making transatlantic trips, and finally in 1910, settled in Paris permanently. Having affinity with European traditions, Wharton already felt comfortable in the progressive intellectual and cultural climate of France. This atmosphere served auxiliary to the personal freedom epitomized by the, albeit discreetly disguised, extramarital affair she had with the American journalist William Morton Fullerton from 1908 to 1910, which would change the tenor of scholarship on her work when the affair was revealed in the 1980s.

During the years before the First World War, living in an apartment in the fashionable district of Faubourg Saint Germain and being driven in and around Paris by her chauffeur in one of the first-ever automobiles, Wharton led a productive literary life, enjoyed vibrant conversations about arts, literature, and politics in such literary salons as that of her friend Comtesse Rosa de Fitz-James in the thriving cultural ambiance of *la belle époque*, relished the intellectual companionship of many Parisian aristocrats and intellectuals such as Romanian-French poet Comtesse Anna de Noailles and French novelist and critic Paul Bourget, and made frequent visits to her literary friends such as novelist Henry James in England and art historian Bernard Berenson in Italy. During the war years, however, the author's personal and professional life was devoted less to social engagement and literary production and more to war effort and charitable work for which in 1916 she was awarded, by the French government, *la Légion d'honneur*, the highest order of merit for military and civil service.

After the harrowing war years, Wharton lived half of the year in Pavillon Colombe, her home in Sarcelle, near Paris, and spent the remaining half in Sainte Claire du Vieux Château, her home in Hyères in the French Riviera. As a modern woman of the twentieth century, she made technological innovations, such as the telephone and the typewriter, essential devices of her personal and professional life, crossed the Atlantic in luxurious steamers, and took advantage of the speedy blue train to travel to the Riviera. Although she never viewed the film versions of her books on the silver screen, her novels *The House of Mirth*, *The Glimpses of the Moon*, *The Children*, and *The Age of Innocence* were made into films during her lifetime.

In literary history, Wharton is placed in the company of such realist and naturalist authors as William Dean Howells, Henry James, Kate Chopin, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Nevertheless, she was able to reflect the contemporary concerns of the twentieth century at least as shrewdly as

Sinclair Lewis or F. Scott Fitzgerald in such novels as *The Glimpses of the Moon* (1922), *Twilight Sleep* (1927), and *The Children* (1928). Wharton died in Pavillon Colombe in 1937 and she was buried in Cimtière des Gonards in Versailles, France.

Wharton was conferred an honorary Doctor of Letters degree for the prominence of her literary achievement in American literature by Yale University in 1923, a gold medal for distinguished service by the National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1924, and a gold medal for special distinction in literature by the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1929. She was elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1926 and to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1930.[1]

Despite her achievements, however, academic attention and general interest in Wharton's life and art became evident only after the publication of her biography by R. W. B. Lewis in 1975 and the access to her papers and letters in the early 1980s. Subsequently, critics began to read the author's work with an awareness of the incongruity between the reticent prose in her autobiographies and letters and the uninhibited expressions in her fiction.[2] Their publications have been valuable to envision Wharton's true disposition in her own time. Recently, scholars have been discovering in Wharton's work such universal themes as poverty or war; controversial ideas as nonconformity or anarchism; current topics as materialism, conservativism, liberalism, transatlantic conflicts, domestic abuse, rural and urban spaces, addiction or disability that are relevant to the many-sided cultural, transcultural, or global matters of the present time and appropriate to be examined with twenty-first-century approaches and evaluations.[3]

These discoveries have been extending the historical time, in which Wharton's art merits significance and examination, to the present and widening the circle of readers whose attention and interest her work captures. No longer are Wharton's novels deemed as timeworn tales reflecting a bygone era of Old New York to nostalgic readers, but realistic narratives mirroring current social, cultural, and technological developments to younger readers, who mostly attend institutions of higher education; making them aware of their own reactions to new advancements of their time; and becoming popular course readings on the curricula not only of English but also of other departments. For instance, it is often possible to hear students reading Wharton's *Twilight Sleep* and comparing the fifteen-minute slots of Pauline Manford's daily schedule, apparently fashioned by the production efficiency methodology, known

as Taylorism, with their own short attention span, identified as Attention Deficit Disorder, possibly caused by the distractions of social media.

