

## Edith Wharton's Response to George Eliot's *Adam Bede*: Sympathy and Charity in *Summer*

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### I Introduction

Edith Wharton (1862-1937) is an American and the first woman winner of the Pulitzer Prize for her novel *The Age of Innocence* in 1920. She lived both in the 19th and 20th centuries for almost the same period, establishing herself in a turbulent age as one of the greatest and prolific writers in America, and a constant traveler with residences in Britain and France.

It is well known that Wharton felt deep and abiding interest and respect in and for George Eliot (1819-80), who is one of the greatest British writers in the nineteenth-century. Wharton was also very much interested in the philosophical works of George Henry Lewes, Eliot's partner (Lewis 238, 239n). Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (1905) and *The Valley of Decision* (1902) have conspicuous features which remind readers of Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876) and *Romola* (1863) as have been discussed by some critics (Bode). However, it is necessary to examine the intertextuality of the whole range of their writings in order to further clarify the interrelationship of these writers. I use the word "intertextuality" according to the definition given by Julia Kristeva: "[A]ny text is constructed of a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (37).

Eliot and Wharton have much in common with their intellectual pursuits by prodigious reading across disciplines, their travelling experiences, and the range and themes of writings and narrative techniques. What underlies these similarities is their aspiration for crossing and extending various boundaries which exist both in one's mind and in society.

The present essay first traces how Wharton expressed her evaluation of Eliot in her letters and essays, and then examines the intertextuality of Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859) and Wharton's *Summer* (1917), which have not yet been discussed fully in the academic literature. How does Wharton respond to *Adam Bede* by developing its themes and problems? This examination also clarifies what kind of boundaries these two authors try to cross or stretch in these works.

### II Edith Wharton's Evaluation of George Eliot

In September 1876, at the age of fourteen, Edith Newbold Jones (maiden name of Edith Wharton) gave a critical assessment of the first volume of Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, which recently had been published, in a letter to Anna Catherine Bahlmann, who was first her governess and became lifelong companion (Goldman-Price ix, 35). Edith found Gwendolen "interesting," but regarded *Deronda* as "a parcel of theories, loosely tied up, a puppet so badly stuffed that the sawdust shews – but the contents of the parcel & the doll – the theories, or sawdust – are good" (Goldman-Price 37). She also thought that *Romola* is superior to this novel: "I cannot think it [*Daniel Deronda*] compares to my beloved *Romola*" (Goldman-Price 37).

Wharton wrote angry endnotes to George Saintsbury's *History of English Prose Rhythm* (1912) which,

Wharton felt, does not treat Eliot's works properly: "Why omit the Prologue to *Romola*? And 'who has not felt the beauty of a woman's arm,' from the M. on the Floss [*The Mill on the Floss*]?" (Lee 674)

Wharton's critical evaluation of Eliot is clearly expressed in her review of Leslie Stephen's *George Eliot* in 1902 (Hutchinson 53-59). This essay is very interesting all the more because the year 1902 is when Wharton published her first full-length novel, *The Valley of Decision*, which shows similarities to Eliot's *Romola* (1863). There are several points to be noted in Wharton's argument in this essay when we consider the intertextuality of Eliot's and Wharton's works. First, Wharton opposes the popular criticism in those days that scientific studies sterilized Eliot's imagination and distorted her style, and that George Henry Lewes prevented her development.

Second, Wharton highly evaluates the Shakespearean quality of Eliot's humour:

Perhaps he [Leslie Stephen] does not do quite as full justice to the Shakespearean quality of her humour, that humour which is of the very texture of life, and which has its source in those 'depths below' [the surface of trivial life] to which only the divining-rod of genius penetrates. (Hutchinson 55)

Third, Wharton argues that the above-mentioned humor is better presented in dialogue than in narrative, because of the often and unnecessarily obtrusive moral preaching:

The philosophic observer of life's ironies—the humorist who records with such zest the sayings of Mr Brooke, Mrs Poyser, the Pullets, and Gwendolen's family group in *Daniel Deronda*—this genial spectator of human comedy is too often thrust aside by the preacher who feels called upon to draw a somewhat obvious moral from the spectacle which his collaborator would have left to speak for itself. Her style shows the same curious quality. Rapid and varied in dialogue, it lacks both these qualities in narrative; yet in character-drawing it is far less heavy and diffuse than in passages of 'reflection.' In other words, the observer of life is a better writer than the moralist. (Hutchinson 55, emphasis added)

Fourth, in the matter of style, Wharton claims that Eliot "showed an almost continuous development in the true direction of her talent; that is, in dialogue and characterisation" (Hutchinson 56). In this respect, she considers *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1858) and *Adam Bede* (1859) inferior to later novels, saying that the principal figures of *Adam Bede* are "the familiar marionettes of fiction," and that "in the subordinate characters (where stock types were less available) did she show the direct grasp of reality that was to be a distinguishing mark of her matured talent" (Hutchinson 56).

