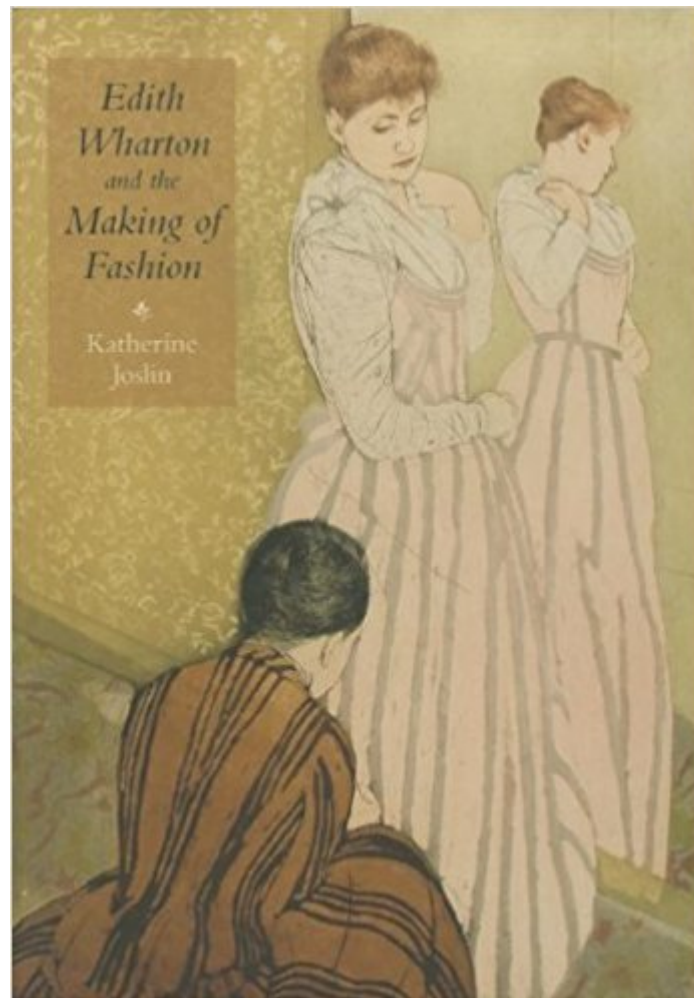


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# Edith Wharton And The Making Of Fashion (Becoming Modern/Reading Dress)



## Synopsis

Edith Wharton and the Making of Fashion places the iconic New York figure and her writing in the context of fashion history and shows how dress lies at the very center of her thinking about art and culture. The study traces American patronage of the Paris couture houses from Worth and Doucet through Poiret and Chanel and places Wharton's characters in these establishments and garments to offer fresh readings of her well-known novels. Less known are Wharton's knowledge of and involvement in the craft of garment making in her tales of seamstresses, milliners, and textile workers, as well as in her creation of workshops in Paris during the First World War to employ Belgian and French seamstresses and promote the value of handmade garments in a world given to machine-driven uniformity of design and labor. Pointing the way toward further research and inquiry, Katherine Joslin has produced a truly interdisciplinary work that combines the best of literary criticism with an infectious love and appreciation of material culture.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A unique, interdisciplinary study, Edith Wharton and the Making of Fashion offers a strong argument for further integration of literary and material culture studies, and will appeal to historians of various disciplines and Wharton aficionados alike." •The Magazine Antiques  
"That a book on Wharton and fashion should be as gorgeous as this one is only fitting. The reprints of paintings and photographs of dresses from museum collections and of

Wharton wearing a variety of fashions enhance the reader's sense of the impact of material culture on Wharton's fiction. The book is concerned not simply with the clothes that fictional and real women wore during this period but also with the production and labor associated with the garment industry. Offering intriguing details about turn-of-the-century apparel as well as an entirely new way to understand Wharton's symbolic resonance of dress, this book offers up a fascinating approach to Wharton's astute chronicle of culture. Highly recommended.

**Choice** "In addition to her compelling readings of the clothing that appears in, or is contemporary to, Wharton's works, Joslin also provides helpful context about the history of dress design and specific designers invoked by Wharton (including Jacques Doucet, Charles Frederick Worth, Jeanne Paquin, Paul Poiret, and Gabrielle Coco Chanel) and analyzes the cultural significance of fashion design, dress reform, and the garment industry. . . . Edith Wharton and the Making of Fashion is a well-conceived and well-written analysis of a topic central to Wharton's oeuvre. Scholars, students, and general readers will welcome this long overdue and interesting study, which breaks important new ground in Wharton scholarship and in cultural criticism.

**Modern Fiction Studies** "When dealing either with Wharton's fiction or with items of period clothing, Joslin is perceptive and sometimes markedly eloquent. Her readings of the author's life in and through clothes to emphasize Wharton's simultaneous welcoming of and resistance to aspects of modernity are also persuasive.

**Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature** "The best moments in the book come when Joslin considers a specific aspect of attire—the puffed sleeves of the customer in *Bunner Sisters* or the Empire-waist opera gown Ellen wears in *The Age of Innocence*—and uses the contexts of such dress to interpret the ways they reveal character and theme.

**American Literary Realism**

"There's never been a book quite like Katherine Joslin's Edith Wharton and the Making of Fashion, a very readable tour de force which blends material culture and literary study in a refreshingly entertaining and informative way." (Susan Goodman, H. Fletcher Brown Chair of Humanities, University of Delaware)

"Joslin brings a new Edith Wharton into view as she draws on several kinds of cultural critique. By focusing her text on certain of Wharton's novels, Joslin creates a practical guide to reading Wharton that is different from any of the current scholarship on this author. This choice of key books works well to illustrate the dimensions of national fashion, and less directly, of national character." (Linda

Wagner-Martin, Frank Borden Hanes Professor of English and Comparative Literature, The University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill)“Part social, part commercial, part aesthetic history, Katherine Joslin’s study of Wharton and fashion gives us an interpretative template for a new and vivid reading of the length and breadth of her writing career. Joslin unfolds Wharton’s relationship with the substance and style of turn of the century fashion, exposing the subtleties of tone and texture and revealing the significance of the nuances of design and provenance in both the fiction and non-fiction.” (Janet Beer, Vice-Chancellor, Oxford Brookes University)“In *Edith Wharton and the Making of Fashion* Katherine Joslin seeks to discover new meanings in the works of Edith Wharton through an examination of the remnants of the “culture of fashion” found in her works. Clearly Wharton knew fashion. Joslin argues that Wharton understood and drew on fashion’s hidden messages and subtle signs: the drape, fit, fabric, color, and style of a gown. Wharton’s ability to delineate fashion in this manner sets her writings apart. Wharton devotees and fashion historians will be thrilled with Joslin’s interpretation of the meanings of these bits of material culture in Wharton’s life and works.” (Patricia A. Cunningham, Fashion Historian, The Ohio State University)

What a treat to have a solid hardcover book packed with pictures of Edith Wharton in her beautiful clothes. The book is a fun read for all lovers of fashion and Edith Wharton’s books.

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