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Michael Pantazzi

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- 1 The face of the young Edith Wharton is known to readers chiefly through two charming portraits by Edward Harrison May, showing her at age eight (National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C.) and eighteen. She was fond of both and after her marriage they hung in the hall of Pencraig Cottage along with a third portrait of her as an infant, now at The Mount. In 1930, after Wharton received the Gold Medal of the Academy and Institute of Letters, she gave the second May portrait to that institution.
- 2 Wharton's attitude to a now lost painting, commissioned in 1886 by Teddy Wharton from Julian Story, is enlightening in regard to her thoughts about the act of portraiture. She mentioned it in the context of her discovery of Venetian furniture: "I was sitting to him one day restless, and desperately bored, for I saw the picture was going to be a failure when my eye lit on an arm-chair" (*A Backward Glance*, 101). Later, characters in two of her short stories also express their familiarity with the fatigue of posing. Bessy Fingall, in "The Temperate Zone" (1925), remembers how her husband had "used to paint a thing over twenty times—or thirty, if necessary. It drove his sitters nearly mad. That's why he had to wait so long for success, I suppose" (236); and Christine Ansley, in "Joy in the House" (1932), reflects on her former lover: "Not that she had ever thought him a great painter—not *really*. . . . His portrait of her, for instance! Why, she must have sat for it sixty times—no, sixty-two; she'd counted. . . . Hours and hours of stiff neck and petrified joints" (633). Julian Story's portrait of Wharton—the "failure"—was nevertheless used for publicity purposes, until the then famous author wrote to her editor at Scribner's in 1903, "I hate to be photographed because the results are so trying to my vanity; but I would do anything to obliterate the Creole Lady who has been masquerading in the papers under my name" ("To William Crary Brownell." 14 February 1902. *Letters* 57-58).<sup>1</sup> And that same year, in another short story, "Expiation" (1903), Wharton ascribed her feelings to Paula Fetherel who says, "They've no right to use my picture as a poster!" (492). So Story's portrait was used—

with his written endorsement printed with the image—as long as it was useful: in 1899, Story was better known than Wharton, but by 1903, the situation was reversed.

## Wharton and the History of Art

- 3 The presence of works of art in Wharton's stories is clearly the result of her experience. Her travels were of primary importance, as were the books she read. Her considerable erudition instils her prose as a matter of course. The names of old masters are casually introduced as points of reference for her readers. Annette Birkton in "That Good May Come" (1894) has a face that has grown as "serene as that of some young seraph of Van Eyck's" (29); elsewhere, analogy is intended to be misleading: the manipulative bride of "In Trust" (1906) is said to have "a little ethereal profile, like one of Piero della Francesca's angels" (620). In any case, Wharton's way of seeing in everyday life clearly depended both on her intimate knowledge of particular works of art and her familiarity with contemporary criticism. In *A Backward Glance*, she refers to pictures to evoke friends: Robert S. Minturn<sup>2</sup> is described as a "grave young man whose pensive dusky head was so like that of a Titian portrait" (156), while Edward Robinson<sup>3</sup> "might almost have sat for the portrait of a Teutonic Gelehrter" (158).
- 4 One of the earlier stories, "The Duchess at Prayer" (1900) was probably sparked by John Addington Symonds's *Renaissance in Italy* of 1887, which also inspired her unpublished poem "The Duchess of Palliano" [sic], two related unpublished poems, "Lucrezia Buonvisi Remembers" and "Lucrezia Buonvisi's Lover (Dying at Viareggio)," as well as "Kerfol," and the unfinished "Beatrice Palmato."<sup>4</sup> The historical Violante, Duchess of Paliano, was the wife of Giovanni Carafa who suspected her of adultery with his nephew, Marcello Capece. Carafa incarcerated Violante. Capece, who at first denied adultery, then confessed under torture and was killed by Carafa. The Duchess asserted her innocence but, shortly after the death of Carafa's uncle, Pope Paul IV, she was strangled on her husband's orders by her own brother and uncle during the night of 28-29 August 1559. Subsequently, Pope Pius IV tried and executed Carafa, as well as his brother and Violante's two relatives. Wharton set her story in the Veneto, almost certainly in the Villa Rotonda, near Vicenza, to which she ascribed the pseudo-historical lore associated with the Villa Foscari, known as "La Malcontenta" and abandoned in Wharton's time.<sup>5</sup> As an undocumented legend has it, the original "Malcontenta" was Elisabetta Foscari, who, following a marital indiscretion, was shut up there for the last three years of her life. It is easy to imagine the Whartons visiting the villa and being told the story by the village custodian.
- 5 In the "The Duchess at Prayer," a visitor to an empty villa is shown the apartments of Violante, Duke Ercole II's first wife. The old guide improbably claims that his grandmother, when a child, was present at events that took place over two centuries earlier. The characters are introduced through their portraits: first Ercole by Bernardo Strozzi,<sup>6</sup> followed by that of Violante. The visitor has the impression she smiles at him but nothing is made of this.<sup>7</sup> In the chapel, Violante's funerary monument, by Bernini, with a face distorted by an expression of horror, is revealed.<sup>8</sup> This elicits Violante's story: a transgression leading to her exile, then suspected adultery with the Duke's cousin, Ascanio; finally, the Duke's unexpected return with Bernini's premature effigy, derived from a portrait by Elisabetta Sirani.<sup>9</sup> The Bernini is placed above the crypt, containing the relic St. Blandina, where Ascanio is supposedly hidden. During the