Fifth, Wharton highly values Eliot's psychological insight sharpened in later novels as her strength, and regards the lack of structural unity as her weakness though the former is not seriously undermined by the latter: "what her later books lost in structural unity they gained in penetration, irony and poignancy of emotion: an exchange almost purely advantageous in the case of an author whose psychological insight so far surpassed her constructive talent" (Hutchinson 57).

Wharton's evaluations of Eliot so far agree with the mainstream of the critical history of Eliot except Wharton's enthusiastic appreciation of *Romola*. It is in Wharton's novels that we can find her more interesting response to and evaluation of Eliot's works.

However, it is worth noting that Wharton points out that Eliot's relationship with George Henry Lewes

had an adverse influence which caused the defects of Eliot the novelist in the last part of the review of Leslie Stephen's work. Wharton argues that it is Eliot's "personal situation" (Hutchinson 57), that is, her illicit relationship with Lewes which forced her into seclusion, that had a serious influence on Eliot, a conservative moralist, and her works, including the above-mentioned coexistence of the strength and weakness in her later novels. The personal situation made Eliot "unconsciously" use her works "as a vehicle of rehabilitation, a means, not of defending her own course, but of proclaiming, with increasing urgency and emphasis, her allegiance to the law she appeared to have violated" (Hutchinson 58). Therefore, the "increasing seriousness, the greater prominence of the moral issue, may have suggested the need of propitiating her readers by a corresponding development of plot; and from this need the complicated machinery of *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* may have originated" (Hutchinson 58-59). Wharton points out the loss of "breadth of vision," in proportion to the increase in "psychological truth," "depth of sympathy" and "power of characterisation," and goes so far as to define "the central defect" of her later novels as "the loss of perspective":

Her normal relations with the world ceased when she left England with Lewes. All that one reads of her carefully sheltered existence after she had become famous shows how completely she had cut herself off from her natural sources of inspiration.... [I]t may at least be said that the novelist of manners needs a clear eye and a normal range of vision to keep his picture in perspective; and the loss of perspective is the central defect of George Eliot's later books. (Hutchinson 59)

The "loss of perspective" discussed here can be interpreted to refer especially to the ambiguity and uncertainty of the female protagonists' future life and position in society in Eliot's novels. Wharton tries to present the "perspective" in her own novel as we will see later.

### III The Representation of Destruction of an Ignorant Woman in *Adam Bede*

There are four points to be considered concerning the representation of Hetty Sorrel, one of the heroines, in *Adam Bede* when we examine the intertextuality of this novel and Wharton's *Summer*: 1) the nature and mental growth of Hetty; 2) her class consciousness; 3) the use of mirror and water images for presenting Hetty's psychology; and 4) the symbolic meaning of Hetty's suffering and ruin.<sup>1</sup>

Hetty is a beautiful but ignorant and selfish girl of seventeen, a niece of a farmer in the village of Hayslope, Loamshire in 1799, set sixty years earlier than the publication of the novel. She exerts her beauty as a power which functions in a place of language. Her beauty is of a kind that deceives others by "false air of innocence" (128). She satisfies her vanity by feeling her power over Adam Bede the artisan though she does not have any affection towards him: "She liked to feel that this strong, skilful, keen-eyed man was in her power" (143). Her beauty also serves to hide her coldness, which is perceived only by her aunt Mrs. Poyser.

Her desire for a luxurious life stimulates her self-centered imagination so much that she begins to live in a daydream when she becomes conscious of the attention from Arthur Donnithorne, the heir of squire and a captain in the Loamshire Militia. While Arthur considers their relationship to be a temporary flirtation, Hetty cherishes the hope that he will marry her in secret despite their difference in social rank. Because of her ignorance and self-centeredness, she can do nothing but hate Arthur and dread the misery for the rest of life when she is forced to accept the reality that he does not intend to marry her and that her conduct might lead to

shame if known to others.

