The Production, Circulation, and Reception of Edith Wharton's Travel Writings

Ágnes Zsófia Kovács
agnes.zsofia.kovacs@gmail.com

This essay explores how a discursive definition of travel writing maps out the study of Wharton's travel texts. Firstly, the essay provides a historical overview of approaches to travel writing. As part of this, it explains the notion of travel writing as a discursive formation and considers the questions of the production, circulation, and reception related to the study of the discourses of travel. Secondly, the types of American travel writing available at the time of Wharton's time are surveyed and her travel texts are positioned among them. Thirdly, the actual publishing context and the contemporary reception of Wharton's work and her travel articles are considered. After these investigations, a set of questions for reading Wharton's travel writing can be formulated.

Keywords: travel writing, postcolonial studies, post-theory, Edith Wharton

1 Introduction

Edith Wharton is generally known today as an American author of novels of manners like *The Age of Innocence* (1920), but this has not always been her only appeal. She also published widely as an essayist, a travel author, and a literary critic, as well as writing plays and poetry from the turn of the century through the 1930s. In Wharton's reception today, her works "beyond fiction" are being investigated more and more. Laura Rattray's monograph *Wharton and Genre: Beyond Fiction* (2020) contains chapters dedicated to Wharton's poetry, drama, travel, aesthetics, art history, criticism, and life writing. In tandem, the thirty-volume *Complete Works of Edith Wharton* under contract at Oxford University Press is to have separate volumes on these genres, besides novels, short stories and translations by Wharton.

Wharton's travel writings constitute a part of her work beyond fiction. Wharton published four volumes of travel writing in her lifetime: *Italian Villas* (1904), *Italian Backgrounds* (1905), *A Motor-Flight Through France* (1908), and *In Morocco* (1920). The typescript of her fifth text, *The Cruise of the Vanadis* (1888), was found by Claudine Lesage at the Municipal Library of Hyères in 1991. Other non-fiction texts by Wharton which are sometimes discussed as travel texts include *Fighting France: From Dunkerque to Belfort* (1915), *French Ways and Their Meaning* (1919)

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and *The Decoration of Houses* (1899). Moreover, the several archives with holdings of Wharton materials turn out an article or fragment occasionally, so by 2023 Wharton criticism is aware of additional travel articles on Morocco and France and fragments of travel writing about the Aegean Italy, and Spain (Singley et al. 2022).

Wharton's travel texts have attracted modest critical attention so far. Traditionally they were handled as material to provide a better understanding of Wharton's fiction, and indeed her characters travel extensively and her settings are often described in architectural detail. There is one monograph available on the topic to date, Sarah Bird Wright's magisterial *Edith Wharton's Travel Writing: The Making of a Connoisseur* (1997). However, there has been an emerging interest in Wharton's specific travel texts more recently. For instance, the popularity of war studies and the centenary of the Great War drew attention to her *Fighting France*.[1] Moreover, the transnational turn towards currents of ideas beyond national borders directed attention to Wharton's cosmopolitanism in her Italian and French pieces.[2] Similarly, several postcolonial critiques of her *In Morocco* have appeared lately.[3] In addition, Wharton's love of travelling by motor (automobile), her need for speed and movement gave reason for discussions of technologies of modernism in her *Motor-Flight* and *In Morocco.*[4] This rising visibility of Wharton's travel writing indicates that it is time to rethink the position of these texts not only in relation to her other works but also as an independent area of study. In other words, what happens if Wharton's travel writings are read *as* travel writing? More specifically, how can this set of texts be approached from the direction of travel writing studies that has been flourishing since the 1990s? The essay explores how a discursive definition of travel writing maps out the study of Wharton's travel texts.

[1] A new centenary edition of *Fighting France* was published by Alice Kelly at Edinburgh University Press (Wharton 2015) that includes discussions of strategies in women's war writing; for this see also Julie Olin-Ammentorp (2004).

[2] For Wharton and transnationalism see the 2016 collection *Edith Wharton and Cosmopolitanism* (Goldsmith et al.) and also the ground-breaking *The Wretched Exotic* (Price and Joslin, 1993); Rattray's edited *Edith Wharton in Context* (2012) on Wharton's time and place and also literary milieux; her other collection *The New Edith Wharton Studies* (Rattray and Haytock, 2019) on "international" Wharton; most recently, part four of Orlando's *Bloomsbury Handbook to Edith Wharton* on global and cultural contexts (2022).

[3] See Frederick Wegener's work (1996, 2000), Gary Totten (2022), Nancy Bentley (2005) and Meg Toth (2016).

[4] Especially by Bentley (2005) and Totten (2013, 2016 and 2022).