dinner that follows, Violante is murdered with poisoned wine and the next night the custodian's grandmother witnesses the unfathomable vivification of Violante's marble face. The Duke remarries a year later, his second wife giving him an heir and five daughters.

- 6 The story is odd inasmuch as the custodian's narrative, intended to show that Violante is guilty, is contradicted by various signifiers. Violante owns a marble Daphne, premonitory of her metamorphosis, but also signaling her chastity. There is, as well, the unusual introduction of Elisabetta Sirani who notoriously died poisoned by a resentful servant not unlike Violante's chaplain. Even more curious is the use of St. Blandina of Lyons, a patron saint of the falsely accused. Wharton almost certainly first thought of the more famous protector, St. Margaret of Cortona, the subject of her poem of 1901, whose cult, however, was approved only after the period of her story. The final revelation about the Duke's second wife suggests that Violante's elimination was a forgone conclusion.
- 7 Something of the genesis and development of Wharton's method can be seen in "The Confessional" (1901), which shares with "The Duchess at Prayer" an Italian background, a dynastic dilemma, a family chapel and the metaphoric transformation of a woman into a living statue. The story concerns the consequences of Faustina Intelvi's confession to her husband, count Roberto Siviano. She has been accused of adultery by his brother, Andrea, who stands to inherit if Roberto produces no legitimate offspring. The narrative is straightforward though enhanced with references to art extraneous to the story. The young Roberto has features resembling those of Robert S. Minturn, "a melancholy musing face such as you may see in some of Titian's portraits of young men" (322). The Siviano own a disputed Leonardo and a tomb by Bambaja<sup>10</sup>—veiled references to the Arconati-Visconti collections<sup>11</sup>—while in the parish church there is a St. Sebastian, also used to describe Ascanio in "The Duchess at Prayer," and mentioned in *Italian Backgrounds* (1905).
- 8 Another—questionable—Leonardo is central to "The House of the Dead Hand" (1904). Dr. Lombard, who found the painting in Bergamo, has forced his daughter, Sybilla, to purchase it, and keeps both daughter and picture as virtual prisoners. Wyant, the narrator, is on an errand: a Leonardo specialist, professor Clyde, wants to obtain a photograph of the painting. Few have seen it and Dr. Lombard refuses to have it photographed or sketched. According to Wyant's account, the work, which is inscribed "Lux Mundi," is an extravagant portrait or allegory of a woman with a crucified Christ, a Dionysus, and various incomprehensible symbols. The description is reminiscent of Cassandra Sacrobosco who makes an appearance in Dimitri Merejkowsky's best-selling *Romance of Leonardo da Vinci* (1902), which Wharton almost certainly read. In Merejkowsky's fictional biography of Leonardo, the learned Cassandra is a sorceress and the creator of a new religion—for "the children of Light"—in which Christ and Dionysus merge (292, 295).
- 9 Scholars have studied the fictitious painting for possible meanings in regard to Sybilla.  
<sup>12</sup> As in "The Duchess at Prayer," the seeds of doubt pierce through the textual surface. Wyant notices that the female figure echoes Dosso Dossi's *Circe* (now called *Melissa*, and in the Borghese Gallery in Rome). The Dionysus who pours wine from a high-poised flagon actually replicates the youth in *Pagan Sacrifice* (now in the National Gallery, London) by Garofalo, a Dosso associate. Wharton was visually astute: when she re-contextualizes an image there is always a point. The cumulative intimations in the

story suggest that the painting is not by Leonardo and this implication heightens the irony of Sybilla's plight. Certainly, when she placed works of art in her stories, Wharton usually referred to artists well known to the public who read periodicals such as *Scribner's* and *Harper's* in which she published.