She mentally grows in her suffering, but very limitedly. After Arthur left for joining the army, Hetty manages to maintain her self-control and realizes the peacefulness, comfort and affection of those around her while suffering from misery and desperation. She even feels "something like contentment" (406) and thinks of marrying Adam as the only best change she can make though she does not love him: "Adam's attachment to her, Adam's caress, stirred no passion in her, were no longer enough to satisfy her vanity; but they were the best her life offered her now – they promised her some change" (406). She cares only for herself and cannot think of Adam's unhappiness and misery in the marriage without mutual love. She still cannot consider Adam's agony when her pregnancy obliges her to leave him and her family secretly and go to Arthur:

... Hetty's tears were not for Adam – not for the anguish that would come upon him when he found she was gone from him for ever. They were for the misery of her own lot, which took her away from this brave tender man who offered up his whole life to her, and threw her, a poor helpless suppliant, on the man who would think it a misfortune that she was obliged to cling to him. (413)

She does not appreciate Adam's deep devotion though she has a "quiet liking for Adam" (413). She only laments that she is separated from "a sense of protection" (413) and comfort Adam gives her. The narrator's description of Arthur "the man" here ironically emphasizes Hetty's lack of insight and blind trust in him.

This self-centered Hetty shows a little further mental growth during her unrewarded, fruitless journey to Arthur. In the following disastrous incident she notices "a small white-and-liver coloured spaniel" (419) which she would not have noticed before: "[T]he new susceptibility that suffering had awakened in her caused this object to impress her strongly" (419). She feels "as if the helpless timid creature had some fellowship with her" (419), and then takes an encouragement from it for asking the driver of a wagon to take her to somewhere near her destination. She unconsciously superimposes or projects herself onto the spaniel, perceiving the spaniel to be helpless like herself. Consequently, she feels great instinctive sympathy with it. This is the first sign of Hetty's true sympathy.

Another sign of her mental growth is seen in her confession to Dinah Morris her cousin in the prison after she is arrested on the charge of murdering her child. Her baby had been a burden which she desperately wanted to remove, and so she left the baby to die. Hetty struggles to find appropriate words to express her ideas and feelings when she was returning to the baby:

I met nobody, for it was very early, and I got into the wood ... I knew the way to the place ... the place against the nut-tree; and I could hear it crying at every step ... I thought it was alive ... I don't know whether I was frightened or glad ... I don't know what I felt. I only know I was in the wood, and heard the cry. I don't know what I felt till I saw the baby was gone. And when I'd put it there, I thought I should like somebody to find it, and save it from dying; but when I saw it was gone, I was struck like a stone, with fear. I never thought o' stirring, I felt so weak. I knew I couldn't run away, and everybody as saw me 'ud know about the baby. My heart went like a stone: I couldn't wish or try for anything: it seemed like as if I should stay there for ever, and nothing 'ud ever change. But they came and took me away. (500, emphasis added)

She could not fully understand her own feeling when she was returning to her baby, wishing it alive. However, she felt at least a kind of delight as indicated by her words “I don’t know whether I was frightened or glad.” It cannot be said with complete certainty that the maternal instinct was awakened in her, but her action and psychology suggest that she had the similar instinct aroused, had a sense of awe for life and a sense of guilty for abandoning a helpless child. This awareness was developed from the first sympathy and a sense of fellowship that she felt towards a little spaniel. Her confession also suggests that she is imprisoned in the time and place of the baby’s death, and that she has grown mentally so far as to admit the state of her numbness.

How does Hetty’s class-consciousness exert influence on her thinking and actions? The selfish Hetty shuts her heart to others and sinks into silence because of the strict moral sense, and the pride of the class to which she belongs to. She keeps silence, resisting this social morality in the first part of the story. Her family, that is her uncle and aunt, know their station as tenants, and accept it proudly and contentedly. Hetty wants to, and believes it possible to cross the class boundary by using the power of her beauty, but does not express her idea openly as she cannot bear the reproach or discord which will be caused by her opposition. For the same reason, she decides to keep silence when Adam tells her of the impossibility of her marrying Arthur. Her silence is not only a way of satisfying her vanity in secret, but also reveals the escapism of her thinking.