2 Definitions of Travel Writing

In Anglo-Saxon literary and cultural criticism, travel writing studies have experienced an explosion of interest since the 1980s, when literary studies, history, anthropology, and geography began to generate interdisciplinary criticism on travel texts. Yet, as the editors of an early reference book, *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, pointed out in 2002: the area was far from being well-defined, and they first "had to bring the subject to focus" to be able to comment on it (Hulme and Youngs 2002, 1). This initiative was still echoed in the sequel to the volume in 2009 (Halmera and Bendixen 2009, 2). Julia Kuehn and Paul Smethurst formulate this emerging multidisciplinary interest as part of "a war against grand narratives" in the 1980s, in which "travel writing proved especially adaptable and responsive to the application of cross-cultural, postcolonial, gender and globalisation studies" (2015, 1; see also Burke 2010, Thompson 2011, Youngs 1994 and 2006, Siegel 2002, Mulvey 1990). Kuehn and Smethurst quickly add that in the era of post-theory travel writing lost none of its appeal, as the spatial/geopolitical turn in the humanities has contributed to its continuing allure, and travel in fact has supplied several metaphors for critical practice outside travel writing studies: "displacement, (re-)location, (de-)territorialisation, mapping, topology, boundaries, space, place, mobility and so on" (2015, 2). This second-wave post-theory approach can be applied to travel writing itself as well, where attempts at exploring the genre are formulated in spatial terms as "positioning" the genre, looking at its "margins," its "extensions," its "borders" (ibid.). The generic permeability of borders of travel writing as a genre intersects with critical accounts of the generic fluidity of travel texts (Totten 2022, 129; Borm 2000, 78 and 2004, 13; Faragó 2004, 28, Halmera and Bendixen 2009, 2–3).

The variations of travel criticism can be readily reconstructed according to Kuehn and Smethurst's theory and post-theory periodisation. As a point of origin for a theory of travel writing, they pinpoint the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) as the landmark event. Building on theoretical premises by Michel Foucault, Said relied on a host of literary and "sub-literary" texts like travel writings, for elaborating his idea of the workings of Orientalist discourse. Characteristically, Peter Burke (2010) sees these analytical sections of Said's book and not his theorising as its most rewarding arguments (Burke 2010, 5). Said's example paved the way for hosts of literary and nonfiction studies within postcolonial studies which are socially invested rhetorical readings of linguistic power-plays about the relation of self and Other in diverse discursive contexts of a global "planetary consciousness" (Pratt 2003, 29–30). A brief overview of Mary Louise Pratt's and Sara Mills's early uses of Foucault and Said in the area of travel writing in the eighteenth and nineteenth

century provides the conceptual guidelines for a definition of travel writing for the case of Wharton. Kuehn and Smethurst argue that more recent theorisations of travel belong to the age of post-theory: these studies point to the need for a study of architectural topologies in a global context.

Said's *Orientalism* explicates signifying processes through which Western knowledge about the Middle and Far East, the Orient, is generated. Said relies on Foucault's notion of discourse as a linguistic pattern of thinking and comprehension that generates an area of knowledge (2003, 3). Discursive practice is the activity through which knowledge of a given subject comes into being in an interplay of power, according to a set of constraints but also productively (cf. Said 2003, 6 and 23). Most importantly, discursive knowledge is non-referential, it has no mimetic connection to its supposed object; therefore, there is no question of it being real or false (or a lie): discursive knowledge is always a representation, patterns of which are to be studied in order to reflect upon contextual reasons for their formation (20–21).

Orientalist discourse exists in many forms that Said set out to assess, at least partially. Literary works constitute one small area of Orientalist discourse, as many kinds of cultural products are produced discursively: "political tracts, journalistic texts, travel books, religious and philological studies" (Said 2003, 23), diverse forms of social communications about the Orient. Foucault in his "What is an Author?" (1989) saw discourse as a limiting force, a powerful tool that determines and de-individualises knowledge production to the point of eliminating the notion of the individual subject (Foucault 2001, 1631–32). In contrast, Said viewed discourse as a site for imaginative knowledge production in which old discursive elements could surface in new combinations and possibly with a potential to resist the prescriptive drive of the discursive matrix (2003, 23).[5] Said's notion of Orientalism refers to the body of knowledge generated by the Orientalist discourse of nineteenth-twentieth century "Anglo-Saxon and French," that is "Western" or Occidental perspectives (16–17): produced by artists, scholars, politicians, colonial administrators, journalists, travelers simultaneously – all of which Said shifts with a searching eye for new combinations, tropes, or ambiguities of representations.

Travel writing studies adopt the notions of discourse and discursive knowledge production for defining its scope.[6] Influenced by anthropology after the linguistic

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[5] So Said, the "Oriental" formulated a belief in resisting the simplifying Western discourse of the Orient. The Western format of the academic book actually *created* a discursive site for his imaginative "writing back" where he could develop his critique of Orientalism.

[6] Foucault's thinking in *Discipline and Punish* and "What is an Author?" provide the theoretical toolkit with which Said, Pratt, Sara Mills, and Youngs begin to unfurl their problematisation of knowledge production by the racial other, or white European women's versions of Orientalist travel writing

turn (Campbell 2002; Marcus and Clifford 1986), travel writing in this sense is defined very broadly as social text that comes into being through discursive production and exists in historically different modes and patterns that can be analysed rhetorically. It tells the story, experience or lessons of an actual traveler or a unified narrator.[7] Traditions of writing travel produce knowledge about other people, foreign lands, and habits according to different generic patterns: the hero's adventures, the pilgrim's tale, the nobleman's cultivation, etc., the rhetorical analysis of which can pinpoint inconsistencies of representations. Travel writing, then, is a cultural product that exists in cultural circulation: it not only comes into being as a result of a discursive production but also its publication, circulation, and reception depend upon its positioning in the wider cultural field.

Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992) provides an illuminating example of a multidisciplinary rhetorical reading of travel texts spanning centuries of European colonisation. Pratt identifies her approach to travel writing first. She finds that up to the 1990s travel writing was studied and commented in three basic ways. Firstly, travel commentary may be celebratory, recapitulating exploits of the authors. Secondly, it may be documentary, drawing on the text as a source of information.[8] Thirdly, it may be literary, when texts by literary figures are studied in order to point out their artistic and intellectual dimensions connected to the authors' 'main' work (2003, 10). She contextualises her own project as part

produced by male authors. Most relevant to readers of Wharton, Mills's book on female travel authors does not define the male/female difference in terms of biology, psychology, or *écriture* but through the social practice of how knowledge production by women travelers works in these texts: what examples they use, what patterns and forms characterise their writing and, just as importantly, what factors determine the publication and reception of their texts. She devotes two full chapters to theorising the notion of gendered discourse and her elaborate and illuminating explication proved usable for many who followed (cf. Said 2003, Pratt 2003 [1992], Mills 2008 [1991], Youngs 1994, Siegel 2002). These early books are not informed by the late theories of Foucault on ethics, which have been published in English recently as part of publishing edited versions of his lectures at the Collège de France, by Macmillan and Picador in England and St. Martin's Press in the US. Cf. esp. Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth (The Government of Self and Others II): Lectures at the Collège de France, 1983–1984* (2012).

[7] As we shall see, diverse authors who are to be referred to in this section all think of travel writing in a broad sense, be it thematically, through generic interactions or by considering its borders and permeabilities (see Hulme and Youngs 2002, Youngs 2006, Bendixen and Halmera 2009, Kuehn and Smethurst 2015).

[8] Historically oriented accounts of Hungarian travel writing trace typical reactions to the US and Mexico from the post-revolutionary perspective of late nineteenth-century Hungarian travelers (see Glant 2013 and Venkovits 2023).

of the large-scale effort to "decolonise knowledge," in which "colonial meaning-making" has become a subject of critical investigation (2).[9]

While Pratt was analysing discourses of travel writing from three eras of European colonisation, in 1991 Sara Mills almost simultaneously extended the Foucauldian discursive framework to women's Orientalist travel writing, representing its cultural work from production through reception. Mills focused on the differences between male and female Orientalist discourses and mapped out the varieties of Orientalist discursive practices performed by British women travel writers. She pointed out that for women in the Victorian era it was "sexually improper" (2008, 41) to publish literary texts, so they often channeled their creative energies into the writing of less valued texts like diaries or travel writing. Her thesis about colonial travel writing by women was that Western women were not comfortable either with the colonial enterprise or with the expectations of femininity they faced (3), therefore ample differences can be found between the male-centred view of the colonial Other and the female one. Women relate more emphatically to the colonial Other as an individual than men who tend to denounce race (3). In addition, Mills claimed that the differences between male and female colonial travel texts were shaped by constraints of production and consumption, as well. She discussed how women's travel writing was produced and consumed (published, illustrated, reviewed and evaluated, sold) in its original context. Her research aims at locating constrains and resistances of production and consumption, as well. She writes:

> The project of this chapter is to trace the way the discursive situation determined women's travel texts in the colonial period. What differentiates this account from pure determinism is that there are possibilities for resistance to this process of constraints, and I concentrate on tracking down the resistances as much as the constraints as such. (68)

Mills' work was republished in 2008, and her lucid text has become a textbook example of discursively oriented study of race, class and gender in travel writing.

The critical treatment of travel writing today illustrates how a genre formerly considered subliterary or unimaginative (Halmera and Bendixen 2009, 1) is

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[9] She analyses the mutual engagement between "European travel and exploration writing and European economic and political expansionism" (Pratt 2003, 38). This practically means that she studies how "travel texts by Europeans about non-European parts of the world have created the domestic subject" of European imperialism from the 1750s through the 1980s (4). In particular, she is after signifying practices that encode and legitimise the aspirations of economic expansion and empire. She finds connections from travel writing to other forms of knowledge, primarily between travel writing and enlightenment natural history, poetic science, and Victorian verbal painting. She locates signifying practices based on how they formulate Euro-centred forms of global consciousness versus a racially different Other.

integrated into the study of cultural texts. When the interest of literary scholars shifts to the interactions of cultural discourses and the histories of cultural issues (reacting to projects like Marcus and Clifford's *Writing Culture*, 1996), travel writing comes to be seen as a social act, a discourse of cultural interaction. The way travel writers represent their Others indirectly shows their own discursive positioning and opens up travel texts for wider cultural analysis – to the point where travel-related terms begin to dominate the critical discourse. One such term in Kuehn and Smethurst's *New Directions in Travel Writing Studies* (2015) is topology: the "study of shapes and structures especially in relation to landscape and the built environment" (6). Topology gains primary importance in travel writing as a way of mediating the traveller's experience of space:

> In travel writing, topologies mediate between the traveler's sense of place and his or her cognitive response to it. In some travel writing this can become a dynamic relation between the space regarded and the culturally-defined perceptual structure imposed on it to make sense of it. Adjustments are often made, and place can resist the imposition of topologies, turning structure to anti-structure and vice versa. (Kuehn and Smethurst 2015, 6)

Burke characterises the vision of nineteenth-century educated travellers as saturated by previous travelers and artists:

> Well-educated travelers often saw foreign countries and cities through the eyes of artists and writers who had already visited the same places and published their impressions. Robert Browning, Henry James and Marcel Proust all took John Ruskin's book *The Stones of Venice* with them and they saw Venetian churches and palaces in a Ruskinian light. As for Ruskin himself, he remarked that 'My Venice, like Turner's, had been chiefly created for us by Byron.' (2010, 5)

This aspect seems to be a particularly relevant way to consider Wharton's descriptions of architecture and landscape, which in her rendering often conform to visions by earlier artists and follow a preset order of description. How the imposition of a culturally defined perceptual structure happens in Wharton is the task at hand for this study to explore.[10] The issue of patterns of representing architecture and

[10] The hermeneutics of the visual understanding of space is a broad philosophical question and a major issue of aesthetics. Sándor Radnóti traces the emergence of the notion of landscape in philosophy and art history in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He argues that the idea of landscape (and of sublime landscape in topological elements like the sea, the sky, mountains, and the garden and these in landscape paintings) is a historical cultural construct. Varieties of cultural landscapes were articulated and formulated by Emmanuel Kant, Wolfgang Goethe, Friedrich Schiller, Edmund Burke, and John Ruskin in the period (Radnóti 2022, 177–260). Particular sublime landscapes were identified with specific national imaginary communities throughout the long nineteenth century (264–80). Radnóti's overview relates directly to the discussion of national literary cults in late

landscape in late nineteenth-century American travel writing about Europe leads to the discussion of discourses of travel writing available for Wharton to render topological features in a globalised context.

3 Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Discourses of Travel Writing and Wharton's Work

Ways of travel and writing about travel are cultural practices interlinked with politics, technological advancements, economic and social change, as well as developments in art and literature. In the long nineteenth century of the West, major shifts in technologies of travel widened the availability of travel to the middle class and increasingly for women to destinations across the globe; the secularisation of arts and sciences posed basic questions about the nature of humans and historical change that travel writings sought indirectly to address and to reflect on. Many wonderful overviews cover this broad area.[11] I wish, very briefly, just to sketch this history on the level of commonplaces and key terms in order to provide basic reference points for Wharton's texts.

The nineteenth century changed ways of travel and ways of thinking and writing about travel significantly. For centuries, travel had been an elite preoccupation of the rich, while rapid industrial and social changes increasingly democratised travelling during the century. Very simply put, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, industrial and economic development that resulted in social shifts found their counterpoint in the Romantic movement that revalued individuals and their relationship to nature positively in the face of technical progress. Patterns of travel shifted in reaction to social and intellectual reconfigurations. Most importantly, the rapid development of ways of travel resulted in a democratisation of travelling by the 1840s.

As James Buzard explains, before the 1840s the seventeenth and eighteenth-century habit of the aristocratic Grand Tour had the ideological purpose of

nineteenth-century Hungarian travel writings, for instance the case of the cultural construction of Lake Balaton as part of the Hungarian national landscape by novelist Mór Jókai in the illustrated periodical *Vasárnapi Újság* (Szajbély 2010, Radnai 2022, and see also: Takáts 2007b, 2012, and 2007a; cf. Nyáry 2023). This signals the fact that in addition to an awareness of early modern and Modernist Hungarian authors writing about traveling abroad (Szirák 2016, Balajthy 2019, Németh 2018), nineteenth-century Hungarian domestic travel writing is appearing on the critical map, as well.

[11] See Mulvey 1983, Stowe 1994, Schriber 1997, Smith 2001.

rounding out the education of young sons of aristocratic families by acquainting them with continental art and society (2002, 38). This function was challenged by travel on a bigger scale affordable to a wider section of society after the 1840s. The middle class could afford to travel and they travelled not so much for education anymore; they were more sensitive to curiosities, as well as exotic and picturesque sites. The Romantic interest in the individual, sublime nature, and the sinister sides of the past at the beginning of the nineteenth century functioned as an impetus for tourism which became large-scale from the 1840s on. The middle and second part of the nineteenth century brought about a more objectifying way of countering progress, relating to nature and the past in travel. This was subdued by turn-of-the-century aestheticism and an interest in a personal experience of beauty through travel.

Buzard defines the English Grand Tour as an ideological exercise (2002, 38). It was a social ritual in elite families to send their sons to Europe after finishing their studies at university. The sixteen- or seventeen-year-old would be sent to travel around Europe with a chaperone or a group of aides to acquaint himself with European art and manners. The tour had a relatively set itinerary, which included Calais, the Loire Valley, Paris, Geneva, and a crossing of the Alps to Milan, Florence, Venice, and Rome. The way back would be through Austria, Germany, and Amsterdam – but the whole circuit could run the other way around, too. The educational Grand Tour favoured classical (Roman and Renaissance) sites and the expectation was the cultivation of both "good manners and educated tastes" (41). The ancient general assumption was that travel would provide "men the opportunity to achieve notable distinction through self-defining experience" (Smith 2001, i). The idea of self-defining experience was modified in the Grand Tour by the reliance on specifically European locations of classical culture for an aristocratic male clientele.