The contemporaneity of Wharton's insights into human and social dilemmas is the reason that her works appear in a steadily growing number of anthologies and reprinted editions and they are taught, with accompanying productions of reimagined versions and screen and stage adaptations, in wide-ranging and different levels of traditional and online courses in colleges in the United States and many other countries more frequently than before. Admittedly, as much as the surge of publications and groundbreaking scholarship on her work is rising, the complexity of her character and ideas is intensifying and her popularity is increasing hand in hand with challenges of teaching her work to students effectively in the twenty-first century. Such editions as *Summer* (Rattray 2015), *Ethan Frome* (Singley 2013), *The Cambridge Introduction to Edith Wharton* (Knights 2009), *A Historical Guide to Edith Wharton* (Singley 2003), *Student Companion to Edith Wharton* (McFarland Pennell 2003), *The Cambridge Companion to Edith Wharton* (Bell 1995), and the Norton Critical Editions of her major novels are valuable but devoid of pedagogical apparatus and stop short of evaluating Wharton's fiction beyond the traditional framework of scholarship.

Teaching Edith Wharton's Major Novels and Short Fiction meets the need of instructors for a resource that translates recent scholarship into pedagogy and implements innovative, adept, and practical approaches to teaching Edith Wharton's versatile works to majors or nonmajors in English, American studies, gender studies, culture studies, transatlantic studies, and majors in other disciplines. Bearing in mind Wharton's strategic position as a twentieth-century American expatriate writer in Paris, writing about her native New York, and her work as a product of regionalist, realist, naturalist, and modernist traditions, the volume comprises such themes as American and European cultures, material culture, art, architecture, morality, psychology, identity, sexuality, class, gender, love, thwarted desire, marriage, divorce, sexual and economic freedom, law, history, journalism, anarchism, war, nationality, addiction, disability, ecology, environment, film, technology, and social media, which are situated in historical, cultural, transcultural, international, or regional contexts. The volume includes Wharton's works compared to those of other authors, taught online, read in foreign universities, and studied in film adaptations.

In the volume, Wharton's novels, novellas, and stories appear as reading elements of introduction to research and criticism courses and fiction components of introductory and advanced literature courses. They especially form essential parts of American literature survey courses organized by period and genre as well as some courses taught on graduate level or in disciplines outside English departments. Bringing together diverse approaches to teaching Wharton's works over a broad range of courses in a cross section of institutional settings in the United States and other countries, this volume provides resources for cultural and pedagogical issues that instructors may encounter in teaching some of Wharton's widely celebrated and also less known novels, novellas, and stories. The volume is prepared to benefit not only instructors who have been teaching the works of Edith Wharton regularly, but also those who just have begun teaching them.

The chapters in the volume are organized in five parts based on the traditional and contemporary topics, critical theories, and contexts they share. In Part I, "Culture and History," the chapters convey methods for teaching works that reflect Wharton's interest in the material and regional cultures of New York and New England, journalistic and military aspects of the Great War, and society of Old New York represented in cinematic adaptations over time. Especially beneficial to students, who may find retaining the abstract quality of words on a page, Elif S. Armbruster's method, in "Reading in Three Dimensions: Using Material Culture to Teach *The House of Mirth* and *The Age of Innocence*," brings students, in a 300-level course, in physical contact with samples of objects, artifacts, decorative details, dwellings, and landscapes that appear in the titular New York novels and enables them to become active learners of both the culture of the Gilded Age and the place of Wharton in this epoch as a realist author with an eye to detail. Extending Wharton's engagement with culture to her involvement with community, in "Getting to Know the Community: Using Raymond Williams's Concept of 'Knowable Communities' to Teach Wharton's *Summer*," by exposing MA- or PhD-level students to Raymond Williams's concept of "knowable communities," Sheila Liming points to Wharton's affinity with urban and rural spaces with emphasis on her rural residences in Newport and Lenox and urban dwellings in New York and Paris. Liming shows the interconnection between urban and rural spaces in the setting of the novella as viable to examination with Williams's contention, which confirms that the difference between city fiction and country fiction

can be perceived by the extent to which the community concerned is presented as knowable, or known, by the writer.