- 10 Wharton's Leonardo plot was probably also connected to a contemporary controversy.<sup>13</sup> Donna Laura Minghetti, the widow of an Italian statesman, owned a portrait said to be by Leonardo and inherited from Giovanni Morelli's collection in Bergamo. The picture was unpublished and no photographs were permitted. Nevertheless, it had been seen by visitors, among them Wharton's friend Paul Bourget. When it was sold in 1898, the work was examined in Paris and London, and mostly negative opinions were expressed: the painting was not by Leonardo. The incident served as the *donnée* for Bourget's story "La Dame qui a perdu son peintre", published in 1910, yet it seems that Wharton was the first author to draw from it.
- 11 A second story inspired by Symonds is "Kerfol," loosely indebted to a murder case in Lucca. Lucrezia Malpigli was compelled to marry Lelio Buonvisi from Lucca, but a suitor from Ferrara, Massimiliano Arnolfini, followed her, and he and Lucrezia were suspected of adultery. On 1 June 1593, as she and her husband were leaving mass, Buonvisi was murdered, and the *bravi* who attacked him admitted under torture that they had been hired by Arnolfini. Before legal action was taken, Lucrezia found immunity in a convent and the court case proceeded without her and without Arnolfini, who had fled. The case was later reopened after accusations of impropriety, and Lucrezia was stripped of her veil and immured for seven years. Wharton retained elements of Lucrezia's story in "Kerfol," displacing the setting to a castle in Brittany and fleshing out the characters differently. A sadistic husband, Yves de Cornault, suspects his wife of adultery with a meek young neighbour, Hervé de Lanrivain, whom she met at a religious function. The wife, Anne de Barrigan, has intimations of her end when Yves finds her with the Chinese dog he had given her lying on the bed at her feet. He tells her she looks like his grandmother's funerary effigy. Her position, in other words, is one that resembles that of figures used for tombs in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. It also links her to Ilaria Giunigi's tomb in Lucca, the subject of an earlier poem by Wharton—Ilaria has a dog at her feet looking—like Anne's dog—oddly Chinese. Yves strangles the dog, but before he can harm Anne, ghostly dogs kill him. Anne, not quite acquitted for murder, spends the remainder of her life shut in a cell in the castle while Hervé finds refuge in Holy Orders.

## Portraits as Signals

- 12 The historical part of "Kerfol" opens with a description of a red crayon portrait of Anne. No true personality emerges from it, while a brief account of the portrait of Hervé is as colourless as his presence in the story. These two images raise the question of how Wharton uses portraits to project a personality. The matter is tellingly expressed in an episode of "Coming Home" (1915) in which Wharton directly addresses the issue of the self in an image. The scene concerns a group of photographs shown to the narrator—"A charming-looking family, distinguished and amiable; but, all, except the grandmother, rather usual. The kind of people that come in sets." When shown a photograph of Yvonne Malo, who becomes the central character of the story, the narrator observes: "That girl had a face of her own! [...] a type so different from the

others that I found myself staring” (28-29). The postulate about the possibility of having a face of one's own, a discernible character—as opposed to belonging to a generic visual and psychological type—had been raised earlier by Wharton. In “The Portrait” (1899), Mrs. Mellish says to the painter George Lillo, “Ah, in some cases I can imagine it's impossible to seize the type [...] Some people are like daguerreotypes; in certain lights one can't see them at all” (28). Certain faces, those of Mrs. Gisburn in “The Verdict” (1908) or Paulina Reardon in “The Long Run” (1912), don't quite register in the mind of the viewer. And in “Bewitched” (1925), the narrator concludes that “It was doubtful, indeed, if anything unwonted could be made to show in Prudence Routledge's face, so limited was its scope, so fixed were its features” (348-349). Some faces, then, are unmemorable, which is not the fault of the viewer—almost always a man in Wharton's stories.

