

Multitudes: A Celebration of the Yale Collection of American Literature, 1911–2011

On view at Beinecke Library, Yale University, July 8 through October 1, 2011

Checklist and Descriptions: American Prose Writers

American Prose Writers: Edith Wharton (1862–1937)

A major American literary figure in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Edith Wharton was the first woman to win the Pulitzer Prize, awarded in 1921 for her novel *The Age of Innocence* (1920). She then became the first woman to receive an honorary degree of Doctor of Letters from Yale, in 1923. Some decades later, the Yale English and American Studies professor and noted critic

R. W. B. Lewis would win the Pulitzer for his literary biography, *Edith Wharton: A Biography* (1975), considered a masterpiece of the genre. While the Wharton papers are understood properly as a “Collection” made up of various gifts and purchases of material from the Wharton estate and from her immediate circle, their scholarly importance has been reanimated by the recent acquisition in 2009 of the papers of Anna Catherine Bahlmann. Employed as Wharton’s German language tutor in 1874, Bahlmann later served as her governess, secretary, and literary assistant. Comprising over 130 letters from Wharton to Bahlmann (along with other related correspondence and Bahlmann’s own papers and effects), the collection sheds light on Wharton’s personal and literary affairs while it reveals, for the first time, a vivid picture of the then Edith Newbold Jones as a young girl and her coming-of-age as a writer.

Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1920).

Edith Wharton, *Au temps de l’innocence* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1921).

“Was She Justified in Seeking a Divorce?” *The Age of Innocence* by Edith Wharton, advertisement, n.d.

Early letters from Edith Wharton to Anna Catherine Bahlmann (addressed to “Miss Anna,” or “dearest Tonni”), 1874–1876.

Photograph of Anna Catherine Bahlmann, undated.

From the Anna Catherine Bahlmann Papers.

E.F. Cooper, photographs of Edith Wharton, ca. 1889–1890.

From the Edith Wharton Papers.

Edith Wharton, “Age of Innocence” manuscript, holograph draft, n.d.

Mary Cadwalader Jones, manuscript account book for the royalties paid Mrs. Wharton on the dramatization of her novel *The Age of Innocence* from August 1928 to December 1929.

From the Edith Wharton Collection.