In "Using Women Reporting War to Teach Edith Wharton's 'Writing a War Story': An Added Context for Gendered Writing," Tricia M. Farwell situates Wharton's story in the context of newspaper reporting with the objective not only of bringing an awareness to students, in a 200-level course, of gender issues women reporters encountered during the war, but also of rendering Wharton's work a part of female war journalism and opening its gender-related concerns to study with feminist strategies. Teaching Wharton's novella to students, in a 300-level course, in the wake of the centennial celebrations of the end of the First World War and set against the background of historical documents and documentaries, in "An Argument for Teaching *The Marne*: A Long Overlooked Example of Wharton's Wartime Writings," Melinda Knight states that her method aims to enhance the twenty-first-century students' knowledge of history and American response to international conflicts while inculcating in them a perspective on Wharton's outlook on the events surrounding the war. In "Historicizing Adaptation: *The Age of Innocence* in the Context of 1930s Hollywood," Sheila J. Nayar places Wharton's novel in the context of the film version of 1934, in a 200-level Honors course, and claims that adaptations through time manifest shifting historical, cultural, ideological, aesthetic, and technological forces and prepare students to read the novel in sophisticated and historically informed terms.

Each of the three chapters in Part II, "Wharton and Other Authors," builds the comparison of Wharton's work with that of another author around components with equal significance to both authors' texts to enhance students' engagements with the themes, characters, and incidents in Wharton's as well as the other author's work. In "Survival Versus Thriving: Social Mobility in Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* and Edna Ferber's *So Big*," Windy Counsell Petrie organizes the comparisons between the two texts in three sections, literary realism and naturalism, social Darwinism, and social mobility in highbrow and middlebrow American literature, each section serving as a scaffolding to the next to enable students, in an upper-level undergraduate course, to understand the mechanism of social mobility through different attitudes of the two heroines toward the obstacles that the early twentieth-century American society puts on their paths to success. In "Developing Sympathy: Teaching Edith Wharton's *Summer* with Lynn Nottage's *Intimate Apparel*," Nina Bannett delineates the use of feminist

approach to facilitate the perception of students, particularly in STEM disciplines, of parallel aspects of the two texts as a way to develop sympathy for Wharton's vulnerable protagonist along with their predilection for Nottage's resilient heroine, and the chapter suggests further opportunities for teaching the two texts together.

Significant for including Wharton's major novels and short fiction together with those of James in the curriculum of the European Studies Department of the University of Amsterdam, Krisztina Lajosi and Gene M. Moore's chapter, "Teaching Edith Wharton with Henry James in the Netherlands," offers an exploration of the development of cultural and national identities in European–American relations from the post-Civil War to the 1930s and examines the manner in which the attitudes and stereotypes of class, gender, and nationality have changed over time in the context of cultural history, nationalism, travel writing, and art history, and the chapter serves as a versatile resource for teaching Wharton's works with comparative technique and international approach in MA-level courses for non-native speakers.

The chapters in Part III, "Wharton and Critical Lenses," emphasize the ways in which students can be equipped with literary theories to examine specific aspects of Wharton's works. In "'Granite Outcroppings but Half-Emerged from the Soil': Using *Ethan Frome* in a Gateway Course for the English Major," by bringing together close reading strategies, psychological and gender studies approaches, and comparison methods, which benefit from the film version of Wharton's novella, in a gateway course, Nancy Von Rosk lays out the possibilities of developing, refining, and enriching students' perspectives on the novella through the use of multiple theoretical approaches. Dovetailing the psychological inquiry with the psychoanalytic investigation of desire, in "'We're Near Each Other Only If We Stay Far from Each Other': Teaching Psychoanalytic Desire in *The Age of Innocence*," Erica D. Galioto provides students, in a 300-level course, with the psychoanalytic theory to perceive desire among the main characters of the novel as a continuous but an unfulfilled and unexpressed urge impelled by the social environment of modernism.