From the 1840s on the development of transportation systems like the railways and steamships enabled the mass mobility of people and increased the scale of travel "fanned by" empire building and trade (Carr 2002, 71). As a result, the elite Grand Tour was rivalled by tourism and organised ways of travel centred around guide-books that determined where to go and what to see. The reason for travelling was no longer educational as it had been in the case of the Grand Tour. The new motivation for travel was to stage the individuality of the tourist by seeking pleasure; visits to picturesque sites highly valued by Romantic artists were relied on to fulfil the function (Buzard 2002, 42–43). Leisurely travellers bent on preserving old habits of dawdling appeared in sharp contrast to efficient tourists doing an itinerary in a matter of weeks, not years (48–49).

Changing patterns of travel influenced changing discourses of travel writing in the nineteenth century in several more or less distinct but overlapping waves. In the first

wave, most accounts of travel written in the echo of the Grand Tour offer stories of cultivation about art and the useful legacy of the past. They are directed at an audience, even if they take the form of letters. In the second wave, the rise of tourism brings a change in who travels and why – middle classes travel for individual pleasure rather than the common good, and this initiates the need for individualised personalised accounts on the one hand, and the mass production of practical guidebooks on the other. The third wave, from the 1880s through the Great War, in the context of late nineteenth-century realism and aestheticising, starts out with an objectivising tone, then it becomes a more personalised pattern of writing about travel (Carr 2002, 75). The last wave of Anglo-Saxon travel writing occurs in the interwar years. At this time, literary travel writing is conducted by disillusioned Modernist authors whose travel writings display a fair amount of world-weariness (81).

American travellers in Europe in the nineteenth century sought to enlarge their cultural and artistic horizon by visiting sites and artworks of cultural value. In the US context, the leisurely and cultivated tempo of travel that survived from the Grand Tour appeared in the form of the travel book by the "belletristic" traveler (Wright 1997, ix), for instance Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne or Longfellow. For Irving, the influential American travel writer of the first part of the nineteenth century, travel serves "to compile impressions from ephemeral contact with venerated foreign sites" (Decker 2009, 128), and the traveler studies European sites because he "balances an appreciation of the European past with a nationalistic affirmation of the American future" (Bendixen 2009, 109). In addition to this nationalistic interest in things past, Irving also established the conventions of literary travel writing (Bendixen 2009, 109) for generations of American travelers to follow.

Another impetus for travel in late nineteenth-century US culture can be found in works of authors who belong to the Genteel Tradition. George Santayana's 1910 essay on "The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy" defines and criticises the cultural work of the genteel tradition at the same time. Santayana describes the US as "a young nation with an old mentality" (1968, 37), where the life of an actively expanding and innovating nation is conceptually driven by ideas of an earlier context. The American mind is inhabited by opposing halves, Santayana writes, the technological modern spirit he calls the American will and the traditional and conservative morally sensitive spirit he calls the American intellect (ibid.). The Genteel Tradition is connected to the sphere of the American intellect that is rooted in Calvinist belief and American Transcendentalist attitudes, but had "grown stale" by the early twentieth century (1968, 39), Santayana claims. At the time of ever-increasing industrialisation, incorporation, immigration, and social strife, genteel intellectuals and authors reacted by envisioning an improved, ideal US based on

conservative values of polity and culture.[12] As part of the Genteel cultural work, the aim of acquiring Classical and Neoclassical European cultural tradition was to elevate and unify US culture according to Republican political standards (Wright 1997, 37). European Classical and Neoclassical examples mainly included but were not limited to literary examples: architectural models were also part of the import of cultural goods. Within the Genteel project of cultivating the nation, Neoclassical architecture was to help create public spaces where the populace could live up to high standards of political and social behaviour: the democratic ideal of social justice, a classical education into beauty, a moral compass for what is right (Benert 1996, 324).

Interestingly for our concern with architecture, Santayana's lecture on the Genteel Tradition relies on architectural metaphors for substantiating the difference of the technologically oriented modern American spirit and the traditional, conservative genteel one in American life. Santayana refers to the contrast metaphorically as one between the skyscraper versus the colonial mansion. He visualises the two opposing extremes of American mentality that coexist at the turn of the century as different kinds of architectural constructs. Santayana famously identified elitist Genteel cultural ideas of the American intellect as feminine, residing in the colonial mansion. Genteel ideals could possibly emasculate the power of the male American will, residing in the crassly perpendicular skyscraper. Santayana could not have relied on the example of the white symmetrical Neoclassical building as a metaphor for the Genteel tradition because, first, it would have masked the explicit gender