- 13 Portraits figure quite largely in several other stories. Usually they establish a visual connection, or contain information necessary to the plot. But they are always introduced at pivotal moments. In “The Lamp of Psyche” (1893), the miniature portrait of a war hero serves as catalyst for a long unasked question: what was her husband doing during the Civil War, Delia Corbett finally asks. In “The Pretext” (1908), a photograph is the first signal to unweave the protagonist's unreciprocated love for a venal young man. And the fading photograph of a great pianist, along with some letters, inspires Ronald Grew, in “His Father's Son” (1909), with the idea that the pianist is perhaps his father, a more appealing prospect than that provided by his real father, the hopelessly romantic owner of Grews Secure Suspender Buckle. In the “The Touchstone” (1900), two photographs symbolically frame the narrative of a man who has lost his moral compass. They portray the late Margaret Aubyn, a famous author who loved him, and Alexa Trent, the woman he will marry with the profits from the publication of Mrs. Aubyn's love letters. The portraits of Lord Thudeny and of his unfortunate wife whom he kept prisoner, lead the protagonist in “Mr. Jones” (1928) to a process of inquiry and discovery. Then there are old portraits, in Mrs. Brympton's house in “The Lady's Maid's Bell” (1902), and many more triple-stacked ancestors in “The Angel at the Grave” (1901), including the fading picture of the divinity of the house, Dr. Anson, above the fire-place.
- 14 Wharton sometimes used portraits to establish a genetic map within certain social circumstances. In “Madame de Treymes” (1905), on entering a salon in Paris, Jack Durham recognizes Christiane de Treymes's profile in the portrait of a powdered ancestress, just as in the *The Valley of Decision* (1902) Odo sees himself and his cousin in the portrait of the first Duke of Pianura's by Piero della Francesca (vol. I 249). The hereditary motif reappears in the late story “Duration” (1936), set in Boston, where the narrator notices with pleasure how “the Copley portraits looked down familiarly from the walls” on their modern, live replicas (786). Lineage, in other words, not only perpetuates itself, but does so visibly, making physical—and perhaps psychological—traits recognizable in the past.
- 15 A portrait is also the focus of “The Moving Finger” (1901) but the story says less about painting than about the effect of a form of obsession. There are three protagonists, Ralph Grancy, his friend the painter Claydon, and Grancy's second wife. Both men are assertive. Mrs. Grancy, a silent figure, is said to come to life only in her husband's presence. Claydon is asked to paint her. The portrait is never described and the reader is never told what Mrs. Grancy looks like, but learns simply that she is “extraordinary.”

Like Wharton's other usually passive sitters, Mrs. Grancy breaks her silence only to remark that she is represented facing east. The portrait is recognized as Claydon's masterpiece though acquaintances "smiled and said it was flattered" (309). Three years later, Mrs. Grancy dies. After an absence of several years, Ralph Grancy has the feeling that the portrait no longer recognizes him because he has grown older, and he asks Claydon to age the figure too. Several transformations follow until the confusions between Mrs. Grancy and her simulacrum accumulate. The portrait is assumed to have an existence of its own. When Ralph is ill, the eyes of the portrait are said by all to predict his death. When Ralph dies, Claydon says: "You think I killed Grancy [...] I swear it was *her* face that told me he was dying, and that she wanted him to know it! She had a message for him and she made me deliver it" (321-322). The portrait then reverts to Claydon, who restores it to its original form. He admits he was in love with Mrs. Grancy and adds "you don't know how much of a woman belongs to you after you've painted her!" (321). Contrary to *Pygmalion*, Claydon says he turned a real woman into a picture while Ralph turned the picture into what he thought was a real woman.