Hetty, however, is rather supported by the pride of “a proud class” (418) which she belongs to in the latter part of the story. It is a pride with a prejudice, that is to say, having a narrow field of vision as the narrator explains:

‘The parish!’ You can perhaps hardly understand the effect of that word on a mind like Hetty’s, brought up among people who were somewhat hard in their feelings even towards poverty, who lived among the fields, and had little pity for want and rags as a hard inevitable fate such as they sometimes seem in cities, but held them a mark of idleness and vice – and it was idleness and vice that brought burthens on the parish. To Hetty, ‘the parish’ was next to the prison in obloquy.... (424, emphasis added)

The people in rural areas like Hayslope have prejudice about poverty because they don’t understand the situation in cities where people are forced into poverty despite their diligence and hard work. Therefore, it is intolerable shame for Hetty to beg, to ask anything of strangers, and she begins to think of killing herself when she finds that Arthur’s militia has gone to Ireland. Shame is also like a sin among the people of her class. Hetty’s pride and dread of shame help her maintain self-control, but at the same time lead to her destruction, as removing her baby becomes her priority.

Hetty’s silent nature, psychology and emotional turmoil are elaborately and effectively represented by the recurrent images of mirror and water. Her vanity is shown by her looking into an old glass as a kind of ritual and imitating the gesture of a lady in a picture. Her self-centeredness, secrecy, and escapism are revealed through the water imagery after she receives Arthur’s attention:

... for the last few weeks a new influence had come over Hetty – vague, atmospheric, shaping itself into no self-confessed hopes or prospects, but producing a pleasant narcotic effect, making her tread the ground and go about her work in a sort of dream, unconscious of weight or effort, and showing her all things through a soft, liquid veil, as if she were living not in this solid world of brick and stone, but

in a beautiful world, such as the sun lights up for us in the waters. (144)

She later expects to see Arthur in a wood – “just the sort of wood most haunted by the nymphs” (175) and vaguely imagines her luxurious future feeling “as if she had been wooed by a river-god, who might any time take her to his wondrous halls below a watery heaven” (181). The dream world of Hetty is represented by the water imagery associated with unrestrained gods seeking sexual pleasure, which foreshadows her tragedy. Her anxiety and solitude are also conveyed by the image of water: “[S]he was alone on her little island of dreams and all around her was the dark unknown water where Arthur was gone” (365).

There is another significant image, an image of pond, that is a combination of mirror and water images. The image of pond functions as a means of conveying Hetty's obsession with dread and death, and emotional turmoil, generating the tension and suspense of the story.

In her despair, the image of “a hidden pool” (429) constantly occurs in Hetty's mind as a place for her death. She thinks that she should drown herself in secret without leaving any trace of her existence. She finally finds the “hidden pool” after wandering about for several days, but it makes her realize her tenacious clinging to life in her contradictory emotions: “She felt a strange contradictory wretchedness and exultation; wretchedness that she did not dare to face death; exultation, that she was still in life – that she might yet know light and warmth again” (432). The pool, regarded as a symbol of death, reflects, like a mirror, her strongest desire hidden deep in her heart.

It is significant that the tragedy of Hetty is given a symbolic meaning. Hetty is represented not only as an individual but also as a representative of so many a helpless woman who were exploited for generations. The narrator suggests this in the description of Hetty's face and eyes which express her love for Arthur more eloquently than words:

... Hetty's face had a language that transcended her feelings. There are faces which nature charges with a meaning and pathos not belonging to the single human soul that flutters beneath them, but speaking the joys and sorrows of foregone generations – eyes that tell of deep love which doubtless has been and is somewhere, but not paired with those eyes – perhaps paired with the pale eyes that can say nothing; just as a national language may be instinct with poetry unfelt by the lips that use it. (330, emphasis added)

The narrator also presents Hetty's decision to marry Adam after abandoned by Arthur as a typical one of many cases in history:

Poor Hetty's vision of consequences, at no time more than a narrow fantastic calculation of her own probable pleasures and pains, was now quite shut out by reckless irritation under present suffering, and she was ready for one of those convulsive, motionless actions by which wretched men and women leap from a temporary sorrow into a life-long misery. (385, emphasis added)

The narrator warns that an impulsive decisions and actions for escaping from difficulties and gaining immediate comforts lead to greater misfortunes.

The tragedy of Hetty also has a social aspect. As Raymond Williams points out, the destruction of

Hetty was caused by Arthur who uses others for his own interest, and his way of thinking shows not only his nature but also a certain social and economic relationship (167). Therefore, the relationship between Arthur and Hetty can be read as an exploitation of the labour class by the gentry (Williams 167). This power relationship is symbolically shown by the ending of the story. While Arthur just leaves Hayslope and enters the army, Hetty is transported to a penal colony in Australia and dies on her way home about nine years later. *Adam Bede* gives readers the social and historical perspectives in the story of the destruction of an ignorant woman. Through such a tragedy as the one experienced by Hetty, Eliot aims to extend readers' sympathies and vision, which she believed to be the novelist's mission.