[12] Emily Coit provides a rich intellectual history of late-nineteenth century US genteel politics and cultural elitism through discussing how Henry Adams, Henry James, and Edith Wharton relate to Genteel ideas of democracy and education. She claims that (Santayana's positive opinion of James notwithstanding) all three authors remained elitist and racist both politically and in their ideas of education, even though they criticised tenets of the set of ideas that is called the Genteel tradition (2021, 8). She also explains how the term the Genteel tradition has been used to service various conservative cultural agendas in the early twentieth century (234–42) which, for Wharton, usually turned out to be very critical (223). Coit's beautifully written argument even links the architectural metaphor of the colonial mansion in Santayana's essay (which stands in for the American intellect) to Wharton's home The Mount (224–25) to say how the erection of The Mount predated Santayana's essay, as did Wharton's correspondence with critical remarks on skyscrapers; as if Wharton had anticipated Santayana's later trope with the opposition of the colonial mansion and the skyscraper. (Just for the sake of signaling a small figurative ambiguity in Coit's metaphor, let me note that the design of The Mount was informed by French, Italian, and English traditions. The layout of the house itself was modelled on Belton House in England, a typical English country house, the garden followed the Italian-style geometric pattern, the furnishings French and Italian classical examples as per the ideal in Wharton's and Codman's *The Decoration of Houses*. The Mount itself is more cosmopolitan than it looks and varies from the American colonial house type considerably (cf. Macheski 2012, 190–91), which problematises rather than simplifies Wharton's relation to the "American intellect" in the metaphor.)

differentiation between old-fashioned private space and modernised public space, second, he possibly did not want to refer to any imported architectural model as a visual reference point speaking about *American* traditions. Yet it needs to be pointed out that viewed from the perspective of the classicist bent of the genteel model of US culture, perhaps a reference to the white symmetrical Neoclassical villa would have also been appropriate to visualise and to criticise the Europeanised elitist cultural ideal the Genteel tradition held dear. The most famous mediator of a classical cultural (including architectural) heritage for the US was Charles Eliot Norton, the first professor of the history of art at Harvard University (a post he held between1872–98), co-founder of *The Nation* in 1865. Norton idealised Ancient, Medieval Gothic and early Renaissance European art and architecture (Blazek 2016). Norton disseminated his views widely, and he was also an avid traveler, whose work inspired US travelers in Europe like Henry James, Henry Adams and Edith Wharton.

To see Wharton's authorial position more clearly, one also needs to consider what difference it meant to be a *female* travel author of the Genteel tradition in turn-of-the-century America. Anglo-American women travel authors in the nineteenth century were expected to write about travel in ways that fit their traditional domestic roles. The nineteenth-century middle- and upper-class woman was the moral and social centre of her stable domestic world, well-separated from male domains of activity. Yet she also travelled, as travel formed part of her leisurely consumption (Smith 2001, 15). The lady traveler was constrained by expectations of decent behaviour: she could travel as a wife or daughter, as a representative of social causes (to save, convert, civilise), or a charity worker, or for her own health. Travel also presented itself as a site of education, institutionalised forms of which were not open to her, and as an activity that was less regulated by limiting conventions of gender discrimination than her domestic context (Smith 2001, 17). According to Sidonie Smith, the lady travel author concentrated on scenes of her travel while she tried to decently sideline her own importance by suppressing the first person "I" (2001, 18) and by reporting on manners and customs rather than politics and administration, a practice which links their work to ethnography (19; Wright 1997, 46). Suzanne Schriber investigated nationalism and womanhood in a vast array of travel texts by American women and showed that despite expectations that they would write about everyday concerns, women travelers – for instance Margaret Fuller, Sophia Hawthorne, Harriet Beecher-Stowe, and Wharton – wrote about art and architecture with sophistication (Schriber 1997, i–xii). Rattray goes as far as to argue that Wharton "seldom presents herself as a woman traveler" (2020, 94). Gary Totten agrees that Wharton is an atypical female author (2022, 179).

Edith Wharton's travel writings are positioned at the intersection of the belletristic, genteel, and objectifying, primarily masculine ways of writing about travel, on which

she could draw as a woman. Sarah Bird Wright found that Wharton transcended all these traditions of writing travel via her expertise (1997, 36). Wright did not problematise Wharton's specialised female perspective explicitly but through the stories of illustrations that she would have liked to be different from the ones expected of a woman author. She also implied a possible connection between Wharton's and Mariana Griswold van Rensselaer's work, and Mary King Waddington's professional treatments of art history in their books on Italy, France, and England (1997, 47).

In contrast, William Decker reads Wharton's travel writing together with that of Henry Adams and Henry James. He lumps the three well-known authors together without gender differentiation again as elite cosmopolitan travel writers who "all have read Ruskin" and are "on the cathedral trail" to find diverse secular means of celebrating Europe's Christian past through monuments (2009, 128). Decker reads Adams, James, and Wharton as representatives of the cosmopolitan "well-educated travelers" influenced by Ruskin to whom Burke also refers (2010, 5). Because of their common Ruskinian approach, Decker argues that all three authors are preoccupied by "the visual consumption of beauty" (2009, 132), yet it is Wharton's texts that provide "lessons of aesthetic appreciation" and culminate in scenes of visual beauty described with a painterly eye (131). In contrast, Adams is more invested in questions of cultural history and James in the production of personal impressions (Decker 2009, 129–30). In particular, Adams's, James's and Wharton's accounts of cathedrals and ancient ruins can be regarded as key topographies of their aesthetic ruminations. Decker's observations connect Wharton's travel writing to a genteel cosmopolitan ideal of learning and art through the Ruskin-induced topography of cathedrals and ruins, even if it leaves the feminine aspect of her texts unexamined. When Helena Chance discusses the architectural principles in Wharton's *Decoration* and *Italian Villas*, she also finds pronounced links to Ruskin-induced Gothicism and Beaux-Arts movement Classicism (2012, 201–2) without making gender differentiations.

