

# Reading response to wharton's roman fever

Literature



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Reading Response to Wharton's "Roman Fever" William Dean Howells was a renowned American realist novelist, and a virtuoso literary critic. In his literary acclaimed essay: *Novel Writing and Novel Reading*, William Howells argues that, "the novel I take to be the sincere and conscientious endeavor to picture life just as it is, to deal with character as we witness it in living people, and to record the incidents that grow out of character." His view was that realism plays a critical role in novel writing. Howell's argument sought to clarify that readers should identify easily with the events or activities going on in the novel, for it to be realistic. For art to be real, it has to be truth. Howells thus argues, "By beauty I mean truth, for one involves the other; it is only false in art which is ugly, and it is only false which is universal."

"Roman Fever" is a critically acclaimed short story written by Edith Wharton, a brilliant American author. The story is based on two middle-aged women, Grace Ansley and Alida Slade, that is. The two had visited Rome in company of their daughters Jenny Slade and Barbara Ansley. Slade and Ansley had been close friends since childhood. But a romantic rivalry during their youth had threatened to jeopardize their relationship.

Edith Wharton story captures matter of factly aspects of moral concepts. The story brilliantly gives the readers clues of immorality. The two women characters, as we read through, engage in savage malice. Their unethical ways well portray how humans are prone to the mortal illnesses of the passions.

In choosing Alida and Grace as the main protagonists of "Roman Fever", Wharton ingeniously portrays the distance from the standpoint that women are by nature morally upright than men. Through Alida's palpable anger, we

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get the notion that Grace's weaving is more than just an equivocation scheme. The needles Grace uses to knit are effectual psychological weaponry towards a woman who is intentional distressing her for having once loved Delphin Slade.

This story shows the kind of things that women go through in Rome, like promiscuity, amid other things. The name "Fever" represents a myriad of things which include happiness, enthusiasm, and irreducible desire. "Roman Fever" queries discrimination, origins and sexual violence amid other things. Rome has always been an extremely powerful site for primordial violence. Wharton stories questions society's episodic command for final return to origins. These origins could either be sexual housekeeping and or ethnic purifications. Wharton story confidently interrogates a prevailing force, say, tyranny or patriarchy. She sees civilization origins as an imaginative invention rather than as mystical, and follows the threat of ignoring the difference.

Wharton's expression here can be seen as a clever way of knitting together the pasts of these two women outdoing each other for the attention of Delphin Slade. Wharton genius cleverly portrays that the purpose of the Roman ruins were to serve as symbols of Western civilization origins. The Roman ruin, moreover, served as places where teenage American girls would go to make love. The whole story weaves itself against the backdrop of the great-amassed ruins of enthusiasm and grandeur in Rome. The story persists that the general awareness of our myths is essentially arbitrary. Either way, if a novel does not mirror real life, then it does not merely pass off as art, but a misrepresentation of real life (Howells 571).

Work Cited

Howells, William. *A writer's Life*. New York: Basic Books, 2005. Print.