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From the Archives

The Shadow of a Doubt: Discovering a New Work by Edith Wharton

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Some of the most exciting discoveries of Wharton scholarship in recent years have been archival: Alice Kelly's recovery of "The Field of Honour," the war story "hidden" in plain sight in the Beinecke Library; Meredith Goldsmith's discovery of the Italian-language typescript of the 1900 short story "The Duchess at Prayer" ("La Duchessa in Preghiera") in the Rubenstein Library at Duke University; and a fascinating, ongoing unearthing of individual poems by Irene Goldman-Price, who also brought us the eagerly awaited *My Dear Governess: The Letters of Edith Wharton to Anna Bahlmann* (2012). The papers of Wharton's governess Anna Bahlmann—bought for the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University in 2009—filled significant gaps in our knowledge of the author's early life and provided new paths for exploration where previously the biographical trail was thought to have run cold. Through the recovery of the Bahlmann correspondence, Wharton's self-portrait of a withdrawn, changeling child was reimagined as that of a lively, outgoing, athletic youngster; the misunderstood Edith Jones was restored to the heart of a close, warm family; the self-mythologized autodidact was recast as a young woman encouraged and supported in her learning; the husband Edward Wharton who was, at best, unfortunate and afflicted, at worst, a monster (reported as literally foaming at the mouth according to one biographer [Benstock 126]), became "charming," accommodating Teddy, a man of whom a not-so-young bride of twenty-three could be proud. The Bahlmann papers offered the most significant discovery in

our store of biographical knowledge since the lapse of literary executor Gaillard Lapsley's embargo of the publication of "anything of a biographical sort" for thirty years when he sold the bulk of Wharton's papers to Yale University in 1938 (Lapsley to the president of Yale, 7 May 1938, qtd. in Lee 755).

Meanwhile, there has been no discovery of a lengthy manuscript since the French scholar Claudine Lesage's intriguing reclamation of *The Cruise of the Vanadis*, published in 1992—and this appears most likely to have been a diary account of the twenty-six-year-old Wharton's cruise in the Mediterranean in 1888, not intended as a published work. In the quarter of a century since, Wharton scholars perhaps could not imagine that with all of the material available in archives worldwide, complete manuscripts of unknown, original, longer creative works, unrecorded in catalogs or by biographers, could still be out there. But they are.

In the fall of 2016, our conversations at, and e-mail exchanges after, the Wharton Society Conference in Washington, DC—where we were the only two speakers on the program focusing on the author's work as a playwright—led us to our discovery of an original, full-length play by Edith Wharton, the only extant original full play by Wharton: *The Shadow of a Doubt*. The play's location was a surprise. Wharton scholars have been traveling to the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin for over three decades to research Wharton's papers. The source of their interest, however, was primarily the Fullerton correspondence bought by the Center—letters first profiled in a special journal issue of the *Library Chronicle of the University of Texas at Austin* in 1985, with a number later included in the R. W. B. Lewis and Nancy Lewis edition of Wharton's selected letters (1988). What an irony, then, that in a different, seemingly unrelated collection at the Harry Ransom Center, there lay for years unremarked on Wharton's play.

We discovered the play (two typescript copies) in the Center's Playscripts and Promptbooks Collection (Performing Arts). The collection holds promptbooks, stage managers' workbooks, preparation and rehearsal copies, and unused scripts for approximately one hundred dramas and comedies (including musical comedies), many of which were staged in New York or London. The collection spans the years 1795–1978, but the bulk of the material dates between 1870 and 1915. The "Scope and Contents" of the inventory reveals that "[t]he majority of the items in this collection are marked copies that appear to have been used in the production process," with promptbooks and stage managers' workbooks containing notes for cues, calls, scene shifts, effects, et cetera (collection processed by Helen Baer, 2000–2001). A number of the promptbooks are likely to be final or souvenir promptbooks, compiled afterward as

a record of the production. Also included, however, are unused typescripts, often with plots and ground plans, in which the stage directions are underlined in red but which lack warnings, cues, or other features of full promptbooks. The descriptive summary inventory notes, “Prominent authors and theatrical managers represented are John Philip Kemble, Charles Frohman, Arthur Wing Pinero, Lillian Hellman [the collection includes a fragile copy of the promptbook for *The Children’s Hour*] and Dion Boucicault.” There is no reference to Edith Wharton among those “[p]rominent authors.”

Inquiries to the curatorial team established that the playscripts and promptbooks that make up the collection have been acquired by the Center since the 1950s from a variety of sources but primarily from two theatre collectors, Messmore Kendall and Albert Davis.¹ There is no specific reference to the acquisition of *The Shadow of a Doubt*, however, and neither copy of the play has any provenance markings or dates. Yet the office of American producer Charles Frohman, with whom Wharton worked on *The Shadow of a Doubt*, was the source of typescripts (mostly unmarked) for eighteen plays, many of which were produced at the Empire Theatre in New York or in London between 1901 and 1913, and the descriptive inventory for the collection speculates that it “seems likely that a few other scripts in the collection passed through Frohman’s office, though they are not marked with his stamp.”

To complicate matters further, *The Shadow of a Doubt* is a late arrival to the inventory, though not to the archive itself. The finding aid for the Playscripts and Promptbooks Collection is a conflation of the original inventory created in 2000–2001, a small addition that was not cataloged until 2006, and subsequent additions. The addition is described only by a Box List that has been appended to the original inventory, using the arrangement established with the original inventory and continuing the box numbering sequence. The Scope and Contents note, Index of Authors, and Production Personnel do not refer to the addition. Thus Wharton is listed simply as one of the alphabetized additions: “Wharton, Edith. *The Shadow of a Doubt*. Typescript, nd (2 copies)” in Box 24. And the entry is easy to miss. No other details are recorded, and the play and its author do not come up in an electronic cross-search. But there they are: two, separate typed copies of *The Shadow of a Doubt*—a total of 248 pages of cream, hole-punched sheets, professionally typed, with red underlinings of all stage directions but no other markings. Coming from an age before xeroxing and digital scans, the copies are close but not identical, produced by a professional typist, both presenting the complete three-act play.

Knowledge of Wharton’s complex, layered composition process suggests that she had invested considerable time in *The Shadow of a Doubt* for it to

have reached the typescript stage. Examination of her manuscripts at Yale University—including her unfinished plays—verifies that the process, often preceded by notes, summaries, or scenarios, would commence in earnest with draft sheets handwritten in pen or pencil (at times both on a single page), often then substantially revised in pen, pencil, and even colored crayon. Wharton would regularly cut and paste, with sheets of manuscripts having strips of paper pasted onto the original. These stages were all completed before a manuscript was passed to a typist, and the typescript would in turn undergo further revision. It would be a complete departure for these preparatory stages to have been skipped in the production of *The Shadow of a Doubt*, underscoring the professionally typed promptbook's highly invested and advanced stage of production.