Pierre A. Walker turns students' attention to the multifaceted aspect of the story in "Social Darwinism, Feminism, and Performative Identity in Wharton's 'The Last Asset,'" by stressing close reading as an essential strategy to unpack the story's motifs with references to a social Darwinian world of struggle to survive, competition, manipulation, and social climbing, revealed by metaphors of business and warfare, and to

a world of theater, which defines identity as performance versus performativity. Walker's teaching method may be adapted to undergraduate or MA-level courses. In "Edith Wharton's *Ethan Frome* and the History of Literary Scholarship," drawing on the novella's critical history and the issues of class, gender, and ableist politics, Karen Weingarten suggests venues for teaching trends in literary criticism and conventions of research and critical writing. Although the course is designed for MA students, strategies are suggested to appropriate it to accommodate undergraduate students as well.

Introducing approaches to teaching Wharton's works with the awareness of the most recent scholarship, which often involves the study of crossover disciplines, the chapters in Part IV, "Wharton and Interdisciplinary Contexts," focus on addiction, bioregionalism and disability, and anarchism. In "Modeling Addiction: Teaching *The House of Mirth* in the Context of Addiction Studies," set against the background of such elements as narrative technique, genre, and cultural milieu, Brenden O'Donnell presents an examination of the cultural construction of the addict and motivates first- and second-year students, who mostly come from disciplines outside the Humanities, to delve into the study of the heroine's misfortunes as a predicament of the female addict, who is often blamed for her own social and political marginalization, but who also defies the definition of addiction by defending the legitimacy of her own pleasures and adventures. Applying interpretive practices that help undergraduate students understand the crossover theoretical models that can be used to investigate the interplay between humanity and environment, in "Ecoliteracy and Edith Wharton: The Ecosomatic Paradigm and the Poetics of Paratexts in *Ethan Frome*," Lina Geriguis proposes a method of teaching the novella through a critical lens that connects bioregional and disability studies, while encouraging an emphasis on its paratexts that brings the novel's ecocritical aspects under investigation. Ferdâ Asya's chapter, "Teaching Edith Wharton's *The Children* in the Anarchist Tradition in Literature Course," introduces the theories of individualist and collectivist anarchism to first-year students with a twofold objective: the viability of the anarchist theory to illuminate the enactment of Wharton's progressive ideas in her novel and to render plausibility to the imaginative realm of Ursula Le Guin's novel.

Keeping technology and social media in mind, while underscoring such methods as online teaching and international cooperation, the chapters in Part V, "Wharton and the World Today," respond to the current

economic and critical requirements of institutions of higher education and relay the adaptability of Wharton's themes to the skills students in the twenty-first century need to enhance. Alicia Mischa Renfroe's chapter, "Wharton Goes Online: Reimagining the Traditional Graduate Seminar," aims to meet the increasing demand for online courses and outlines the process of converting a traditional graduate seminar to an online course. Covering Wharton's major novels and stories, the online course progresses toward a reconceptualization of the graduate seminar for MA- and PhD-level students as a decentered community of scholars, rather than an expert and students, and provides space for facilitating workshop strategies, stressing writing as a process to guide students through writing seminar papers to theses and dissertations.

Demonstrating the suitability of Wharton's works for investigation by international students across countries and cultures, with commitment to transatlantic collaboration, and a mind to the reality of students for whom study abroad programs are out of reach, in "Students Abroad—In the Classroom: A Transatlantic Assignment on Edith Wharton's 'Roman Fever,'" Rita Bode and Sirpa Salenius discuss the application of internationalization at home model to teaching "Roman Fever," a story that unfolds in Rome with references to New York—both settings different from those of students in Canada and Finland—and enables transatlantic conversations between students, in their senior year of undergraduate studies, in the two countries via digital technology, while granting them a sense of a broader world in which their cosmopolitan aspirations find expression.

