A Conference in Honor of R. W. B. Lewis
Sponsored by the Edith Wharton Society

Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut
April 28-30, 1995
Edith Wharton at the June 20, 1923 Yale University commencement ceremony at which she received an honorary Doctorate of Letters. In his speech of presentation, Professor William Lyon Phelps described Wharton as an American novelist of international fame. Chevalier of the Legion of Honour in France. For nearly twenty-five years she has produced novels, some of the most notable being “The House of Mirth,” “Ethan Frome,” “The Age of Innocence.” Her books are marked by sincerity in art, beauty in construction, distinction in style. She writes short stories and full-length works with equal skill. She is a master in the creation of original and living characters, and her powers of ironical description are exerted to satirical ends. She is a realist in the best sense of the word, revealing the inner nature of men and women without recourse to sensationalism and keeping ever within the boundaries of true art. She holds a universally recognized place in the front rank of the world’s living novelists. She has elevated the level of American literature. We are proud that she is an American and especially proud to enroll her name among the daughters of Yale.

The Yale Alumni Weekly (6 July 1923)
Helen Killoran, Ohio University, Lancaster: “Edith Wharton Reads Biography”

Artifice and Aesthetics: WLH 203

Frederick Wegener, St. John’s University, Chair
Katherine Joslin, Western Michigan University: “Architectonic or Episodic?: Edith Wharton, Gender, and The Fruit of the Tree”
Heather K. Thomas, Loyola College in Maryland: “The Decoration of Houses, Nineteenth-Century Merchandising Techniques, and Edith Wharton’s Aesthetic Theory”
Sarah Bird Wright, College of William and Mary: “Refracting the Odyssey: Edith Wharton’s Travel Texts as the Cultural Capital of Her Fiction”
Suzanne W. Jones, University of Richmond: “The Decoration of Houses and Edith Wharton’s Fiction”

Wharton and Popular Culture: WLH 204

Carole Shafter-Koros, Kean College: Chair
Kristin Lauer, Fordham University: “Lioness of a Warm Winter: A Refusal to Deplore Edith Wharton’s Latent Sentimentalism”
Jessica Levine, University of California, Berkeley: “Discretion and Reparation in The Old Maid: Wharton Takes on the Philistines”
Eileen Connell, University of Virginia: “The Perils of Individualism: Edith Wharton’s Early Representations of America’s Turn-of-the-Century ‘Divorce Disease’”

10:30-11:00 a.m. Coffee break: WLH 309
William L. Harkness Hall

11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Small group sessions (four panels)
William L. Harkness Hall

Dismantling Wharton’s Houses of Mirth I: WLH 202

Jenni Dyman, Arapahoe Community College: Chair
Annette Zilversmit, Long Island University, Brooklyn: “The Politics of Revision: Through the Gaze of the Beinecke Manuscripts of The House of Mirth”
Chitra Viraraghavan, Tufts University: “Hidden Ingredients: Eating and Discomfort in Edith Wharton’s The House of Mirth”
Stephanie Batcos, University of Delaware: “The Moral Education of Lily Bart and Gwendolyn Harleth”

Literary Relations: WLH 207

Esther Lanigan, College of William and Mary: Chair

Susan Koprince, University of North Dakota: “Wharton and Longfellow”
Deborah Clarke, Pennsylvania State University: “Dangerous Sanctuaries: Imperiled Autonomy in Wharton and Faulkner”

Yrs, Edith: The Correspondence: WLH 203

Alan Price, Pennsylvania State University, Hazleton: Chair
Claudine Lesage, University of Amiens: “Léon Bélouguy, l’Ami Français”
Daniel Bratton, Ryerson Polytechnic University, Toronto, and Youngdong Institute of Technology, Youngdong, Korea: “The Letters of Edith Wharton and Louis Bromfield”
Sharon Shallow, Independent Scholar, Arlington, Massachusetts: “Edith Wharton and Mary Cadwalader Jones: A Literary Sisterhood”
Ellen Dupree, University of Nevada, Reno: “The Meaning of a Selling Success: Edith Wharton’s Move to Appleton”

Texts and Contexts: WLH 204

Judith L. Sensibar, Arizona State University: Chair
Jerome Loving, Texas A&M University: “The Death of Romance: Lily Bart and the 1908 Portrait of a Lady”
Elizabeth Keyser, Hollins College: “The Age of Innocence: A Backward Glance” at The Major Phase”
Frederick Wegener, St. John’s University: “Trembling Like an Aspen: Edith Wharton’s Struggles as a Critical Writer”

12:30-1:30 p.m. Lunch: Rose Alumni House
232 York St.

1:30-3:00 p.m. Plenary session: Problems of Biography
Rose Alumni House

Linda Peterson, Yale University: Chair
R. W. B. Lewis, Yale University: “Life into Writing/Writing into Life”
Patricia Bosworth, New York City: “Private and Public: A Daughter’s Reflections on Writing about Her Father”
Charlotte Margolis Goodman, Skidmore College: “A Backward Glance: Rethinking Women’s Biography in the Postmodern Era”

3:00-3:30 p.m. Coffee break: William L. Harkness Hall 309
3:30-5:00 p.m. Small group sessions (four panels)
William L. Harkness Hall

The War at Home: WLH 202
Mary Suzanne Schriber, Northern Illinois University: Chair
Judith L. Sensibar, Arizona State University: “What Did You Do in the War, Daddy?: Gender Confusion in Wharton’s War Writing and Post-War Fiction”
Jacquelyn M. Scott, Arizona State University: “Summer: Wharton’s Revision of Individual Bondage in Community”
Valérie Baudier, Yale University: “Edith Wharton’s Fathers and Fatherlands”