The significance of finding *The Shadow of a Doubt* resonates on many levels. First, the discovery of a long work of which Wharton scholars past and present had no knowledge inevitably carries a degree of excitement. *The Shadow of a Doubt* has, in effect, been lost for over a century. It is not referenced in major biographies by R. W. B. Lewis, Cynthia Griffin Wolff, Hermione Lee, or in the Lewis and Lewis *Letters*. With its recovery we now have for the first time a complete original play by Wharton—the other plays are all unfinished manuscripts and typescripts held in the archives at Yale University.²

Further, the discovery of the play both confirms the importance of playwriting to Wharton's career and offers a major expansion of primary material with which to evaluate the writer's work in this genre. The timing also is crucial. We have been able to establish that *The Shadow of a Doubt* was completed, and in production, by early 1901—a pivotal, formative period of her career, about which Wharton scholars still have less information than they would like. The dating—so often a thorny, uncertain issue in archival research—and the production history, charted below, prove that Wharton was establishing herself as a playwright at the turn of the century. In fact, playwriting seemed to be more important to her at this time than establishing herself as a novelist. *The Shadow of a Doubt* is one of a number of plays Wharton wrote and adapted between 1899 and 1902, including *The Tighrope*, *The Man of Genius*, *Manon Lescaut*, and a translation of Herman Sudermann's drama *Es Lebe das Leben* (*The Joy of Living*). She also published a volume of poetry, a set of fables, a field-defining work of interior design, a collection of short stories (with a second to appear that year), and a novella—all before the appearance of her first novel in 1902.

Yet the discovery of *The Shadow of a Doubt* also develops new thinking and proves of profound influence on our understanding of Wharton's work as a novelist. *The Shadow of a Doubt* rehearses motifs for *The House of Mirth* (1905) and links to themes of the abandoned narrative "Disintegration," itself a partial

precursor to *The House of Mirth*. On top of this, Wharton would recycle major material and themes from *The Shadow of a Doubt*—including an entire plotline and the controversial theme of euthanasia—for her 1907 novel *The Fruit of the Tree*, offering us a new way into that text and throwing into question a number of established readings, and the assumed provenance, of that work.

Written in three acts, *The Shadow of a Doubt* is set in London, in the Earl of Osterleigh's drawing room in Park Lane, in the garden of the Derwents' home on the river Thames, and concludes in a lodging house in the city's East End.

John Derwent has married Kate Tredennis, nurse and best friend to his late wife, Agnes, who died after breaking her back in an accident. The new Mrs. Derwent is a model wife and stepmother to Agnes's daughter Sylvia; however, Lord Osterleigh, Agnes's wealthy father, disapproves of the swiftness of the remarriage as well as of Kate's position in society. He discusses his distress at length with Lady Uske.

Dr. Carruthers, a down-on-his-luck physician, visits Lord Osterleigh's home to continue to extort money from Kate for keeping her secret that she administered a fatal dose of chloroform to Agnes when she had begged her to end the pain of her condition and prevent her husband from witnessing her agonizing death. John Derwent enters and, recognizing the doctor, offers to help him attain a position by writing a letter of recommendation. Kate asks her husband to withdraw the letter, and Carruthers retaliates by revealing Kate's role in the death of Agnes. Kate confesses to her husband.

The couple continue to live together but lead separate lives. Lord Osterleigh takes this opportunity to separate his former son-in-law and second wife by sending him to a posting in the foreign office in China without his family. Lord Osterleigh asks Derwent to give him sole responsibility for the care of Sylvia during his long absence. Kate is numbed at witnessing her husband's discomfort at the idea of leaving his child alone with her. She is to be separated from both her husband and her beloved stepdaughter.

Act III opens in a lodging house, Kate's new home as she struggles to find work as a nurse without character references.³ Only her friend Clodagh knows of her whereabouts until Lady Uske tracks her down through Scotland Yard. Lord Osterleigh follows Lady Uske with the news that Derwent has returned early, recalled by the Foreign Office in anticipation of a prestigious posting in Spain. Osterleigh offers Kate money to divorce her husband, but she refuses. Holding Kate responsible for his daughter's death, Osterleigh in turn threatens her with the police if she does not consent to a divorce and disappear. Pushed to extremes,

Kate produces a letter written by Agnes in her final hours that both proves the veracity of her story and suggests an extramarital affair between Agnes and John's best friend, destroying Lord Osterleigh's image of her as the perfect daughter and wife. Derwent enters the room and entreats Kate to return to him. Lord Osterleigh, crushed, vouches for Kate, exonerating her from all blame in his daughter's death. Kate burns the letter, unread by John. Osterleigh "leans upon her feebly like an old man, and Derwent, stunned and yet already penetrated by the sense of some great renewal, stands before her with bowed head as the curtain falls."

The Shadow of a Doubt, completed and in production by early 1901, helps illuminate Wharton's formative years as a writer before the publication of her first novel. Any discussion of Wharton's playwriting career almost always begins and ends with a truncated reference to her work with Clyde Fitch on the adaptation of *The House of Mirth* in 1906. By the time of her collaboration with Fitch, however, Wharton was not a novice at writing, adapting, translating, or staging plays. Indeed, she was already deeply engaged in both the creative and business aspects of theatre.

In fact, by 1901, the arts journal *The Critic* opened with a brief feature on Wharton as a new writer of note and included an 1897 picture of her reading on a porch with a dog on her lap (an image now found at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale). The article concluded that Frohman was lucky to have found this new talent: "It is a feather in the cap of Mr. Charles Frohman that he has been the first manager to appreciate the dramatic worth of Mrs. Wharton" ("Lounger" 197). By the time of a December 1902 review of a matinee of "The Twilight of the God," the *New York Times* announced, "Mrs. Wharton, Playwright" ("Mrs. Wharton, Playwright" 6).