#### IV The Development of "The Woman Who Pays" Theme in *Summer*

Edith Newbold Jones was born into a fashionable New York family, and she became famous as a high society novelist, but the life and limitation of the poor and underprivileged was one of significant themes for Edith Wharton since the beginning of her writing career (Rattray, "Edith"). This shows Wharton's lifelong exploration of the possibilities of transcending class boundaries and attempt to enlarge her horizons.

It is not difficult for readers to recognize that the female protagonist Charity Royall in *Summer* belongs to the tradition of "the woman who pays" and "the illegitimate child" presented in Eliot's *Adam Bede*, Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) and Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), and Wharton herself was conscious of it (Lee 512, 596).

How did Wharton develop the story of Hetty Sorrel in *Adam Bede*? Both Hetty and Charity wish to escape from the present situation, a strong yearning towards the upper class, which leads to their sexual relationship with a man in a higher class, and pregnancy. Their characterization is also similar. Both of them have pride, vanity, and a sense of superiority. They overestimate their power and come to be overwhelmed by their powerlessness and helplessness. It should be noted that the struggle with language to express their feelings is an important factor in their process of mental growth.

The differences between these two female protagonists are the class consciousness, a sense of inferiority due to it, the depth of self-awareness, and the extent of mental growth. Wharton gives more minute representation of Charity's suffering and growth in her awaking to sexuality and motherhood and coping with her difficulties.

Charity Royall in *Summer* is much more conscious than Hetty is of her ignorance and class to which she belongs, and her suffering becomes more complicated because of her self-knowledge.

Charity's class consciousness is very acute, but causes her to have inner conflict. She was reared by Mr. Royall the lawyer but was not legally adopted. She was christened Charity so that she might not forget his benefit, and everybody around her always tells her to be grateful to him. She was rescued from the Mountain (outlaw community) to North Dormer, a civilized but obsolete village of New England. In this village, she has a sense of superiority towards those around her and is able to exert her power as a foster daughter of Mr. Royall, who is in a position of authority. At home, she has a power over him as he loves her. Therefore, she makes him obtain the position of librarian for her despite her lack of qualifications.

However, Charity cannot but feel a sense of inferiority towards people in a city like Nettleton who make her conscious of her ignorance and coarseness. Her inferiority complex becomes stronger in her relationship with Lucius Harney, who is a young and cultivated architect visiting the village from New York to examine

old houses. Remembering that she could not find a book he wanted at the library, she is made acutely aware of her ignorance: "Never had her ignorance of life and literature so weighed on her as in reliving the short scene of her discomfiture" (19). The more intimate they become, the more acutely she becomes aware of her lack of understanding as his talk is often unintelligible for her. She is also frightened by the existence of a different world she cannot reach: "She had always dimly guessed him to be in touch with important people, involved in complications – but she felt it all the time to be so far beyond her understanding that the whole subject hung like a luminous mist on the farthest verge of her thoughts" (101).

The mirror is used to reveal Charity's inner thoughts and feelings. She looks "critically at her reflection" in "[a] narrow greenish mirror with a gilt eagle over it" which is hung over on the passage wall in her house, and wishes "for the thousandth time that she had blue eyes like Annabel Balch," a girl living in a town Springfield (3). This shows her acceptance of the traditional criterion of female beauty and values of white supremacy that created it.

Like Hetty Sorrel in *Adam Bede*, Charity satisfies her vanity and gets deeply absorbed in her self-centered imagination, lighting a candle and looking into a glass:

Her small face, usually so darkly pale, glowed like a rose in the faint orb of light, and under her rumpled hair her eyes seemed deeper and larger than by day. Perhaps after all it was a mistake to wish they were blue. A clumsy band and button fastened her unbleached night-gown about the throat. She undid it, freed her thin shoulders, and saw herself a bride in low-necked satin, walking down an aisle with Lucius Harney. He would kiss her as they left the church ... She put down the candle and covered her face with her hands as if to imprison the kiss. (20)

This scene shows that Harney's attention to her gives her confidence and helps her accept herself as she is. It also reveals her sexual desire.

The image of mirror is also utilized for revealing Harney's psychology. On the night when Harney didn't come for dinner at Mr. Royall's, Charity goes to Harney to inquire into the situation and finds him as if looking himself in the mirror: "He sat staring straight ahead of him, a look of weariness and self-disgust on his face: it was almost as if he had been gazing at a distorted reflection of his own features" (53). He is bitterly conscious of his own desire for Charity, irresponsibility of his behavior towards her, and self-deception as Mr. Royall penetrated his inner motive for accompanying Charity for his research.

