When Edith Wharton published *The Glimpses of the Moon* in 1922, critical acclaim and a large popular readership had already established her as a major literary figure and provided her with financial security. As early as 1917, she had entered the mass magazine market, having made an agreement with D. Appleton and Company for the serialization of *Summer* in *McClure’s* and its subsequent publication as a book. Her editor at Appleton at the time wrote to her, “You are the only author in the field who is writing literature and at the same time being paid the high figure which is usually the reward of tosh” (qtd. in Lewis, *Wharton* 446–67). Her reputation as a best-selling writer would earn her nearly $70,000 in 1922 (Lewis, *Letters* 446). Yet Wharton had also achieved recognition from the literary world with the reception of the Pulitzer Prize for the *Age of Innocence* in 1921.

The melodramatic plot and sentimental theme made *The Glimpses of the Moon* an immediate popular and financial success. Having been first serialized in *The Pictorial Review* and then published as book, it sold over 100,000 copies in the first six months.¹ Contemporary reviews of the novel, however, were mixed. Some reviewers argued that the work was better than either *The Age of Innocence* or *The House of Mirth* in its analysis of the corruption of the wealthy class in America; other reviewers found the plot disconnected, the characters unbelievable, and the writing slick.² Nevius Blake called it “the feeblest of her novels” (19). More recent criticism has also tended to dismiss the narrative as an inferior work. In his autobiography of Wharton, R.W.B. Lewis took note of “its characteristically entertaining moments” but found it ultimately “not very readable today” (*Wharton* 445). Cynthia Griffin Wolff found the “natures” of the two protagonists to be “sketched quickly, almost carelessly, with a facile, glossy, verbal shorthand” and the plot to be marred by a “pat, sentimental denouement”
Nevertheless, a careful reading of this novel within the context of Wharton’s ongoing exploration of gender and narrative suggests that this novel is much more carefully crafted and more deserving of critical attention than previous readers have accorded it.

Within the story of Wharton’s continuing fascination with women trying to tell their own stories, *The Glimpses of the Moon* marks a turning point. Earlier novels such as *The House of Mirth*, *The Reef*, and *Summer* demonstrate multiple ways in which her female characters fail to control their stories; these novels can also be read as efforts by Wharton to explore her own struggles with telling the story and her own uncertainties about writing. Her analyses of the problematic relationship between gender and discursive power reside beneath the surface story and amid the gaps within the narrative; these hidden stories reflect both Wharton’s concern about her role as author and her determined efforts to face down these personal and professional challenges. *The Glimpses of the Moon* suggests that Wharton has at last laid claim to her own narrative authority.

Sophisticated narrative strategies and broader thematic concerns with cultural beliefs about women and the stories that constrain them reveal the insight and craftsmanship of a skilled and confident writer. Wharton employs parody and satire to extend her analysis of society beyond the surface criticism of the foibles of the very rich to a critique of the gender ideologies at work within that society. Although Susy Lansing never fully controls the stories about her, Wharton makes her a better reader of society and narrative than Lily, Anna, Sophy, or Charity. *The Glimpses of the Moon* turns the reader’s attention away from the muting of women’s language and narrative, to a concern about the ways in which women always remain subject to broader cultural stories that define the character of women and their appropriate gender roles. Wharton’s novel moves beyond representing the effects of unequal gender power over story and language to an analysis of the cultural beliefs that generate this gender inequality.

In *The Glimpses of the Moon*, Wharton explores how damaging individual masculine narratives regarding the identity and perceived morality of a female protagonist are themselves contained within larger destructive ideologies governing male and female gender roles. Wharton moves beyond the struggles of individual characters to seize control over language and story in order to critique broader cultural narratives about romantic love, female virtue, and motherhood. On the surface, the story of Susy Lansing seems to support common cultural assumptions about women, their nature, and their destiny as