Wharton was thus building a reputation as a dramatic writer in the early 1900s and working on several projects associated with Charles Frohman. Frohman, who began in local vaudeville and minstrel shows and then moved on to big musicals and melodrama, was the best-known theatrical producer before his death on the *Lusitania* in 1916. He formed the Theatrical Syndicate in 1896 with his brother Daniel Frohman, Alfred Hayman, Mark Klaw, Samuel Nirdlinger, Frederick Zimmerman, and A. L. Erlanger. (Walter Berry wrote to Wharton, "What's this Theatrical Syndicate?" [31 Jan. 1900, Beinecke]). This cabal of theatre administration had little competition except the Shubert organization. Frohman owned multiple venues, including the Empire Theatre, the Lyceum, the Garden Theatre, the Criterion Theatre, and the Madison Square Theatre. In London, Frohman managed the Apollo Theatre, the Lyceum Theatre, and the

Duke of York's Theatre. Even Clyde Fitch despaired of Frohman's stranglehold, exclaiming, "[W]hat a state it is, when there is only one man to whom one can offer a play and expect to have it in any ½ adequate way presented" (qtd. in Bryan 5).⁴ Known for the "out of town try-out," Frohman's scheme worked the kinks out of a production before its appearance in front of critics in New York or London; the most successful plays were then quickly engaged on tours (Marcosson and Frohman 162).

Frohman reviewed scores of plays, short proposals, and playscripts from agents and authors in order to have enough stock for his theatres. His Empire Acting School and Franklin Haven Sergeant's American Academy of Dramatic Arts collaborated to create a source of plays for Frohman's theatres, for the "senior thesis" required students to perform in matinees for the public. The *New York Times* and other theatre publications announced performances and reviews of these plays ("A Record" 67). Frohman used the matinee format as a vehicle for this new full-length play by Wharton, as reported in *The Critic*:

Early in the present month Mr. Frohman will present a play by her at a special matinée at the Empire Theatre. The significance of this step on the part of Mr. Frohman cannot be overestimated. Miss Elsie de Wolfe will play the leading rôle in "The Shadow of a Doubt," and she will be supported by an exceptionally strong company. It is hardly necessary to say that the occasion will be a notable one. ("Lounger" 197)

Later, Sergeant and Frohman worked with Wharton and Scribner's to secure permission for Wharton's brief dialogues—"The Twilight of the God" (1899), published in her first collection of short stories, *The Greater Inclination*; and "Copy" (1902), from her second collection, *Crucial Instances*—to be performed in these thesis matinees by the student actors. Sergeant wrote to the lawyers representing Wharton that Frohman "has a direct interest in the matter, and the scenery and stage settings will be as complete as at any theatre in the city" (14 Nov. 1902, Princeton). "The Twilight of the God" was soon performed several times as a matinee by students of the Empire Acting School.⁵ In December 1902, the production was reviewed in the *New York Times* as "a brilliant little play" and compared to *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Doris Keane, the young actress who played the lead role of Isabel Warland, was called "a draught of iced wine" ("Mrs. Wharton, Playwright" 6) and later became a prominent stage and silent film actress. In 1903, this brief play was performed by the Independent Players in Cincinnati ("News of the

Playhouses” 9) and again later that year by the students of the Empire Theatre Acting School, this time to less glowing reviews.

Wharton likely made Marbury’s acquaintance through her family and social contacts. Elizabeth Marbury was the preeminent drama agent in her day, representing J. M. Barrie, Hall Caine, Rachel Crothers, and Clyde Fitch, among many others. Marbury was wellborn and the author of a book on social mores, *Manners: A Handbook of Social Customs* (1888). In 1903, she formed the Colony Club, a women’s social establishment, catering to wealthy and professional women who did not have access to the club life of men of the same station. She writes in her autobiography, *My Crystal Ball: Reminiscences* (1923), that after an amateur theatrical event at Tuxedo Park, Daniel Frohman advised her to use her remarkable managerial skills in the theatre (55). Marbury worked independently at first, then collaborated extensively with the Frohman brothers and the Syndicate. For convenience, Marbury eventually moved her office from East 33rd Street in New York to 40th Street, in a location above the Empire Theatre itself. Her partner, Elsie de Wolfe, had joined Frohman’s theatre company in 1894 and was a well-known actress in her day before launching a career in interior design.

It seems that Marbury, Frohman, and de Wolfe all had a part in *The Shadow of a Doubt*. On 10 March 1901, the *Atlanta Constitution* announced, “‘The Shadow of a Doubt,’ a play in three acts by Edith Wharton, will have a trial performance at the Empire Theatre in New York in about a fortnight. If it is successful, Elsie de Wolfe, who takes the leading role, is likely to star in it” (15). Buried in a theatre column on 3 February 1901, the *Boston Herald* had announced weeks earlier that “Edith Wharton, who wrote ‘The Twilight of the Gods’ [*sic*] has turned out plays called ‘The Shadow of a Doubt’ and ‘A Man of Genius’” (17). This announcement was repeated in the *Detroit Free Press* on 10 February 1901, in a roundup of theatre news under the heading “The Stage” in the column “Hit or Miss Bits of Theatrical Comment, Gossip and Current News.” (“Hit or Miss”/ also includes news of a number of Wharton’s current or future collaborators: Fitch, Frohman, and Julia Marlowe.)

For unknown reasons, however, the production was cancelled. The *Atlanta Constitution* announcement appears to have been obsolete, for two days earlier a column in the *New York Times* reported that “[t]he proposed special matinee to be given by Charles Frohman to present Mrs. Edith Wharton’s three-act play, ‘The Shadow of a Doubt’ with Miss Elsie de Wolfe in the leading part, has been abandoned by Mr. Frohman for the present. This will enable Mrs. Wharton to strengthen some of the roles. The play will be produced next season” (“Theatrical Gossip” 7).

The cancellation of *The Shadow of a Doubt*, however, did not detract from Wharton's steady attention to drama from 1900 to 1903. Wharton had been busy in this period completing a dramatization of Abbé Prévost's novel *Manon Lescaut*. In a 15 May 1900 letter to Anna Bahlmann about *The Tighrope*, Wharton had written, "Then it seems there is a chance that Frohman's version of 'Manon' may have fallen through, so Miss Marbury is going to see what she can do about mine" (qtd. in Goldman-Price 187). The popular actress Julia Marlowe was engaged to play Manon, but she withdrew in February 1901 to be replaced by de Wolfe only for the production to be cancelled. However, Frohman's production of *Manon Lescaut* was not abandoned after all. Adapted by Theodore Burt Sayre, this version debuted on Broadway on 19 March 1901 with the stage duo Herbert Kelcy and Effie Shannon. Wharton's inability to get her own adaptation of *Manon* produced may have been a narrow escape, for *The Theatre* reported that "Mr. Sayre's version of Abbé Prévost's *Manon Lescaut*, produced recently at Wallack's Theatre, did not prove a success. The play, however, is not as bad as some claimed; many worse have been inflicted on the public" ([May 1901] 6). Later in February, de Wolfe was already starring as Lady Mildred in Frohman's production of *The Shades of Night* ("Plays and Players," *The Theatre* [Dec. 1901] 4).

