

THE MYTH OF PERSEPHONE, DEMETER, AND HADES IN MARION MAINWARING'S
COMPLETED EDITION OF EDITH WHARTON'S BUCCANEERS

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ABSTRACT

Edith Wharton's last and incomplete novel, *The Buccaneers*, published posthumously in 1938, tells the story of five girls from three American families "invading" England in the hopes of improving their social standing. Marion Mainwaring, with the aid of Wharton's synopsis, undertook to complete the novel while making very few changes to Wharton's manuscript. The completed edition was published in 1993. Wharton employs the abduction myth of Persephone to characterize the heroine, Annabel St. George (Nan), who, with a fractured sense of self, remains childlike and uncertain of her identity following an oppressive marriage to the wealthy Duke of Tintagel. The purpose of this paper is first to explore Wharton's use of the myth, in particular how Annabel plays Persephone both in her marriage to the Duke and in her relationship with her paramour, Guy Thwarte, with the result that both men emerge as Hades figures. Nan's governess, Laura Testvalley, who leads the girls in their conquest of England, stands in as a surrogate mother for Nan and plays the primary Demeter figure. Wharton, by using the same narrative to structure two opposing relationships, has Nan essentially give up one underworld experience for another, demonstrating what the original myth does, namely the necessity and cost present in all matters of love and marriage. The second half of the paper is an examination of Mainwaring's adoption of the Persephone-Demeter-Hades theme as a means of providing unity between the two manuscripts. Mainwaring's completed edition not only elaborates on the dual presentation of these figures but even deviates from Wharton's synopsis in ways that reinforce the concepts initially developed by Wharton.