Charity discerns the true nature of Harney though deeply absorbed in love and passion for him: "All her tossing contradictory impulses were merged in a fatalistic acceptance of his will. It was not that she felt in him any ascendancy of character – there were moments already when she knew she was the stronger – but that all the rest of life had become a mere cloudy rim about the central glory of their passion" (90-91).

Like Arthur Donnithorne in *Adam Bede*, Harney does not think of transcending the boundary to marry Charity. He is also exploitative (Makowsky and Bloom 226). He defends himself by saying that Charity herself chooses their relationship. When Mr. Royall tries to make him marry her, Harney leaves the village, just asking Charity to trust him. He writes in his letter to give Charity hope without any intention of returning to her: "If ever there is a hope of realising what we dreamed of you will see me back on the instant; and I haven't yet lost that hope" (120).

When she has her pregnancy confirmed, Charity does not think of having an abortion but believes that

she has got “her sovereign right” (119) to marry Harney. Her heart becomes replete with maternal affection and happiness. However, she changes her mind when she finds Harney is engaged to Annabel Balch, a city woman. It is due to her consideration for Harney and consciousness of class barrier which she cannot cross due to her lack of education. She does not want to force him to marry her against his own will. It is ironical that Charity’s choice in the past has a fatal influence on her life. She gave up an opportunity of going to a boarding school when she was fifteen because Mr. Royall wanted her to stay with him. She realized that she and he were connected by the shared feelings of isolation and solitude.

Charity struggles to express her feelings when she writes a letter to Harney: “[S]he did not know how to express what she wanted to tell him” (115); “she found nothing to say that really expressed what she was feeling” (122). She does not tell him of her pregnancy but encourages him to act right and lets him choose to marry Annabel Balch. Charity accepts her relationship with him as what she herself chose, and does not blame Harney:

She did not even reproach him in her thoughts for having concealed from her that he was not free: she could not see anything more reprehensible in his conduct than in her own. From the first she had needed him more than he had wanted her, and the power that had swept them together had been as far beyond resistance as a great gale loosening the leaves of the forest.... (120)

She finally decides to marry Mr. Royall who wants her to be his wife, knowing and understanding about her affair with Harney and her pregnancy. To marry him is the only way to avoid a shame and secure a social status for her and her child in a closed community like North Dormer where everybody is watching each other. She also recognizes their shared feelings of isolation and solitude anew, and even feels gratitude for his consideration on the wedding night. He did not seek the consummation of a marriage.

It is significant that Charity grows to feel some sympathy towards her mother, whom she believed to be half-human without feelings, and at least gains better understanding of Mr. Royall, whom she regarded as her enemy before her marriage. Charity’s marriage with Mr. Royall has been controversial among critics.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Royall can be regarded as a rescuer who can perform an act of charity, as Makowsky and Bloom argue (221). However, it cannot be denied that he took advantage of Charity’s predicament, and that there pervades “incestuous overtones” (Rattray, Introduction xxx). The ending of the story presents the more complicated nature of sympathy and charity than in *Adam Bede*.

As we have seen, Wharton developed the themes in *Adam Bede* by creating a woman who faces her difficulties in a responsible way, decides how to live, and is resolved to accept the result of her choice. She will be torn between conflicting emotions in the future, but at least will be able to have confidence that she secured a safe place in society for her child as her mother had done for her. The story of Charity calls attention to the fact that women were deprived of educational opportunities, and society was structured in such a way that made it almost impossible for women to have social mobility and achieve independence.

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## Notes

- 1 The analysis of Hetty in this section is based on my discussion in Amano 113-30.
- 2 For the different interpretations, see Rattray, Introduction xxvii, xxx; Skillern 118.

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### Abstract

The present essay first traces how Edith Wharton expressed her evaluation of George Eliot in her letters and essays, and then examines the intertextuality of Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859) and Wharton's *Summer* (1917).

*Summer* is Wharton's attempt to explore the possibilities of transcending class boundaries and enlarge her horizons. She develops the theme of "the woman who pays" by creating a woman who faces her difficulties in a responsible way, decides how to live, and is resolved to accept the result of her choice. Wharton is more concerned to show the future perspective of a woman than Eliot does. She also presents the more complicated nature of sympathy and charity than in *Adam Bede*.