In "Slouching Toward the Posthuman: Teaching Edith Wharton's *Twilight Sleep*," by instructing students, in a 200-level course, to trace correlations between the incidents in the lives of Wharton's fictional characters and in their own daily activities related to social media, Jericho Williams maintains that the reader-oriented theory leads students to perceive Wharton's insight into the impact of modern commercialism and consumerism on the lives of the characters in the novel and he steers students to uncover the author's foresight for the intrusion of technology and social media into the lives of people in the twenty-first century.

For undergraduate courses, contributors offer methods for teaching primary texts and generally present background materials in lectures or class discussions. For graduate courses, contributors also provide methods for teaching theoretical readings to students. All the contributors supply titles of specific critical texts in relation to the approaches through which

they instruct students to read the primary texts, and they propose unique techniques of weaving these critical texts into teaching Wharton's works. Almost all the contributors provide sample questions for class discussions or suggest paper topics.

Given the considerable variety of levels and kinds of courses, topics, techniques, and contexts, some overlap of Wharton's works is unavoidable in the book. Instructors, who need strategies for teaching a particular text, may be guided by chapter titles in the five distinct parts. By consulting the index, they may benefit from different themes, many approaches, and diverse contexts concerning that text, while finding any overlap a significant asset to the versatility and usefulness of the volume. Indeed, the overlap adds an array of possibilities for juxtaposing traditional approaches with contemporary ones, implementing numerous teaching strategies to the same text, or teaching the same text in several courses, at various levels, and in multiple contexts.

Notes

1. A life abounded with books, publications, correspondence, friends, travels, events, activities, charities is hard to put in a few paragraphs. These few details of Wharton's life may serve as helpful reminders.

   As well as R. W. B. Lewis (1975), other biographers chronicle Wharton's life. For example, Cynthia Griffin Wolff (1977) examines the author's work in context of her psychological development, Shari Benstock (1994) traces the delicate balance between Wharton's public existence and private being from the late nineteenth-century America to the fin-de-siècle and early twentieth-century Paris, and Hermione Lee (2007) presents a multidimensional portrait of Wharton as an innovative gardener, inexhaustible traveler, inspired interior decorator, independent expatriate writer in Paris, and a strong and dynamic woman making her own decisions in the personal and professional arenas of her life.
2. Although Wharton's letters, written to her family members, friends, and publishers, edited by R. W. B. Lewis and Nancy Lewis (1988), and her biographies reveal some details about her daily routines, interests, readings, writings, friends, travels, and personal life that might have missed inclusion in her autobiographies, her fiction remains as the source of her true beliefs and genuine emotions. Published more recently, however, in her letters to her governess Anna Bahlmann, edited by Irene Goldman-Price (2012), Wharton discloses the literary support she received from her family, especially her mother, which seems at odds with the distant rapport they had with her she describes in her autobiographies.

3. For example, the volume edited by Jennifer Haytock and Laura Rattray (2020) includes essays which reevaluate Wharton's work in relation to such topics as ecocriticism, poverty, community, transnationalism, and contemporary psychology, and the collection of essays, edited by Myrto Drizou (2017), offers new ideas about Wharton's views on such topics as law, architecture, gender, and classical works. The essays, included in the volume of Meredith L. Goldsmith and Emily J. Orlando (2016), examine the international context of Wharton's life and art and demonstrate her profound engagement with such global issues as anarchism, imperialism, regionalism, and orientalism in both her canonical and less-familiar works. Laura Rattray's essay collection (2012) brings new perspectives into a wide array of topics in Wharton's life and work, including the time and places in which she lived, the genres in which she wrote, the languages in which she read, and the artistic, social, and political issues in which she was interested. Studying Wharton's last six novels, Janet Beer and Avril Horner (2011) claim that these novels are experimental in form and radical in content, and the critics suggest that her depiction of elder female characters in these novels predicts the contemporary society's social sidelining the older woman.