As the final step in the overview of diverse discursive frames for writing travel available for Wharton, it is useful to highlight key textual meeting points that inform her texts and motivate her aestheticising search for beauty. Wharton critics have already enumerated that Wharton's travel writing was influenced by the work of specific authors like Wolfgang Goethe, Addington Symonds, Paul Bourget, and Vernon Lee (Lee 2008, 83–89 and Rattray 2020, 90), links to whom are to be mentioned in relation to specific travel accounts. I would only like to add as a note that these informing works can be connected to three major traditions of travel writing. The Enlightenment ideal of aesthetic and social *Bildung* related to the elite Grand Tour emanates from Wharton's love for Goethe' *Italian Journey* (1816–17). The romanticising personal touch of the belletristic tradition is present through

Symonds and Bourget, and the scientific-moralising thrust can be considered through Charles Eliot Norton and Harper Lee's works. Norton's work connects Ruskin's theories of architectural beauty and continuity to scenes of Wharton's visual consumption of beauty in her travel writing.

The historical discursive context around Wharton's travel writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries consists of interlocking strands generally moving away from the legacy of a Romantic sensitivity through an objectivising and continuity-oriented stance towards an agnostic aesthetic sensuousness of Modernist taste. Wharton the emerging professional author navigated among these traditions when she represented her experiences as a female travel author in the institutional context of nineteenth and early twentieth-century US literary production.

4 Publishing Wharton's Travel Writing

The discursive definition of travel writing adopted for this discussion entails not only that one studies the factors of text production but also its institutions: contexts and modes of publishing and contemporary reception. Reduced prices of production and a growing demand made the nineteenth century the golden age of periodicals (Nettels 2012, 137). According to contemporary habit, Wharton published her poems, short stories, book chapters, and essays in illustrated monthly magazines between the 1890s and 1930s. The book publication of these pieces, altered and amended with some extra sections, usually followed soon after. Wharton was in constant negotiations with magazine editors and book publishers on plans, needs, deadlines, marketing and, very importantly, prices and sales revenues, as her extended business correspondence testifies (see Towheed 2007, Shaloo 2012 and Girling 2016). She developed close ties to Scribner's editors William C. Brownell and Edward Burlingame, and later to Appleton's Rutger B. Jewett, who eventually became her agent. The journals she wrote for included the highbrow *Century Magazine*, *Scribner's Magazine*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *North Atlantic Review*, and later the middlebrow *Pictorial Review*, the *Delineator,* and the *Ladies' Home Journal*. As Elsa Nettels points out, the "majority of her most notable writings were first available to the reading public in serial form" (2012, 144).

Wharton's travel essays also appeared in illustrated monthly journals first. The illustrated travel essay was a popular genre for periodicals, as it provided welcome variation between short stories and other literary genres (Wright 1997, 37). Turn-of-the-century US middle-class female readers educated their sense of travel through reading impressionistic travel authors of the mid-nineteenth

century. This influence was changing slowly in highbrow periodicals like *Harper's*, *Scribner's Monthly* or *The Century* (Wright 1997, 37). Journal editors needed publications that served readers' needs, so editors favoured the impressionistic tradition. Wharton began to sell her stories on the marketplace of illustrated monthly magazines for women after 1913, when she ceased to publish her texts exclusively in *Scribner's Magazine* (Pajot 2020, 9–10).

The study of the market of periodicals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century has been a popular area of recent periodical studies[13] that has initiated an exciting direction in Wharton's reception as well – another new expansion, as it were. To view periodicals as an institutionalised form of literary production relies on a socially oriented view of the literary field[14] in which a literary marketplace of products serves a diversified clientele of readers, highbrow or middlebrow. Wharton's publishing habits relied on habits of her times. First, she was linked to the periodicals managed and read by her own social class: those of *The Atlantic Monthly*'s circle (Billips 2018). As a case in point, Pavlina Pajot's dissertation shows how the market of periodicals made Wharton navigate the needs of periodicals and publishing houses differently, as her revisions between journal piece and book chapters indicate. Pajot describes that in the 1910s Wharton published her poems, stories, chapters and essays in highbrow magazines. She was loyal to *Scribner's Magazine* and her editor Richard Burlingame until Scribner's could process her outpouring of texts no longer (Shaloo 2012, 122). Afterwards, she sought multiple outlets for her short forms. By the end of the decade, she published with middlebrow magazines also including the *Pictorial Review* and the *Delineator*. Finally, in the 30s she struggled to find the right market for her socially critical stories (Pajot 2020, 26). Throughout these years, she transformed her journal publication to fit the needs of the readers of her books, an upgrade most visible in the revisions she made for the book versions of these pieces in the twenties.

