

Edith wharton

[Family](#), [Divorce](#)



Wharton: The Other Two Edith Wharton was brought up in a rich and privileged family. She lived in a time when the high-class circle feared the drastic social changes that occurred due to post-civil war expansionism and immigration (The Norton Anthology 829). The story, The Other Two, is Wharton's way of reflecting on the social changes that American society was undergoing. I plan to focus my response on the psychology of the main character, Mr. Waythorn. The story's main character is a high society man who is the archetype for the values that most men during his time held as a standard. His status as a Wall Street investor and as a man who has the means to have servants, gives us a clear parallel between himself and high society. What he thinks or believes is a doorway into the psychology of high society as a whole. This is apparent throughout the story as the main character is always preoccupied with what the society pages have to say about his wife. Mr. Waythorn is a man who is having trouble reconciling with his wife's past marriages. This reflection on the difficulties the issue of divorce is having within society is also attributed to Wharton herself. The author has been divorced and so this story can reflect her thoughts on that issue. The main character is concerned that his wife has had two divorces in the past. The ease in which divorce is granted is one of the important points in this story as well as Mr. Waythorn's uneasy reconciliation with his wife's two ex-husbands. Wharton is a person who did not divorce her husband easily due to her "devotions to family ties and the sanctities of tradition" (The Norton Anthology 829). In this story there is an exploration into how divorce can destabilize society as it did with Mr. Waythorn. The ending is however the moment of reconciliation when the awkward situation is

accepted and all accept the roles that they are given within the divorce. Mr. Waythorn also has an issue with his wife not belonging solely to him. There is a passage in the story when our main character reflects on his ownership of his wife. He reflects on his wife's past with the other two men, and then the author tells us: " Waythorn felt himself yielding again to the joy of possessorship" (Wharton 835). Men at that time were still the bread winners and authoritative figures in a marriage. The times were changing however and men were having trouble accepting the notion of women in the workplace or women in authoritative roles. Edith Wharton has created an interesting story that delves into the psychology of society as a whole in response to the issue of divorce. Her work is important as it addresses an issue that society was having trouble reconciling during the early 1990's. As a woman who has been divorced, this story gives us a first hand insight into how difficult the process of accepting divorce had been.