Especially symbolic of Wharton's ambivalence about class structure is Katherine Joslin's study (2009), which portrays the writer, on the one hand, as a fashionable woman who took pleasure in dressing up and, on the other hand, as a business person involved in the craft of dressmaking and establishment of workshops in Paris during the First World War to support the labor that went into the hand stitching of garments. Judith P. Saunders (2009) studies some of Wharton's novels and short stories employing evolutionary biological theory and biopoetic investigation. Detecting modernism's formal aspects in some of Wharton's fiction, Jennifer Haytock (2008) defines her place in the modernist canon. Shafquat Towheed's edition (2007) brings together some of the letters between Edith Wharton and her publisher, Macmillan, highlighting the writer's understanding of the publishing practices and market. Annette Benert (2007) investigates Wharton's perception of class in terms of space in her life and art. With frequent references to interior decoration, art, painting, sculpture, architecture, and fashion, the essays in Gary Totten's collection (2007) center around the effect of material culture on Wharton's work. Focusing on the female characters in Wharton's major novels, Emily J. Orlando (2007) asserts that they gradually take an active part to gain power and contentment in relation to art and to their own identities. Parley Ann Boswell (2007) explores the film adaptations of Wharton's work. Paul J. Ohler (2006) analyzes the impact of the evolutionary theory on the formal and thematic elements of the writer's fiction. Robin Peel (2005) discerns

the connection between the politics and ideology of Wharton's fiction and the aesthetics of early modernism. Identifying Wharton as a cultural innovator, Reneé Somers (2005) surveys her theories of interior design, architecture, and landscaping as well as the architecture and aesthetics of Wharton's homes.

Writing about the effect of the First World War on the form and content of Wharton's work, Julie Olin-Ammentorp (2004) depicts the writer's sense of personal, social, and literary self, and shows her concern over the role of history during and after the First World War. Discussing in Wharton's work the apprehension about threats to Anglo-Saxon superiority, Jennie A. Kassanoff (2004) sheds light on the relation between social class and race in the author's major novels. Hildegard Hoeller (2000) argues against the established position of Wharton as a realist writer and underscores her sentimental voice in her critique of realism, bringing forth her dialogue between the two literary traditions. Adeline R. Tintner (1999) inspects the influences between Edith Wharton and Henry James and art allusions in Wharton's work. Carol J. Singley (1995) follows the development of Wharton's moral and spiritual attitudes in her major novels and short stories. Dale M. Bauer (1995) looks at the impact of cultural, historical, and political issues of modernism on the author's later novels. Implementing the theory of the female gothic to Wharton's fiction, Kathy A. Fedorko (1995) observes the adaptations of gothic motifs in her fiction and displays the feminine nature and masculine nature and the tensions between them.

Katherine Joslin and Alan Price's edited collection (1993) consists of essays about Wharton's travels, wartime efforts, and relationships with other authors in Europe. The essays in the collection, edited by Alfred Bendixen Annette Zilversmit (1992), include a wide range of critical views on Wharton's fiction, short fiction, and poetry. Gloria C. Erlich (1992) points to the influence of Wharton's flawed erotic development on her creation of a fictional gender identity and a professional identity. Examining the allegories of women, art, and writing in Wharton's works, Candace Waid (1991) detects the mythical Persephone as Wharton's representation of the woman writer, and Janet Goodwyn's study (1990) discusses Wharton's use of specific landscapes and her concern with the idea of place and emphasizes that, actual and metaphorical, Wharton's ideas of landscape and place give structure to her work.

This body of a scholarship of more than a quarter of a century exemplifies the wide variety of themes and contexts Wharton's work displays and the diversity of approaches to which it yields, and it has found venues of expression in conferences organized by the Edith Wharton Society, founded in 1983, *Edith Wharton Review*, established in 1984, and many other academic conferences and literary publications.

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