## Wharton and the Modern Art World

- 16 Another group of stories is no longer informed by older art, but addresses modern issues. Wharton's stories about modern painters form a fairly homogeneous group. The artist is usually the focal point. Several stories are cynically accurate about the condition of the portrait painter, and leave little doubt about the possibility of an artist retaining his integrity within the higher reaches of the society that pays him. Wharton was fully aware that flattery was an important ingredient in the relationship between artist and client: Ned Stanwell, in "The Pot-Boiler" (1904) aptly sums up the recipe: "The pearls and the eyes very large—the hands and feet very small" (668). In both "The Verdict" and "The Pot-Boiler," Wharton holds dealers and women responsible for encouraging what she despised most—second-rate work. In the first, the narrator remarks that the artist, "all his life, had been surrounded by interesting women: they had fostered his art, it had been reared in the hot-house of their adulation. And it was therefore instructive to note what effect the 'deadening atmosphere of mediocrity' [...] was having on him" (656). In "The Pot-Boiler," a dealer tells Stanwell: "You've attracted Mrs. Millington's notice, and vonce you're hung in dat new ball-room—dat's vere she wants you, in a big gold panel—vonce you're dere, vy, you'll be like the Pianola—no home gomepleat without you" (667-668).
- 17 In "The Portrait," an early story about the modern art world, a successful American artist living in Paris has an exhibition in New York, his first in a dozen years. George Lillo's sitters fear him. As Mrs. Mellish, who would not sit to him, explains, "he is no more to blame than a mirror. Your other painters do the surface—he does the depths; they paint the ripples on the pond, he drags the bottom" (174). Lillo is the only painter in the stories examined who paints male portraits. When young and eager to make a splash, he set his eyes on Alonzo Vard, a spectacular-looking unscrupulous businessman who agrees to sit to him. Vard has a daughter who idolizes him. During the sittings, Lillo discovers that Vard is a small-minded man who offers him no inspiration, but he continues with the painting in order not to disappoint Vard's daughter. When Vard has to flee justice, the portrait—a failure—is finished in his absence. Inexplicably, Lillo places the Vard portrait at the centre of the exhibition he



opens twelve years later, where it is revealed to all as a failure. Just as inexplicably, Vard commits suicide on the opening day.

- 18 Lillo has a rival, Cumberton, the author of innocuous pastels. This polarity, touched on in “The Portrait,” is enlarged upon in “The Pot-Boiler,” in which an aspiring artist, Ned Stanwell, is pitted against the fashionable but despised painter Mungold. Mungold and Stanwell also compete for Kate Arran. When offered a commission to paint a society hostess, Stanwell gives in to temptation. His painting is a social success and more commissions follow but he gets hold of himself and refuses further offers. His transient moral failure, however, is held against him by Kate who marries Mungold. In the “The Verdict,” Wharton exploited the possibility of an intelligent Mungold as it were—one who has a moment of self-awareness. Owing to his eminence, Jack Gisburn is asked to paint the portrait of a dead painter, the mediocre Stroud. As he begins the task he notices a wonderful sketch by Stroud which suddenly reveals to him his own limitations. He recommends another artist to do the portrait—Grindle, whose career is thus launched. Gisburn, who is at the height of his fame, ceases to paint, marries a rich widow, and retires to the Riviera. So “The Verdict” is the story of the descent of one artistic “cheap genius” and the ascent of another around a corpse, and in the presence of their wives (one “not interesting,” the other “an awful simpleton”).
- 19 Horace Fingall, the painter in “The Temperate Zone,” has been dead for some years when the story opens and is brought to light through the lens of the narrator, a would-be biographer, a gossipy aristocratic sitter, and a poet. Emily Morland, now also dead, inspired Fingall’s work as he inspired hers. His mercantile, alluring widow, originally Bessy Reck, has married Donald Paul, Morland’s last love and heir. Bessy was the subject of Fingall’s most famous picture, purchased by the Luxembourg Museum. But celebrity comes only with death. The plot includes interesting sidelights on what happens to an artist’s estate. There is a colourful cameo of a spiteful society painter, André Jolyesse, who is able to say, “My full-lengths are fifty thousand francs now—to Americans” (220).
- 20 Painters’ lives, in Wharton’s stories, with a few exceptions, turn around the question of fame. Some like Fingall, or Lillo, or Jeff Lithgow in “Joy in the House,” or Vincent Deering in “The Letters” (1910), settle in Paris. Bessy Reck, the only woman painter in the stories, leaves a miserable existence behind to marry Fingall. Society painters, whose ephemeral fortunes depend on fashion, are rendered with tragicomic effect. The narrator of “The Verdict” remarks that “Victor Grindle was, in fact, becoming the man of the moment—as Jack [Gisburn] himself, one might put it, had been the man of the hour” (657). And Axel Svengaart, in “Charm Incorporated” (1934), insists on painting his clients against the background of their sources of income, “one lady getting out of her car in front of her husband’s motor works, and Mrs. Guggins against the spouting oil well of Rapid Rise” (669). Svengaart is in New York to “do” only “a chosen half-dozen sitters” and charges fifteen thousand dollars for a three-quarter length (671). The choice or refusal of a painter is mostly dictated by fashion. Nowhere is this more evident than in Jack Gisburn’s remark in “The Verdict” about Mrs. Stroud’s request for her husband’s portrait: “Stroud’s career of failure being crowned by the glory of my painting him!” (661).
- 21 In the background are reminders of the living conditions of artists. Stanwell’s studio is “bare and gaunt, with blotched walls and a stained uneven floor” (“The Pot-Boiler” 663); Mungold’s is like a “manicure parlour” (664). Horace Fingall’s rooms reflect a