In 1902, Wharton agreed to translate Herman Sudermann's *Es Lebe das Leben* from the German for the popular actress Mrs. Patrick Campbell (Beatrice Stella Tanner), who both produced the play and acted in the lead role. This collaboration was a surprise, because in a letter to Sara Norton in January that year, Wharton had called Mrs. Campbell a "great ranting gawk" of an actress (Lewis and Lewis 56). The production debuted on 23 October at Frohman's Garden Theatre to mixed reviews, but Wharton's translation was noted with special regard in the *New York Times* ("The Joy of Living"). And while *The Joy of Living* was not a critical success, the same review noted, "it grips the attention and carries the sympathies breathlessly." A November article, "Mrs. Wharton and the Joy of Translating," hinted at artistic differences between the two women. Wharton preferred a correct, idiomatic translation, and Campbell preferred a dramatically expressive one. In a May review of the theatre season, the *Times* concluded, "The only German play of the season which as produced was of genuine literary value was Mrs. Wharton's translation," though the production was marred both by the overly dramatic effect of Campbell's acting and the lack of sophistication of the American audiences for its content about adultery ("Topics of the Drama" 25). The play had a successful run in Britain the following year, *The Scotsman* newspaper noting

in its review of the London production the translation of one of the class of plays “loosely called problem plays” by “Miss Edith Wharton [*sic*]” (“‘The Joy of Living’ at the New Theatre” 5). To Wharton’s surprise, the published translation brought residuals for years, as she recalled in *A Backward Glance*, and it became her best-known dramatic effort until later stage adaptations of her work.

In 1903, Frohman produced a student matinee of Wharton’s “Copy,” a one-act dialogue developed out of her short story collection *Crucial Instances*. Wharton wanted to give the short play a trial, saying through her lawyers that she “considers it more adapted to the stage than ‘The Twilight of the God’” (A. Bellman, 23 Sep. 1903, Princeton). The *New York Times* thought differently: “[b]oth of Mrs. Wharton’s little plays reveal her cleverness and her psychologic [*sic*] grasp of emotion, but this one [‘Copy’] is better read in Scribner’s, whereas the other one [‘The Twilight of the God’] was better seen in the theatre” (“Under Cover a Success” n.p.).

Wharton was nonetheless confident about her playwriting abilities. Her work was being discussed, cast, and produced. The leading producer of the age had taken on her dramas, resulting in international press coverage and interest. And there was no false modesty. Writing to Bahlmann on 15 May 1900 from London, Wharton shared leading actor-producer George Alexander’s assessment of one of her scripts: “He told Miss Marbury (not knowing she knew me) that he thought ‘The Tightrope’ the best play (written by an American) that he had ever read” (qtd. in Goldman-Price 187). Wharton’s work was evidently being passed around theatre circles in both the United States and Britain.

Wharton was thus an active member of the turn-of-the-century, big-business American theatre scene, though her interest in drama reached back into her childhood. Whereas in *A Backward Glance* (1934), Wharton downplays the significance of theatre in her life, one of her last essays restores its importance. In “A Further Glance,” later developed and published posthumously as “A Little Girl’s New York” in 1938 in *Harper’s Magazine*, she recalls theatre and churchgoing “standing up like summits catching the light when all else is in shadow,” the two “great emotion[s]” of her life (“A Further Glance” 26). Although Wharton claims in general that she was unable to immerse herself fully in a play, she casts the experience in a hue of wonder as “something new, a window opening on the foam of faeryland,” watching acting that the writer in her seventies believed was mostly “much better” than any she had seen since (27).⁶

Given such extensive interest, Wharton’s expansive record of correspondence is less revealing about her playwriting and about *The Shadow of a Doubt*

than one might hope. In part this is due to the gaps in the correspondence, more specifically the timing of those gaps. During periods when she was at some distance from friends, conversations spilled over into letters—“ink-to-ink talk[s]” as Wharton once called them to Bernard Berenson (letter of 4 May 1915, I Tatti). When friends and family were closer, correspondence stopped. Goldman-Price explains, for example, why there is little correspondence between Wharton and Bahlmann from the first few years of the century: “The two women were increasingly together as Wharton wrote ever more prolifically” (186). Following the 15 May 1900 letter to Bahlmann, cited above, there follows a thirteen-month gap until a June 1901 letter from Lenox. Then there is an almost two-year wait to the next letter from Venice, on 4 April 1903. It is unfortunate, not least as this was a period in which Wharton was avidly writing and adapting plays. The May letter cited above is an indication of what might have been captured, with all the talk of writing focused on plays.

To one important correspondent, however, was Wharton less open about her playwriting than her work in other genres? It has been well documented that Henry James destroyed almost all of his letters from Wharton—regrettable to Wharton scholars on many levels, here not least as one might have expected their early twentieth-century correspondence to have included references to her playwriting. Yet there is reason to suggest that Wharton may have kept quiet about her original playwriting to James—perhaps out of sensitivity. James’s unsuccessful career as a playwright has been often cited—notably the failure of *Guy Domville* in 1895, before the period their correspondence commenced (though Lyall H. Powers records that Wharton sent her good wishes for the opening of *Guy Domville* via Minnie Bourget [3]). Yet they were regular correspondents. The surviving letters from James, printed in Powers’s edition, begin on 26 October 1900, when Wharton was engaged in playwriting, yet James’s letter refers only to Wharton’s story “The Line of Least Resistance,” which appeared that month in *Lippincott’s Magazine* (Powers 32–33). There follows an interval until 17 August 1902, by which time discussion concerns *The Wings of the Dove* and *The Valley of Decision*. Yet we know that James resumed his playwriting endeavors by 1907, and his correspondence to Wharton, notably in 1908, discusses theatre performances in Edinburgh and Manchester, as well as difficulties in obtaining a London theatre, in some detail (see Powers 83–99). One looks for some allusion to Wharton’s earlier plays—yet the only references James makes are to the adaptation with Fitch of *The House of Mirth* in 1906. Without Wharton’s letters to James—her side of the dialogue—we can never be certain, but the complete omission of any responsive reference to Wharton’s

original playwriting suggests that this may have been an area of work which in her letters to James she kept muted.