Autographs and Autobiographies: WLH 203
Windy Counsell, University of Delaware: Chair
Jennifer Swift, SUNY, Buffalo: “Great Grandfather Stevens’s Eagle Andiron and Great Grandmother’s Bible: Edith Wharton’s Invented Genealogy in A Backward Glance”
Manuela Thurner, Yale University: “Woman or Writer?: Strategies of Self-Representation in Edith Wharton’s A Backward Glance”
Alan Price, Pennsylvania State University, Hazleton: “Mrs. Wharton, Never ‘Mrs. Edith Wharton: The Significance of Names”

Edith Wharton: Friends and Family: WLH 204
Janet Beer Goodwyn, Roehampton Institute, London: Chair
Carol J. Singley, Rutgers University: “Abiding Loyalties: Elisina Tyler’s Diary and Wharton’s Last Months of Life”
Mia Manzulli, New York University: “Keeping Up with the Joneses: Edith Jones Wharton and Beatrice Jones Farrand”
Elsa Nettel, College of William and Mary: “Edith Wharton and Zona Gale”

Fictions and Fashions: WLH 207
Helen Kiloran, Ohio University, Lancaster: Chair
Deborah Pleisch-Owen, University of Waterloo, Ontario: “Form Follows Fashion: Unstable (Postcolonial) Interiors in The Age of Innocence”
Maureen Honey, University of Nebraska, Lincoln: “The Uses of Art in Edith Wharton’s Fiction”
Nancy Bentley, University of Pennsylvania: “Wharton, Car Accidents, and the Erotics of Publicity”
Anne Ullmo, University of Paris, Sorbonne: “The Tomb-Painting”

6:00 p.m. Banquet: Horchow Hall
55 Hillhouse Ave.

8:00 p.m. Special screening of The Age of Innocence (1993), starring Irene Dunne and John Boles
Whitney Humanities Center, Auditorium

Brigitte Peucker, Yale University: “Rival Arts?: Filming The Age of Innocence”

SUNDAY, APRIL 30

9:00-10:30 a.m. Small group sessions (five panels)
Linsky Chittenden Hall (LC)
63 High St.

Dueling Lives: Autobiography and Biography: LC 209
Jean Franz Blackall, Cornell University: Chair
Susan Goodman, University of Delaware: “A Composed Life: The Biographies of Edith Wharton”
Clare Colquitt, San Diego State University: “The Making of Percy Lubbock’s Portrait of Edith Wharton”
Candace Waid, Yale University: “Justifiable Biography”

Edith Wharton: Encounters with Race and Class: LC 208
Annette Zilversmit, Long Island University, Brooklyn: Chair
Anne C. MacMaster, Millsaps College: “Dark-Skinned Servants and the Invention of Whiteness: Color, Race, and Freedom in The Age of Innocence”
Jill Wacker, University of Pennsylvania: “Sewed on Crooked: Millinery and The House of Mirth”
Julia Ehhardt, Yale University: “Who’s Steering the Sled?: The Challenge of Creating a Cross-Cultural Wharton”
Gianfranca Balestra, Universita Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan: “Edith Wharton’s Exercise in Italian: An Unpublished Short Story”

Dismantling Wharton’s Houses of Mirth II: LC 203
Karin W. Jackson, University of Maine, Augusta: Chair
Niki Parisier, Yale University: “Staging the Female Self: Edith Wharton and Lily Bart”
Joseph Coulombe, University of Delaware: “Man or Mannequin—Edith Wharton’s Selden”
Mary Suzanne Schriber, Northern Illinois University: “Fighting France: Travel Writing in the Grotesque”
Contending Cultures: LC 105

Katherine Joslin, Western Michigan University; Chair
Annette L. Benedt, Allentown College of St. Francis de Sales; "Edith Wharton at War: Civilized Space in Troubled Times"
Brian Edwards, Yale University; "The Out of Bounds in In Morocco"
Julie Olin-Ammentorp, Le Moyne College; "Edith Wharton after the War: The Failure of A Son at the Front"
Marcia McGowan, Eastern Connecticut State University; "Into the Hands of the Enemy": Family Battles in The Children

Constructing Culture: LC 206

Peelope Vita-Finzi, Independent Scholar, London; Chair
Heather Hirschfield, Duke University; "Survival of the Feminist: Edith Wharton, Charles Darwin and Sexual Selection"
Carole Shaffer-Koros, Kean College; "Edith Wharton and the Concept of Universal History"
Ellen Pifer, University of Delaware; "The Children: Wharton's Ambivalence to Self, Society, and the 'New World'"
Dale M. Bauer, University of Wisconsin, Madison, and Mary V. Marchand, Goucher College; "Wharton's Competition with her Contemporaries"

10:45-11:45 a.m.  Plenary session: Justice to Edith Wharton: The Need for a Scholarly Edition

Rose Alumni House
232 York St.

Alfred Bendixen, California State University, Los Angeles; Chair
Alfred Bendixen, California State University, Los Angeles; "Proposing, Planning, and Developing a Scholarly Edition of Wharton's Writings"
Kenneth M. Price, Texas A&M University; "The Need to Edit Wharton's Unpublished Writings: The Example of Literature"
Abby Werlock, St. Olaf College; "Visions and Revisions: The Need to Edit Wharton's Fiction"

12:00 Farewell brunch: Rose Alumni House

(Handwritten notes: illegible text)