“scornful bareness” with “rough paint-stained floors” in “The Temperate Zone” (235). Lady Brankhurst, a partial observer, remembered them while occupied as “very picturesque, but one *did* smell the drains. I used always to take my salts with me; and the stairs were pitch-black” (212). In contrast, Claydon’s studio in “The Moving Finger” is a “long tapestried room with a curtained archway at one end. The curtains were looped back, showing a smaller apartment, with books and flowers and a few fine bits of bronze and porcelain” (320).

- 22 A question arises as to how well Wharton knew the art scene and borrowed from actual painters. Her group of artist friends was small. She knew Walter Gay and Jacques-Emile Blanche best, neither of them likely candidates as the originals of characters in her stories. The few known portrait drawings by Wharton herself show she emulated the work of Paul Helleu, whom she certainly knew and who was one of Proust’s models for the painter Elstir in *A la Recherche du temps perdu*. Julian Story is insufficiently known to allow for conclusive remarks but the stormy part of his life took place after 1909. Andres Zorn, the Swedish painter, who painted portraits of Isabella Stewart Gardner and three Presidents of the United States, perhaps inspired Wharton’s imaginary Norwegian, Axel Svengaart. As for Sargent, Wharton met him only in 1899 but of course knew him by reputation and Barry Maine has suggested that she had him in mind when creating George Lillo in 1899 (7-14).
- 23 Sargent in fact makes an appearance in “The Pot-Boiler,” where the dealer Shepson explains that his sitters allow him to take liberties “because it’s like being punched in the ribs by a King”; any other painter, however, is expected to make them look “as sweet as an obituary” (667). Wharton herself was to experience this delicate balance between artist and client in connection with two portraits of Henry James she commissioned. The first, by Jacques-Emile Blanche, was finished in 1908 and thought by the conservative Henry Adams “a rather brutal, Sargent portrait” (Adams 146). It was purchased instead by an American collector who donated it to The National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C.. In 1912, Wharton turned down a second portrait of James commissioned from Sargent himself. Deemed a “failure,” it was given by the artist to the Royal Collections in honour of James.
- 24 Among secondary figures one might retain two friends. Robert Norton, a largely self-taught painter, less idle than he seemed, and the author of *Painting in East and West*, published in 1913, was very close to Wharton who owned some of his works. Georges Rodier (who barely registers in Wharton studies), was an artist in early life<sup>14</sup> and published *L’Orient : Journal d’un peintre* in 1889. In the early 1900s he frequented the salon of Madeleine Lemaire. Proust, who met him there, partly based the character of Legrandin in *A la Recherche* on him. In 1916, Rodier became Wharton’s right hand man in her war work. At the time, Jacques-Emile Blanche wrote to Cocteau: “*Mariage possible, très annoncé, d’Edith Wharton et de Rodier. Je n’y crois pas*” (Blanche 67). He was a source of information on varied subjects, from Chinese art to fashion, but it seems unlikely that he provided her with material for her later “artist” short stories. Another, secondary, figure proved contentious when Wharton published “The Verdict.” Wharton’s friends Egerton Winthrop and Lucy Hewitt thought they recognized Ralph Curtis as the model for Jack Gisburn and immediately alerted him. Unfortunately for all concerned, Curtis was a friend of Teddy Wharton’s and of almost everyone Wharton knew. It was the sort of incident she had written about lightly in “That Good May Come,” but this time it was real. The degree to which the Curtises resented the story is

evident in the correspondence. An attempt many years later by Ralph Curtis to mend fences remained unresolved.<sup>15</sup>

- 25 Portraits of the past cannot be compared to their originals, which leaves a degree of interpretive free play to the imagination. A.S. Byatt has discussed the question in depth in *Portraits in Fiction*. Imaginary painted portraits in fiction, however, are mental constructs, which can be carried in any direction an author wishes. As such, they have to be enjoyed on their own terms. Let the author lead the brush and so adopt Baudelaire's useful dictum that "there are two ways of understanding portraiture—either as history or as fiction" (88).