In one correspondence, however, playwriting was effusively discussed—namely, the letters from Walter Berry to Wharton. Once again, huge chunks of this correspondence are lost to us, but what survives, on this occasion, includes an aptly timed selection spanning 1900–1902 of Berry’s letters, dripping in references to theatre. The correspondence enthusiastically discusses Wharton’s plays, plays-in-progress and rehearsals, works by other dramatists, as well as reading, viewing, and reviewing plays. They reference both popular and dreadful theatre performances as well as business dealings with key theatrical personages, including Marbury, William Archer, Alexander, Frohman, C. B. Dillingham, Fitch, Marlowe, de Wolfe, and others. Notably, it’s all “fun,” a word repeatedly used by Berry to Wharton (letter to Wharton, 2 Jan. 1900, Beinecke): “it’s the fun of it, though, that makes it the big success” (5 Feb. 1900, Beinecke); “Wouldn’t it be fun knocking about the theatres together!” (31 Jan. 1900, Beinecke). In a letter to Robert Grant in 1906 Wharton describes the experience of turning *The House of Mirth* into a stage production as “great fun” (Lewis and Lewis 103). Berry applauds Wharton’s desire to write for the stage. He regularly commented on what he was seeing in Washington, DC, and New York City, believing these descriptions were useful for Wharton’s development as a playwright. To Berry, Charles Haddon Chamber’s *The Tyranny of Tears: A Comedy in Four Acts* presents a model of good dramatic formula: “not over-clever but mighty-clever for all that, having a good situation, . . . and plenty of comics to keep the laugh[ing]” going (letter to Wharton, 5 Feb. 1900, Beinecke).

In addition, Berry teases Wharton that she could make a lot of money writing for the stage, noting Hall Caine’s *The Christian* and J. M. Barrie’s *The Little Minister* as examples (7 Dec. 1898, Beinecke). Barrie’s *The Little Minister* (1897) ended with a wellborn woman living happily with a man below her station. Caine’s enormously popular *The Christian* (1898) focuses on a minister who unsuccessfully sets out to save the woman he admires from her successful stage career. Berry thought it made excellent “stagery” despite its mawkishness. Berry also commented on other popular plays, many of them melodramatic or religious. He mentions Mrs. Pearl Mary Theresa Craigie; her *The Ambassadors* (1898) played on both sides of the Atlantic and starred Fay Davis, who would later act in Wharton’s stage version of *The House of Mirth*. Wharton herself attended Paul Heyse’s *Mary of Magdala* (“In Brooklyn Theatres” 26), a play notable for the acting of Minnie Maddern Fiske, known for her depiction of strong women characters, including the New York debut of Nora in

Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1894). Berry commented several times on *The Gay Lord Quex* (1899), a farce by Arthur Wing Pinero, in which one figure tempts his newly engaged friend to cheat on his fiancée. And Berry explicitly references *The Shadow of a Doubt*, or rather "The Shadow" as he calls it, in a letter sent to Wharton's Park Avenue address in New York City, by which time the play is in rehearsal: "How I do wish I could run on to see the first rehearsal of The Shadow." In the same letter, he reports gossiping with Irene Vanbrugh, the lead actress in *The Gay Lord Quex*, that she would be perfect in the role of the wife in "The Shadow" (22 Feb. 1901, Beinecke).

What we know of Wharton's other original, turn-of-the century plays in their extant, incomplete state or from partial insights via correspondence suggests that *The Shadow of a Doubt* represents both a continuation and a new departure in her playwriting trajectory. Clues to its predecessor, the missing *Tightrope*, are largely limited to Berry's effusive references: it was a comedy of manners, with characters including "Mrs. Smash," scenes of a "Musical" and ball, with Berry suggesting "A Comedy of Distemperament" as an appropriate title (letters of 31 Jan. 1900; 15 Feb. 1900; 27. Feb. 1900, Beinecke). Understanding of the contemporaneous *The Man of Genius*, via an extant typescript of Act I, twenty pages of Act II, and a full scenario of the remaining acts, is much more extensive: a comedy in four acts, set in England, charting the trials of a successful writer, Claud Hartwood, as he tries to complete his novel in his busy family home, with a lighthearted plot of misunderstandings and mistaken identity (a young heiress poses as a secretary to help him with his work) leading to a temporary separation between the writer (the "Man of Genius") and his wife, before all is happily—that rare lexicon in the Wharton canon—resolved. *The Man of Genius* envelops an interesting discussion of the role of the artist and of the creative life, a recurring motif of Wharton's work, but the play exudes a light, bright touch, with her trademark witty one-liners on fulsome display. An additional play, untitled, unfinished, and most likely written in the period 1899–1902, opens in a high-society English setting with two ladies discussing how best to conceal an inconvenient social indiscretion and a pregnancy, before it is revealed that the unmarried maid is also pregnant, unleashing a disturbing scene of moral condemnation and brutal dismissal for both the maid and her lover (the household's butler) without a reference, though not before the butler (rather than the maid) has given them all a piece of his mind.⁷

The Shadow of a Doubt, meanwhile, set in England, like the majority of Wharton's plays, opens in a drawing room, leading to a familiar scene of social

privilege and affluence, in this case a world of Earls, Right Honourables, and landed gentry. Indeed its opening is familiar in both setting and tone—the amusing one-liners are in abundance, sharp social commentators in attendance, while an almost Wildean wit and languor layer the scene and the prose. This is a world of appearances and social niceties. Unlike its predecessor, however, where women are little more than foils to illuminate the “man of genius,” *The Shadow of a Doubt* gives us a female protagonist who pushes forward the plot—two in fact, one living, one dead, the memory of the deceased first wife casting a long, scenario-altering shadow. While *The Man of Genius* maintains its lighthearted tone, its successor takes a decidedly dark and controversial turn into a world of extortion, mistrust, deception, and the revelation of an act claimed alternately as euthanasia and as murder, resulting in threats of imprisonment and exile as the female protagonist elects to leave.

The Shadow of a Doubt anticipates a number of thematic and structural concerns on view several years later in *The House of Mirth*, most markedly in the final act, which witnesses a spiral down the social scale from the upper echelons of affluence and perceived respectability to a drab lodging house in the East End. Kate Derwent, even though married, is always the outsider trying to fit into her new circumstances. We learn of blackmail, a fatal dose of chloroform (rather than the equally effective chloral), the burning of letters to conceal an affair, and in the final scene the incineration of a letter that protects both the man she loves and the memory of her friend. The solidarity among women lower down the social scale on view in the final stages of *The House of Mirth* is in clear evidence in *The Shadow of a Doubt*, but tellingly in the latter it is a solidarity that extends across the social strata: the affection between Kate and Gwendoline (“a small pallid slavey”), and Kate’s supportive friend Clodagh. Even Lady Uske, who doubted her and schemes with Lord Osterleigh, relinquishes her Bertha Dorset ways and seeks out Kate to apologize, accepting that she has been wrong. How does she know she was wrong? “A woman who has something to hide doesn’t creep away without a word from her husband’s house and bury herself in the slums -- not she! If there’d been anything wrong you would simply have remained at home, and engaged the best cook in London ---.” Lady Uske advocates a pragmatic return home and pretense: “My dear, after twenty, all life is pretending, and it’s easier to pretend in a good house, with everybody’s cards on the hall table, than alone in a garret under a false name!” (Kate is “about” twenty-eight to Lily’s twenty-nine years.) Here, at the turn of the century, when the women’s suffrage movement was crystallizing, Wharton—the writer who never vocally supported women’s suffrage—creates