[13] See Pavlina Pajot's overview (2020, 10–12), and also Edie Thornton's "Selling Edith Wharton: Illustration, Advertising, and *Pictorial Review*, 1924–1925" (2001), Sarah Whitehead's "Breaking the Frame: How Edith Wharton's Short Stories Subvert their Magazine Context" (2008), and her "Edith Wharton and the Business of Magazine Articles" (2019), Shafquat Towheed on Wharton's business correspondence with Macmillan's (2007), Sharon Shaloo on Wharton and her editors (2012), and Paul Ohler on digital archives and Wharton's publications in periodicals (2015).

[14] Pierre Bourdieu's *The Field of Cultural Production* provides the background for Wright's and Pajot's work, too. The literary field is defined as one area of the cultural field, the literary work of art is not to be studied in itself or as a product of an autonomous agent but 1) through its conditions of publication and reception 2) against the backdrop of patterns of the field of literary production 3) in the wider context of other fields of race relations and power relations (Bourdieu 1993, 30–31). For Bourdieu and Wharton see Carol Singley's reading of *The Age of Innocence* through Bourdieu's concept of culture as a social field (2003).

The publication history of Wharton's travel essays and books normally figures as a fact and figure introduction, not as part of literary institutions and market factors. Hermione Lee's biography, for instance, in a wonderfully meticulous way, provides all the details of which travel article appeared where and when before being turned into a chapter in a book, and she sums up the main points of the volume afterwards. It is customary to include these "publication data" in the introductory section of scholarly articles as well (cf. Rattray 2020) as a kind of bibliographical fact. What difference does it make to say that one views information on publication history as part of the life of the travel text? As we have seen, the first wave of travel writing critics like Mills in the 1990s would answer that it is possible to look at stories of publication as sites of expectations and negotiations between author and editor, product and market, and supply and demand that embody the interplay of contemporary cultural preferences and norms ([1991] 2008). This is the approach to be adopted for considering the publication stories of Wharton's travel books.

Wright's monograph already initiated such a market-oriented approach. Wright devotes a full chapter to the discussion of Wharton's travel publications in the literary marketplace. In particular, she gives detailed publication histories based on archival material and surveys the sales reports of Wharton's travel books, as well. Wright portrays the story of sales as a way to look at Wharton's professionalisation process. She provides valuable archival footage on the story of the illustrations in *Italian Villas*, too; in fact, a major part of the chapter on Wharton's first travel book relates to this incident. Wharton was commissioned to write essays on Italian villa architecture by the editor of *Century Magazine* based on her earlier travel essays on her Italian giros. Picturesque sketches by Maxwell Parrish were ordered for the volume by the editor, as well. Parrish's attitude to producing the sketches was much to the dislike of Wharton: he was not present at the sites when she was, they could not cooperate through correspondence, and the sketches did not highlight the points Wharton wanted to emphasise. Wharton repeatedly proposed including layouts of gardens and drawings of key architectural elements in scale instead of impressionistic sketches, but the editors paid no heed to her suggestions (Wright 1997, 39). In brief, the story of the publication process translates as a struggle between Wharton's scientifically minded representation of her data and the editors' expectations of impressionistic travel sketches on scenic Italian villas. Without the influence of the market factors that the editors' requirements represent, Wharton would have turned out a comprehensive handbook of Italian villa architecture complete with layouts and architectural drawings. In its actual form, the book can be seen as a mixture of these two sets of endeavours.

The contemporary reception of Wharton's travel writing also belongs to the life of texts as part of the available discursive and institutional framework. In this

regard, James Tuttleton's volume on the contemporary reception of Wharton's work (Tuttleton et al., 1992) serves as a reference point. Reviewers of Wharton's individual travel works can be assessed in relation to traditions of travel writing and in relation to the gentile educative-architectural tradition, as well.

5 Conclusion

A survey of the notion of travel writing and of historically distinct discourses of travel writing in the nineteenth century contextualises the study of Wharton's travel texts. Travel writing has been defined as a social text about the act or lessons of travel performed in historically changing patterns that is to be studied in relation to preliminaries, publication and reception history. A brief overview showed that Wharton's travel writing can be placed in a variety of historically relevant discursive contexts: the Enlightenment tradition, the belletristic tradition, and the gentile tradition that Wharton, the upper-class woman author was directly related to. The marketplace of periodicals was the first gateway between Wharton and her readers, book publications usually followed afterwards in a modified form, offering another channel that catered to another set of readers. Wharton's contemporary reception can be arranged usefully according to available discourses and the expectations of the literary market.

By analogy, for the travel writings this implies that Wharton's architectural vision is to be thought of in its discursive institutionalised contexts as a changing representational strategy catering to specific groups of readers. In particular, the focus of my investigations has been to find out (1) how the discourse of observing architecture based on John Ruskin's writings on Italy and France is both defied and relied on in Wharton's travel writing and what its purported aims are and (2) how this enterprise changes the trajectory of Wharton's travel writing roughly between 1904 and 1926 in tune with changes in the institutional context.

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