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- . "The House of the Dead Hand." *Collected Stories 1911-1937*. 520-547.
- . "The Lady's Maid's Bell." *Collected Stories 1891-1910*. 499-519.
- . "The Lamp of Psyche." *Collected Stories 1891-1910*. 23-41.
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- . "The Long Run." *Collected Stories 1911-1937*. 112-140.
- . "The Moving Finger." *Collected Stories 1891-1910*. 307-322.
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## NOTES

1. See also Benstock 63 and 483 n25.
2. Robert Shaw Minturn (1863-1918), erudite Harvard graduate, businessman, philanthropist and collector, an early mentor of Edith Wharton.
3. Edward Robinson (1858-1931), historian of classical art, director of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (1902-1905), then assistant director (1905-1910) and director (1910-1931) of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
4. In Symonds, see "Lucrezia Buonvisi" 330-345, "The Cenci" 345-353, and "The Duchess of Palliano [sic]" 372-380.
5. Both villas are described in Wharton's *Italian Villas and their Gardens* 245-49. The Villa Rotonda overlooks Vicenza like the villa of the story. Villa Foscari is on the Brenta, near Venice.
6. Bernardo Strozzi, known as "Il prete Genovese" [The Genoese Priest] (c.1581-1644), important painter from Genoa who took holy orders and established himself in Venice in 1631.
7. In "The Moving Finger", written a few months later, Wharton used the same device with Mrs. Grancy's portrait.
8. Emily J. Orlando has shown that Wharton's source for Violante's monument was Bernini's *Anima Dannata*; see Orlando 49.
9. Elisabetta Sirani (1638-1665), celebrated Bolognese painter of religious paintings and biblical heroines. Recently, her early death, deemed to have been murder, has been attributed to medical causes.
10. Agostino Busti, called Bambaja (1483-1548), Milanese sculptor known mainly for his famous tomb of Gaston de Foix in the Castello Sforzesco, Milan.
11. The Arconati-Visconti were prominent in the political history of Lombardy. The best known objects of the family collection were Leonardo's *Codex Atlanticus*, given in 1636 by Galeazzo Arconati Visconti to the Ambrosiana Library in Milan, and the carved fragments of Bambaja's mausoleum of Gaston de Foix, purchased by the city of Milan in 1990.
12. See, for example Carpenter 62 and 64, and Orlando 141-142.
13. For the controversy and its literary posterity, see Pantazzi 321-348.
14. A letter from Rodier of 1915 is in the Bahlman Papers, Beineke Library, Yale, YCAL MSS 361, Series I, Correspondence, 1-17, and Wharton mentions him in her letters, for which see *My Dear Governess* 242, 251, 258, 263 and 271.
15. See Adams 152 and 169. "To Elizabeth Cameron," 9 June 1908 and 7 August 1908; and Lingner 74-75.

## ABSTRACTS

L'intérêt d'Edith Wharton pour l'art en général est bien connu. Son attitude envers le portrait a été moins étudiée. Riches en exemples, les nouvelles de l'écrivain mettent en jeu une grande variété de représentations figuratives, du portrait symbolique ou mystérieusement animé au portrait mondain ou photographique. L'idée du portrait en tant que dénominateur social est souvent présente et le regard porté par Wharton sur le portrait moderne est fréquemment critique et ironique. De façon assez curieuse, elle pose aussi la question des visages mal individualisés, ce qui met en cause la possibilité de la représentation et l'idée même du "je" du portrait.

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Michael Pantazzi was Curator of European and American art at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 1979-2006, a Fellow of the Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 1988, and Guest Curator, Musée du Louvre, Paris, 2007-2009. He curated or co-curated several international exhibitions among which *Degas* (Paris-New-York-Ottawa, 1988; Canberra, 2008); *Egyptomania* (Paris-Ottawa-Vienna, 1994-95); *Corot* (Paris-New-York, Ottawa, 1996-97; Tokyo-Kobe, 2008; Verona, 2009-10) and *Daumier* (Paris-Ottawa-Washington, 1999-2000, London, 2013). Latterly he contributed to the exhibitions *Drawn to Art* (Ottawa, Caen, 2010-11) and *Daumier: The Heroism of Modern Life* (London, 2013). He has published a number of catalogues and articles and taught at York University in Toronto, and Carleton University in Ottawa.