one of her most supportive female networks and a professional woman who has the courage of her convictions, who chooses to leave a life of affluence to endeavor to be self-supporting. Rather than be defined by a man who doubts her, even though she loves him, she refuses Derwent's financial support and the protection of his name, living instead under her mother's surname. The play's movement down the social scale, meanwhile, offers a welcome reminder that Wharton's early work regularly addresses unprivileged lives, particularly those of women, as seen in her first published story, "Mrs. Manstey's View" (1891), and the shattering 1892 narrative *Bunner Sisters*, rejected by *Scribner's Magazine*.

While John Derwent is no Lawrence Selden—he arrives in time to say “the word” to appeal to the woman he loves—it is evident that even in the final scene he still questions his wife; he accepts not *her* word of her innocence, but the word of a man, his former father-in-law who, moments before his arrival, had deemed his wife a “venomous reptile.” While Wharton was accused in early reviews of producing weak, ineffectual men (*Munsey's Magazine*, reviewing her volume of stories *Crucial Instances* in the same year *The Shadow of a Doubt* was in rehearsal, judged the male characters to be “subtle and complex ladies wearing mustaches,” wondering “whether the fault is with Mrs. Wharton's power of characterization, or in the material that she has for study” [“Mrs. Wharton's Nativity” 43–44]), she produces in this play two compelling male figures. Dr. Carruthers, though given little dramatic time, effectively treads a murky line between loathsome blackmailer and a man driven to desperate acts. Wharton literally gives us here a stereotype of a dramatic villain—Carruthers is even described by one observer in the play as “a tall black theatrical-looking fellow, with a kind of seedy good-looks”—only cleverly to subvert it. Osterleigh, meanwhile, the mistrustful, scheming, manipulative figure who separates the couple and conspires to destroy Kate, is also a desperately bereft father trying to avenge what he believes is the killing of his child. For all the heightened dramatic business, nuanced ambiguities seep through these characterizations from a writer who would never be afraid to present flawed, not always likeable characters in the mold of Lily herself four years later, who treads at times a fine line between manipulator and manipulated.

As versions of stories are questioned in *The Shadow of a Doubt* and audiences invited to reassess their judgment of characters, we also see structural links to Wharton's abandoned narrative *Disintegration*, the surviving eight chapters of which are likely to have been written in 1902 (see Rattray, *Unpublished* 2:65). This novel promised to be one of Wharton's most complex

uses of perspective, roving multiple perspectives of the same story. “[W]ere not events beginning to declare<show> that there might have been two sides to the story?” is a question posed—and *Disintegration* provides at least four (Rattray, *Unpublished* 2:107). The novel presents the perspective of the abandoned child, abandoned husband, family friend, and social observers. Only the perspective of the woman is denied. *Disintegration* opens with a girl struggling to understand the new circumstances of her life, notably the absence from the family home of her mother, whom she watches pass up Fifth Avenue in a barouche. Thirteen-year-old Sylvia Derwent of *The Shadow of a Doubt* has also lost her mother but been provided with a second, the play opening with the girl watching for the brougham to transport her new mamma. Both works feature women who choose to leave, despite the consequences: *Disintegration*’s Alice Clephane/Wing has scandalized society by eloping with another man but is slowly buying her way back in: “[O]ne can’t stay shocked forever: it’s such a strain on the moral muscles” (Rattray, *Unpublished* 2:103). *The Shadow of a Doubt*’s Lady Uske, meanwhile, advises Kate Derwent that “[n]o matter what’s going on at the back of the house, one can always keep flowers in the front windows!” In a moment presaging Lily Bart’s uncomfortable discovery in the mirror, Lord Osterleigh insists, “Women who have quarreled with society at thirty have been glad to make up the quarrel at forty. The first wrinkle sends the penitent to the confessional!”

It is intriguing that the *New York Times* should have reported in March 1901 that *The Shadow of a Doubt* had been temporarily abandoned by Frohman to “enable Mrs. Wharton to strengthen some of the roles.” Which roles were not identified, and the notice may have been simply a convenient ruse to shelve a production that no longer suited Frohman’s schedule. Alternatively, the role of Kate Derwent may ultimately have been considered an insufficient star vehicle for leading actress de Wolfe. Yet Kate is an understated, rather than an underwritten, character. In May 1902, one year after *The Shadow of a Doubt*, Wharton published a review of American actress Minnie Maddern Fiske’s “brilliant presentation of *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*” (“The Theatres” 78–80). An antidote to histrionic acting and stage conventions, Fiske is transformed before Wharton’s eyes into a modern performer, almost literally moving from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries: “Is it possible,” asks Wharton, “that the American stage has at last produced an actress who, without losing for a moment the sense of theatrical limitations, and without obtaining her effects by the use of a cheap colloquialism, has managed to express a simple character in simple terms, without resorting to a single recognizable stage device?”

(79). Wharton complimented Fiske's "sobriety of method" and "marvellous skill in producing effects with the smallest expenditure of voice and gesture," concluding, "Such talent . . . cannot be too highly commended in these days of theatrical clap-trap and triviality" (80). One year before writing this review, Wharton can be seen endeavoring—not always successfully—to lay the groundwork for such "sobriety of method" with her creation of the understated but resolute character of Kate Derwent. And the play itself adopts an approach its writer advocates in the Fiske review. For all its potential melodrama, *The Shadow of a Doubt* is a play of gaps and omissions, with the most dramatic incidents—a fatal accident, euthanasia, an affair—all left offstage. Events have already happened, the crucial, plot-driving incidents have already taken place—a device by which a potential melodrama refuses to be melodramatic. Three decades later, Wharton would revisit such an approach for her (ultimately abandoned) play *Kate Spain*, stripping the infamous axe-wielding Lizzie Borden story of all melodrama with the play's opening line: "Well—that's over" (in Rattray, *Unpublished* 1:136).

Though *The Shadow of a Doubt* did not enjoy an extended stage life, we can now see how its influence would form the foundations of another work in a different genre: *The Fruit of the Tree* (1907). In June 1906, Wharton wrote to Scribner's about her new "nameless novel" (letter to William Crary Brownell, 14 Jun. 1906, Princeton). Musing over titles, she asked Edward Burlingame whether he thought "The Boundary" "might do" for the new work, suggesting it "isn't a bad name to say, and its symbolism can be brought out in the course of the story." It is Wharton's subsequent statement that proves the true revelation, however, when she goes on to inform him, "I planned the story first as a play, two years ago, which I called 'The Shadow of a Doubt': I have never suggested this name, as it struck me originally as rather theatrical, but in our present dearth of labels it occurs to me to mention it to you" (letter to Burlingame, 18 Jun. 1906, Princeton). The identification of the play's conception from two years previously—1904—is incorrect, out of alignment with the early 1901 date established above for the completion of *The Shadow of a Doubt*. Wharton's statement may suggest a casual, misremembered approximation or absentmindedness—the name not the year, after all, was her point here. Or (less likely perhaps) the author may have returned to the play in 1904, perhaps even to strengthen the female roles as indicated in the newspaper report, but we have found no evidence to support such a theory, and the conception of the play has been shown irrefutably to predate 1904. Dating aside, the letter clearly evidences that Wharton reworked her play *The Shadow of a Doubt* for one of

her most innovative and controversial novels, to which she would finally give the title *The Fruit of the Tree*.

Wharton scholars have overlooked both the play and the connection. Only one biographer—Shari Benstock—makes a passing reference to the link via the letter, albeit simply to reiterate what we now know from the play’s recovery and (near) performance history is Wharton’s miscalculation that the novel was “[f]irst conceived in 1904 as a play,” Benstock mistakenly identifying the recipient of the 14 June letter as Burlingame, not Brownell (154). And play-writing was once again center stage for Wharton, thanks to the adaptation of *The House of Mirth* with Fitch. In the 14 June 1906 letter to Brownell, when Wharton writes of taking up the “nameless novel with redoubled vigour” after her holiday, she gleefully reports that “Mr. Frohman is enthusiastic over the play [*Mirth*], which is to ‘open’ at Buffalo in Sept, & pronounces two of the characters ‘corkers.’”

Wharton’s disclosure over source material for *The Fruit of the Tree* offers new insights into both the genesis and popular readings of the novel. Scholars have repeatedly cited ghastly, personal accidents in 1905 as Wharton’s inspiration for the euthanasia theme. Donna Campbell summarizes: “As critics have long noted, Wharton’s sources were as much personal as intellectual; having seen one friend left comatose in 1905 after a carriage accident and, later, another suffer with a terminal illness before taking her own life” (xiv). Benstock states that “Edith drew on the experiences of two women friends in Lenox to create Bessy’s life-and-death struggle: Ethel Cram . . . had been left comatose after a carriage accident in July 1905; Mrs. Hartmann Kuhn, who suffered from a painful illness (probably cancer)—and eventually took her own life—a decision Edith supported” (154). Lee tells us that in *The Fruit of the Tree* Wharton “made use (not for the last time) of two terrible accidents in Lenox”—a sledding accident in March 1904 that killed one young girl and badly injured two others, while in July 1905 her good friend Ethel Cram had her fatal accident, lingering on for months (208). The sled ride of *The Fruit of the Tree* takes place without disaster, but Lee notes “the ride is followed by a catastrophe which borrows, ruthlessly, from her friend Ethel’s horrible slow death” (208). While the accidents may have brought the motif again to the forefront of Wharton’s mind and prompted her to revisit the theme, we now know that euthanasia was a topic she had explored several years earlier in her work with *The Shadow of a Doubt*, a theme on which the play would hinge. Given the dates, if a personal connection is to be drawn for the first deployment of the euthanasia motif, it seems likely that it was the condition of Wharton’s mother—“paralyzed & unconscious” for nearly

a year, including the period the writer worked on the play, before what seemed to her daughter a merciful release in Paris in June 1901 (letter to Sara Norton, 3 Jun. 1901, Beinecke).

Euthanasia was certainly a hotly disputed topic in the United States; Jennie Kassanoff explains that “[b]y early 1906, a sequence of widely publicized events had brought the euthanasia debate to a crescendo” (74). In October 1905, a resolution before the American Humane Association sought approval of “the practice of physicians who in cases of helpless suffering make painless the last hours of life by an aesthetic” (“Kill to End Suffering,” qtd. in Kassanoff 74), a campaign that enlisted the support of Wharton’s friend Charles Eliot Norton, who wrote an open letter to the *Washington Post* in January 1906 in which he condemned the prolongations of suffering as “criminal cruelty” (Kassanoff 74). Wharton contributed to that heightened debate with *The Fruit of the Tree* in 1907, but *The Shadow of a Doubt* illuminates that she was engaged earlier, and more deeply, in the era’s euthanasia debate than previously recognized, making a bold decision in 1901 to present in the commercial theatre a play with euthanasia and its consequences as a central theme. Indeed, the controversial nature of such a theme at the turn of the century may even have been one of the reasons why the production was shelved. In an interview four decades later, Wharton, looking back, insisted, “I was once called, you know, a ‘revolutionary writer.’ Critics then talked about my ‘audacious’ treatment of unpleasant themes” (*New York Herald Tribune*, Nov. 1936, clipping Beinecke). An audacious treatment of an unpleasant theme, however, may have been something a commercial producer looking for an audience ultimately decided he was unable to countenance in 1901.

Perhaps not surprisingly, many critics have found “too much” in *The Fruit of the Tree*. *The Nation* reviewer suggested the book “would seem at first to be a composite of three” (“Current Fiction” 147–48), and our knowledge that a primary plotline was pulled, ready-made, from *The Shadow of a Doubt* suggests a significant, contributing factor. Lewis goes so far as to speculate that Wharton “seems not to have been quite sure what she was up to” in the novel (181). There are “too many ‘subjects’ in the book” he declares (181), a position subsequently supported by Wolff and others (“That brief judgment [from Lewis] really sums up its deficiencies” [Wolff 135]). In the character of Justine, Lewis finds one of the writer’s “most comely and intriguing heroines” and suggests that if Wharton “had clung to her first intention of calling the book ‘Justine Brent’ [one of the working titles for the novel], and if, doing so, she had written a tightly packed novella devoted to that young woman’s moral and psychological

crisis, she might have composed one of her strongest shorter works of fiction” (182). In many respects, *The Shadow of a Doubt* emerges from its long seclusion as the text Lewis wanted—with a sleeker, tighter focus on the female protagonist, a newly married former nurse, independently minded, a professional woman, who makes the decision to administer a fatal dose of chloroform (as opposed to morphine in the novel). Wharton retained only one name in the evolution from *The Shadow of a Doubt* to *The Fruit of the Tree*, that of the male protagonist—John Derwent / John Amherst—but Kate is clearly a precursor to Justine Brent, the author transposing her interests from an English to an American setting in what would become the last full novel she wrote in the country of her birth.

Scholars also continue to perceive a distinct lack of unity in Wharton’s 1907 novel. In Lee’s succinct phrase, “The novel’s three main issues—the need for welfare reform in industry, the inadequacies of American marriage and the argument for euthanasia—have as much difficulty co-habiting as Bessy and John Amherst do” (210). While admiring the text, Henry James saw in it “a strangely infirm composition and construction—as if [Wharton] hadn’t taken thought for that” (letter to Mary Cadwalader Jones, 8 Dec. 1907, qtd. in Powers 79). (Ironically this was the work with which reviewers thought Wharton had finally shaken off James’s shadow, “her former master’s influence . . . almost totally disappeared” [“Recent Fiction and the Critics” 152–54]). In her introduction to Northeastern University Press’s 2000 edition of the novel, Campbell suggests that the “well-documented flaws in structure . . . have for too long overshadowed its merits” (xi). The new “shadow” illuminates. Even reviewer Edward Clark Marsh’s conviction that “there is elaboration of plot, but little of the complexity that springs from the interaction of highly individualised characters. The persons of the drama are indeed somewhat conventionalised into the guise of ‘types’” resonates anew in the discovery of its source (“Mrs. Wharton’s *The Fruit of the Tree*” 149–50). Knowledge of the play also serves to extend those readings that see the novel as directly speaking to issues of genre. Ellen Dupree, for example, suggests the text offers a conscious rewriting of the Progressive problem novel (52), and we are now aware that Wharton was quite literally working through considerations of genre with *The Fruit of the Tree* to transpose a story from stage to page. At the same time, while readings have often been swift to condemn perceived structural flaws and a surfeit of issues, the varying perspectives in evidence in *The Shadow of a Doubt* (and in *Disintegration*) as noted above, each offering its own version of events, its own story, illuminate an expansion to an external multiplicity of subjects and stories as its natural

progression. Though *The Shadow of a Doubt* was a streamlined presentation in comparison to the multiple plotlines of its successor, the play evidences a willingness to experiment from the genesis of production.

The discovery of *The Shadow of a Doubt* offers us new ways of thinking about Wharton: as a playwright and as a novelist. It also provides new vistas on the impact of her playwriting on her work as a novelist, her commitment to genres, and the direction and impact of her early career. In the year before Wharton's death, her interview in the *New York Herald Tribune* suggested that after the success of recent stage adaptations of her work, the author's attention was turning "more and more to the theater" (November 1936, clipping, Beinecke), and Wharton certainly appreciated the cash flow of acclaimed productions of *The Old Maid*, dramatized by Zoe Akins, and *Ethan Frome*, adapted by Owen and Donald Davis. Yet theatre, and writing for the theatre, was a major part of Wharton's thinking—and career plan—from the beginning. Wharton complained at times about labels. "When a critic thinks up a good label for me it lasts about ten years," she observed in the same interview above. While dispensing with the "Mrs.," there is one label, however, that Wharton scholarship would profoundly benefit from attaching. In December 1902, the *New York Times* alerts us to an epithet that has been lost ever since: "Mrs. Wharton, Playwright."

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Notes

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2. "The Man of Genius," "The Arch," "Untitled," "The Necklace," and "Kate Spain" are now published in *The Unpublished Writings of Edith Wharton*, vol. 1., edited by Laura Rattray.

3. There is some confusion in the play about how much time has passed between the close of Act II and the opening of the final act. Lady Uske informs Kate that it has taken her "nearly a year" (and cost her "a perfect fortune") to find her. Lord Osterleigh, meanwhile, notes that Clodagh is the only one who "during the last six months, has had the privilege of Mrs. Derwent's society," and Derwent references the "six months' exile" of his foreign posting.

4. Wharton's future collaborator Clyde Fitch wrote numerous hits, many produced by Charles Frohman. *Barbara Frietchie* (1899), based on the John Greenleaf Whittier poem of a Union woman standing up to a Confederate soldier, received mixed reviews, but the version Berry saw in Washington, DC, with Julia Marlowe played for months. By May 1901, *The Theatre* noted, "Foremost among this season's successes must be mentioned: 'The Climbers,' 'Lovers' Lane,' 'Captain Jinks of The Horse Marines,'" all written by Fitch ("Plays and Players" [May 1901] 12). Fitch's plays combined the popular features of the age and "portrayed a modern world; they explored urban life, the pathologies of the modern culture, and the new social structure of the industrializing age. His characters, if lacking depth, had detail" (Bryan 6).

5. In fact, "The Twilight of the God" already had a dramatic history from an unauthorized performance in 1899. A social "incident" surrounding an earlier production of "Twilight of the God" garnered as much publicity as the play itself. Newspapers reported that Wharton was "hurt" when rich, fashionable Mrs. George Gould did not ask her permission before acting in "Twilight" for the entertainment of her guests at Georgian Court, their country estate at Lakewood, complete with a private theatre and casino. The *Brooklyn Eagle* was suspicious from the outset, suggesting under its heading "The Passion for Advertising" that "[n]o doubt, the newspapers stories . . . are inspired by a publisher anxious to extend the sale of Mrs. Wharton's book, *The Greater Inclination*" (4). If the incident was indeed manufactured or exaggerated for publicity, it was successful—prompting a second (free) round of promotion for the recently published volume. And certainly there were no retractions. The following year an expansive article on "George Gould's Home at Lakewood" in *Munsey's Magazine* was headlined by a picture of the theatre at Georgian Court with Mrs. Gould as "Isabel Warland" in "The Twilight of the Gods" (Hoffman 301).

6. As a child, Wharton was taken regularly to the theatre, alongside the opera, "Barnum's three-ringed circus . . . and Moody and Sankey's revivalist meetings" ("A Further Glance" 26; "A Little Girl's New York" 286). Of course, this list excludes the kinds of entertainment that a young girl from a good family did not attend, such as vaudeville, minstrel shows, or other working-class diversions. Wharton saw "good English companies" and wonderful "guest-players" performing in traveling repertory from Europe (285). As Celeste Wiggins explains, "A season would be comprised of a variety of plays, each lavishly staged and well performed by an excellent ensemble of actors. The plays presented ranged from Shakespeare to melodrama, from Greek tragedies to English comedies. Foreign productions were imported and presented in their native languages . . . within walking distance of the Whartons' brownstone" (29).

7. For a discussion of these plays, see Rattray, "Edith Wharton as Playwright," (*Unpublished* 1:xxvii–lvi).

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